

**REPORT TO:** CABINET

**DATE:** 1 DECEMBER 2022

**TITLE:** WYCH ELM DEVELOPMENT BRIEF – FINAL FOR ADOPTION

**PORTFOLIO HOLDER:** COUNCILLOR DAN SWORDS, DEPUTY LEADER AND PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR REGENERATION

**LEAD OFFICER:** ANDREW BRAMIDGE, DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC GROWTH AND REGENERATION (01279) 446410

**CONTRIBUTING OFFICER:** VICKY FORGIONE, PRINCIPAL PLANNING OFFICER (01279) 446878

**This is a Key Decision**  
**It is on the Forward Plan as Decision Number I014347**  
**Call-in Procedures may apply**  
**This decision will affect Little Parndon and Hare Street Ward.**

**RECOMMENDED that:**

- A** Notes the responses received to the consultation and approves the consequential amendments made to the Wych Elm Development Brief.
- B** Formally adopts the Development Brief as set out in Appendix A to this report.

**REASON FOR DECISION**

- A** To enable the development brief to be formally adopted and used in the determination of planning applications for the Wych Elm area, providing encouragement to the private sector to invest and regenerate the area.

**BACKGROUND**

1. The Town Centre Masterplan Framework Supplementary Planning Document (TCMF SPD) was adopted in March 2022. The document includes masterplan drawings and frameworks for individual opportunity areas including Wych Elm (Opportunity Area 2). Wych Elm is situated at the northern most part of the town centre close to the existing Princess Alexandra Hospital (PAH) site to the west, Sainsbury's to the north-east and Rectory Wood to the north. It is bounded by Fourth Avenue to the south.

2. There has been developer interest and interest from statutory bodies in redeveloping and re-using parts of the Wych Elm area. Furthermore, there have also been a number of issues identified including legibility and accessibility across the area, a lack of green space and poor overall appearance. To help tackle these issues and to ensure that the area comes forward comprehensively, a development brief has been prepared.
3. The draft development brief sets out a vision and set of objectives for Wych Elm and has divided the area into separate land parcels each having their own development strategy. However, the development brief seeks to deliver a comprehensive approach to the delivery of the area. More information on the individual land parcels can be found in the development brief set out in Appendix A.

## **ISSUES/PROPOSALS**

### **Consultation**

4. In June 2022, Cabinet approved the draft Development Brief to enable it to be published for the purposes of consultation. The consultation period started on Friday 24 June 2022 and closed on Friday 29 July 2022. This is a period of five weeks.
5. The Council complied with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement in relation to the consultation. This included:
  - a) Notifications being issued to parties who have expressed an interest in Planning documents including statutory consultees;
  - b) Letters being issued to businesses and neighbouring residents as well as landowners where details were available;
  - c) Posts being made on the Council's social media channels to advertise the consultation;
  - d) Hard copies of the development brief being available at the Civic Centre, and libraries in Harlow; and
  - e) An online version being available on the Council's website.
6. In total 15 people, organisations or companies responded to the consultation. Appendix B summarises the representations along with a Council response which is highlighted in bold. This includes the following:
  - a) Wording to strengthen the requirement for urban drainage systems and reference to sewerage requirements;
  - b) References to the need for planning contributions including contributions towards primary school education and early years;

- c) Essex County Council have confirmed that a site for a primary school is not required in Wych Elm and this has been removed from the land parcels as a requirement;
- d) Additional wording to refer to the need for affordable homes in accordance with Local Plan Policy;
- e) Inclusion of reference to the one-way loop to the west assisting ambulances in this area (if retained);
- f) Reference to wheelchair users being able to move in and around the area and for this to be a consideration;
- g) Flexibility in applying mode shift targets to healthcare facilities (as employees/visitors are more likely to have to travel in unsociable hours);
- h) More information in a new delivery strategy section around relocation of uses, phasing and land equalisation;
- i) Further references to landscaping, open space and public realm including stewardship; and
- j) Reference to some of the land parcels enhancing the setting of the scheduled ancient monument to the west, where appropriate.
- k) Additional wording in the delivery strategy to relay concerns over the relocation of existing businesses, and in particular the Funeral Directors, which is an important local business in Wych Elm, with good access to public transport, the hospital and has seen significant investment over 20 years. The brief now specifically notes that if suitable alternative sites are not identified for existing uses and they are not available at the time an application is submitted for the land parcels, then they will remain on their existing sites or incorporated within a development scheme.

## **Next Steps**

7. The Wych Elm development brief will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and will also inform pre-application discussions on relevant developments is approved for adoption.
8. The adopted development brief will be hosted on the Council's website with several hard copies also being made available at the Civic Centre.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **Strategic Growth and Regeneration**

As set out in the report

**Author: Andrew Bramidge, Director of Strategic Growth and Regeneration**

### **Finance**

As contained within the report.

**Author: Simon Freeman, Deputy to the Chief Executive and Director of Finance**

### **Housing**

As outlined in the report.

**Author: Andrew Murray, Director of Housing**

### **Communities and Environment**

None specific.

**Author: Jane Greer, Director of Communities and Environment**

### **Governance and Corporate Services**

Adoption of the brief means that it becomes part of the material considerations of officers and members in future planning applications supporting consistent decision making.

**Author: Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Services**

### **Appendices**

Appendix A – Wych Elm Development Brief (Final)

Appendix B – Summary of representations received and Council's response

### **Background Papers**

None.

### **Glossary of terms/abbreviations used**

PAH – Princess Alexandra Hospital

TCMF SPD – Town Centre Masterplan Framework Supplementary Planning Document