

Smithfield Riverside Strategic Development Framework (SDF): Consultation Outcomes and Final Report

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1. Synopsis

To report on the outcomes of consultation and present the final Smithfield Riverside Strategic Development Framework document for approval.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. At the meeting on 8 March 2021, Cabinet agreed the draft Smithfield Riverside Strategic Development Framework be subject to public consultation for a period of six weeks and the outcomes of this process inform amendments necessary to finalise the document for final publication. Consequently, this report summarises the consultation process adopted, an appraisal of the feedback received and the substantive outcomes that have been incorporated into the final document for approval.
- 2.2. The Smithfield Riverside SDF has been developed with the engagement of key stakeholders, businesses and partners. Framed around the Big Draw, a two-day design workshop, stakeholders and the general public were invited to shape ideas and create a working vision for the site. Through this vision LDA Design and Shropshire Council created a principles-based, deliverable framework which reflects the needs and aspirations of Shrewsbury.
- 2.3. The consultation process was undertaken via the 'Commonplace' online portal ([Community Forum – Smithfield Riverside Development Framework – Commonplace](#)), as well as consideration of written representations received, predominantly via email. The Commonplace portal focussed on nine key lines of enquiry, namely:
 - Introduction and Feedback
 - Design Principles
 - Getting Around
 - Spaces and Streets
 - The River
 - An area to live
 - Business and Innovation
 - Illustrative Vision
 - Summary and next steps

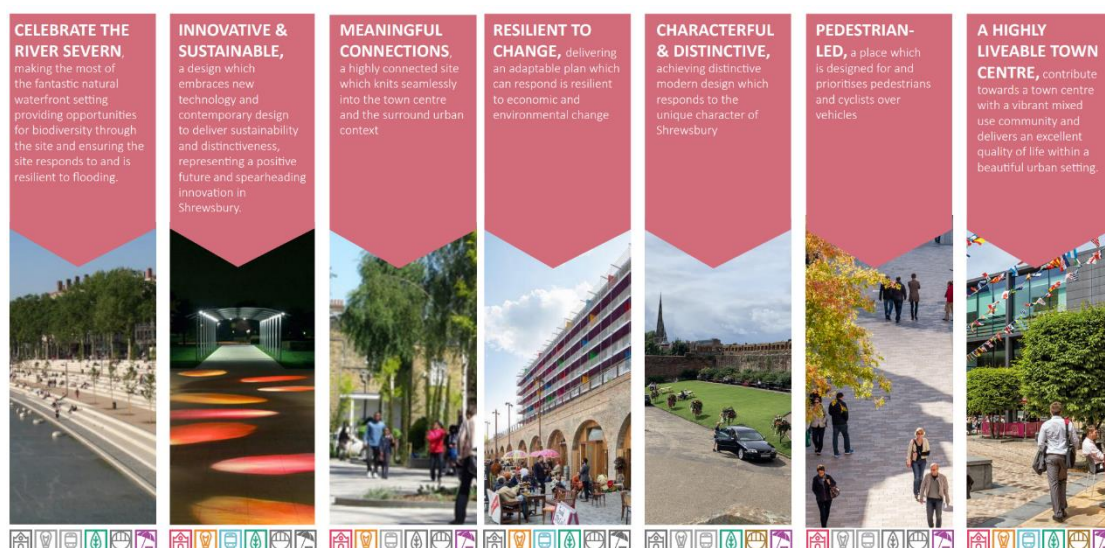
- 2.4. The Commonplace portal attracted 1118 visitors to the site with 227 respondents providing more comprehensive responses and 637 site contributors (perhaps adding either one comment or viewing the information presented). The key themes can be summarised as follows:

Getting around - Public transport and cycle routes are particularly important to many of our respondents. There is support to reduce traffic entering yet some concerns that the existing bus station is shown as redeveloped, without alternative facilities being identified.

Design principles - Although more people are satisfied than dissatisfied, there are some concerns that more needs to be done to design in a way that will address climate change. Others are keen to highlight how important it is to retain the character of the town.

The River - Current feedback suggests people would like to see new opportunities for riverside public spaces, a new crossing, walking/cycling routes and riverside cafes, bars and restaurants. There are also concerns over flooding highlighted within the comments.

- 2.5. Of the 7 regeneration objectives set out within the Strategic Development Framework, the most important to our current respondents is 'Pedestrian led' (prioritising pedestrians and cyclists).



- 2.6. In addition to the data analysed via the Commonplace portal, written representations were received via email from 5 correspondents including Bus Users Shropshire and Sustainable Transport Shropshire. The majority of the emails received asked for clarification on the future of the existing bus station, options for potential future locations for replacement facilities, integrated with other forms of public transport serving the town centre and its hinterland. There was also a call for greater prominence of bus

facilities in the SDF and the consideration of a transport hub. Also concerns over the number of buses that might have to be taken by passengers if coming into the town centre from a rural location and also queried the appendices that were available to support the document.

Smithfield Riverside SDF: Summary of key amendments

- 2.7. The concern to keep a town centre bus station has been addressed with a bus station facility being worked into the revised SDF and an intention to ensure that its revised location integrates with other modes of transport locally. More detailed work on this will be undertaken through the Movement Strategy work for Shrewsbury. The need to address future bus provision within the town centre, and how it supports wider mobility for residents of Shropshire, has been explicitly included as a required output from the Shrewsbury Movement and Public Realm Strategy that is due to be completed Summer 2022. A comprehensive engagement and consultation plan is also a requirement to be undertaken by the consultant team appointed to deliver the movement strategy; this will provide further opportunities for this issue to be co-designed with stakeholders.
- 2.8. The illustrative aspect of the SDF document has been re-emphasised throughout the revised version with notes throughout that the SDF sets out to inform the aspirational opportunity for the regeneration of the site being indicative of the principles not the definitive solution.

3. Recommendations

That Cabinet agrees to:

- 3.1. Acknowledge the outcomes of the consultation process, as summarised in this report.
- 3.2. Approve the final Smithfield Riverside Strategic Development Framework document (appendix A), incorporating amendments informed by the outcomes of the consultation process.
- 3.3. In line with the current Local Plan and the draft Shropshire Local Plan (2016-2038), and specifically draft policy S16.1 (2), it is agreed that the Smithfield Riverside Strategic Development Framework (SDF), being an associated masterplan document of the Big Town Plan, is to be considered as a material consideration in decision making on relevant planning applications. The weight afforded to the SDF in decision making will be dependent upon the circumstances of each application.

REPORT

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. The SDF incorporates feedback and comments received from the online consultation from 19th October to 13th December 2021. The feedback received has been collated and analysed by Shropshire Council's Feedback and Insight Team.
- 4.2. Opportunities – the outputs from the consultation identified positive responses and opportunities which have been identified as follows:
- Positive engagement for more active and sustainable travel i.e., more footpaths, cycle routes etc, reducing traffic levels and impact on the environment.
 - Opportunities to design in a way that reduces long term environmental impact and maximises the benefits of public space.
 - Utilising river to enhance leisure and tourism opportunities.
 - Engagement with public in every stage of the process through future consultations.
 - Continuation of collaboration and engagement with key partners (Shrewsbury Town Council and Shrewsbury BID) which also provides a level of public reassurance.
 - No strong objections to the design principles, so opportunity to take this forward.
 - Positive response to the area being modernised and practical providing a nicer environment for shops and leisure (providing it doesn't become over modernised spoiling natural environment and too expensive).
 - Opportunity to understand and address key concerns and needs regarding integrated public transport (considering rurality of the County, access to the town centre and railway, accessibility and mobility).
 - SDF provided opportunity to acknowledge the need to design the area to mitigate flooding and feedback has further clarified that this is a concern for residents.
- 4.3. Risks – some key concerns/risks have been identified through the consultation process which are detailed below with options for mitigations:
- As the consultation was strategy based, less responses so reduced representation.

- Mitigations: Continued engagement through further consultations during the planning and proposed development phases.
 - Concerns about movement (with specific concerns regarding location of the bus station).
 - Mitigation: Movement Strategy currently being worked on.
 - Raising expectations that we can afford and address all flooding issues in the short term.
 - Mitigation: Realistic costed programme to implement flood alleviation.
 - Concerns around alignment of ambition with available investment (deliverability).
 - Mitigation: Partnership working with experts, businesses, and a focus on strategic partnerships and investment opportunities.
- 4.4. There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendation in this report. There may however be legal implications arising from projects/work which come forward as a result of the SDF being adopted and advice should be sought as appropriate.
- 4.5. It will be necessary to keep the SDF under review. The economy and prevailing property markets will change, and decisions might be made which change the context within which the SDF must be seen.

5. Equality, social inclusion and health impact assessments (ESHIA)

- 5.1. An Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment has been undertaken on the SDF consultation. The consultation respondents were predominantly aged 55 or over and of White British backgrounds. It has been noted that there is some lack of diversity within the respondent sample, and this will be considered in the planning for future engagement as the SDF and linked programmes are taken forward. Targeted stakeholder engagement and ongoing equality and social inclusion impact assessments will also be important elements of future work.
- 5.2. The development and delivery of the Smithfield Riverside Strategic Development Framework (SDF) is anticipated to have a positive impact on communities in Shrewsbury, Shropshire as a whole and to visitors to the town. It creates a collective vision and strategy, to help guide Shrewsbury's future. It sets the aims, aspirations, and vision for the Riverside area of Shrewsbury and sets an aspiration for the regeneration of the site and for the future ensuring that

Shropshire Council takes a proactive approach alongside communities and businesses towards the development within the town. (full ESHIA in **appendix B** of the report)

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. As a result of this report there are no direct financial implications to the Council. Any subsequent projects or development which may come forward on the back of the SDF will be subject to separate financial appraisals and business cases.

7. Climate Change Appraisal

- 7.1. The Smithfield Riverside SDF and any future delivery and procurement will include Council expectations on new developments and this report provides reassurance to Cabinet that the SDF sets out an aspiration for sustainability and responding to the climate emergency. Smithfield Riverside will be recognisably sustainable and responsive to the environmental sensitivities of the site, as well as responding to the climate emergency and its impacts in Shrewsbury.
- 7.2. Popular and well received by consultation respondents was the consideration of public and green spaces particularly for the opportunities for riverside public spaces.
- 7.3. The majority of participants were either satisfied or very satisfied with the proposals to make the area a low traffic zone, and climate change consideration of reducing vehicular traffic and increasing pedestrian led prioritisation, easing access and movement, was clearly supported as, of the 7 regeneration objectives set out within the Strategic Development Framework, the most important to the respondents is "Pedestrian led" (prioritising pedestrians and cyclists).
- 7.4. Public transport routes are particularly important to many of the respondents with buses being central to a low emission future and this is to be further developed through the Movement Strategy.
- 7.5. Respondents acknowledged that the SDF should identify further measures or activities that contribute to improving air quality and mitigate for, or adapt to, the effects of flooding. The SDF recognises the latter is an issue that significantly impacts on future development opportunities on Riverside and will be addressed in liaison with the Environment Agency, through the River Severn Partnership, as developments come forward. The proposed Shrewsbury Movement and Public Realm Strategy cites improvements to air quality, as well as wider climate change adaption, health and wellbeing, economic growth and the visitor economy and high-quality public realm as primary drivers for the project.

- 7.6. Addressing climate change through design principles was of importance to respondents, principally that design is done in a such a way to address climate change, be sustainable and future proofed.
- 7.7. The Movement and Public Realm Strategy for the Town Centre will include proposals for the development of next generation park and ride facilities and improvements to bus services. The council is awaiting the results of the Bus Service Improvement Partnership submission to Government which if successful will accelerate this investment. In addition, the strategy will look to improve off street parking at town centre shoulder locations such as Frankwell, Abbey Foregate and Castle Foregate
- 7.8. As joint Chairs of the River Severn Partnership, the Council and the Environment Agency are committed to exploring the opportunities that the scale of development on the Smithfield Riverside may provide to showcase for this new approach to climate resilience and flood risk management. The Partnership will sponsor the identification of a suite of measures to increase resilience against future flood events, but not necessarily implemented from the outset. Instead, the changing environmental conditions and other actions to address flood risk in the catchment will be monitored. Measures on the Smithfield Riverside site will be implemented at an appropriate time depending on need; not all measures may be needed but that there will be a plan in place should flood risk change over time. These measures will enable the site to provide opportunities for economic growth that would be otherwise unviable.
- 7.9. The SDF has been updated to reflect and inform the final document to strengthen climate change imperatives.

8. Background

- 8.1. As stated in the Cabinet report 8 March 2021 *'The Smithfield Riverside Strategic Development Framework (SDF) provides a bold and ambitious vision for one of Shrewsbury's prime development sites. The Shrewsbury Big Town Plan (BTP) Masterplan Vision 2020 identifies the Riverside site's significance and its opportunities in achieving the place-shaping aspirations of the BTP. As a core component in delivery of an investible masterplan for Shrewsbury, the SDF establishes the spatial framework for development that will sustain and enhance the economic, social and environmental performance of the town centre and increase its attractiveness to businesses, investors and developers, residents, and visitors, whether for leisure, tourism, culture or to work.*
- 8.2. *The Smithfield Riverside SDF provides regeneration objectives for the site and with guiding principles for development, articulates the scale, form, massing and orientation necessary to ensure sensitive and appropriate development. Informed by multi-modal forms of*

movement, mobility and accessibility the SDF, will inform the use profile and mix, activities, public realm and open space, streets and squares, as well as promote environmental quality and measures that contribute to climate change mitigation.'

- 8.3. The Smithfield Riverside SDF has been developed with the engagement of key stakeholders, businesses and partners. Framed around the Big Draw, a two-day design workshop, stakeholders and the general public were invited to shape ideas and create a working vision for the site. Through this vision LDA Design and Shropshire Council created a deliverable framework which reflects the needs and aspirations of Shrewsbury. The current consultation supported the transition to the next stage in the process of finalising the document.

Consultation Approach, Process and Timescales

- 8.4. The consultation process was predominantly informed by the online Commonplace interactive portal. Publicised on social media and with local press releases, responses were collated via Commonplace portal, as well as incorporation of written feedback for those respondents preferring to not use the online facilities.
- 8.5. A summary of key findings is set out below.

Consultation Outcomes

- 8.6. Overall, 48% of people were satisfied or very satisfied with the draft Smithfield Riverside Development Framework. 21% had neutral views and 31% were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied. The proportion of neutral opinions was quite high throughout, compared to other public consultations.
- 8.7. Commonplace online portal consultation resulted in 637 comments/contributions and 226 participants provided comprehensive responses. Respondents included members of the public and local businesses. 10 written/email responses were provided.
- 8.8. The location of the bus station drew a number of responses that supported a reconsideration of the necessity for a town centre location. The final report for approval by Cabinet demonstrates and affirms that the concern to keep a bus station has been addressed with a bus station facility being worked into the revised SDF and an intention to ensure that its revised location integrates with other modes of transport locally.
- 8.9. When asked 'In considering the development of the area, what matters most to you?'. The top ranked themes were 'green spaces and the river', 'easy access and movement' and 'good design'.

Response numbers were high for the theme 'getting around' and it was a dominant theme within comments.

- 8.10. Under the theme 'Design', 66% were either satisfied and 22% were unsatisfied. Top themes from comments included the importance of sympathetic and appropriate design and development, and positive feedback for the vision/design principles importance. There was a necessity to re-emphasise, within the revised document, that the SDF is illustrative only and sets out to inform the aspirational opportunity for the regeneration of the site being indicative of the principles not the definitive solution. This emphasis has been an amendment throughout the new Riverside SDF document.
- 8.11. 5% were satisfied with the proposals for getting around and 35% weren't (36% neutral). The reasons for concerns included not knowing what the plans for the bus station are (most would like the current site to be retained), design for accessibility and the need for good public transport and rural bus links. 64% are satisfied with proposals for a low traffic zone, 22% are not and 13% don't have an opinion. Proposals for active travel, opportunities for pedestrians, and public transport were viewed positively overall.
- 8.12. There were few comments on 'Spaces and Streets'. 49% are satisfied and 23% are not satisfied (28% have a neutral view). Public spaces and green spaces are popular.
- 8.13. In relation to proposals for The River, 58% are satisfied, 19% were not satisfied and 23% had neutral views. Concerns related to flooding, but many people also saw opportunities for leisure, tourism and business along the river.
- 8.14. When considering the area as a place to live, design of homes was considered top (31%), followed by accommodation mix (24%) and resident parking (17%). Few commented on this theme but of those, 48% were satisfied, 26% were not (26% were neutral).
- 8.15. The number of responses for the business theme were very small but the elements considered most important were access and transport (17%), cafés, bars and restaurants (16%), spaces for cultural activities (15%) and leisure and tourism opportunities (14%). More feedback would be helpful at a next stage.
- 8.16. The most popular site feature locations are 'rerouting Smithfield Road to create a new high street' (21%), squares and a riverside square (15%), and creation of mixed-use streets with frontages that create interest and activity (14%).
- 8.17. Beyond the document themes there are some concerns over investment, deliverability and the challenges of implementation.

Smithfield Riverside SDF: proposed amendments

- 8.18. The concern to keep a town centre bus station has been addressed with a bus station facility being worked into the revised SDF and an intention to ensure that its revised location integrates with other modes of transport locally.
- 8.19. The illustrative aspect of the SDF document has been re-emphasised throughout the revised version with notes throughout that the SDF sets out to inform the aspirational opportunity for the regeneration of the site being indicative of the principles for the site not the definitive solution.

9. Additional Information

- 9.1. The SDF sits within the umbrella of the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan (approved by Cabinet 2018) and provides further guidance on achieving a number of strategic policy objectives set out in the currently adopted Local Plan and emerging Local Plan. In particular, draft policy S16.1(2) specifically references the Shrewsbury BTP and associated masterplan documents to ensure that development is consistent with this. The SDF is also consistent with draft Policy S16.1 (8) which looks to support mixed used development into the town which are consistent with the BTP. The SDF is therefore considered to be in conformity with the objectives and policies of the current Local Plan (Core Strategy and SAM DEV) as well as the emerging objectives and policies in the draft Local Plan 2016-2038. Whilst the SDF itself does not form part of the statutory Development Plan for the area, it does provide important guidance on the implementation of policies CS2 and S16 and will provide guidance to support the delivery of draft Policy S16 in the emerging Local Plan. Subject to the agreement of Cabinet, the principle of using the SDF as a material consideration in decision making on relevant planning applications can be established. The degree of weight that can be attached to the SDF will depend on the individual circumstances.
- 9.2. The SDF will inform and coordinate with the emerging Local Transport Plan 4 for Shropshire and the policies which will form this strategy going forward.

10. Conclusions

- 10.1. The feedback on the Smithfield Riverside Development Framework reflects a broad range of views and significant numbers selected 'neutral opinion options'. Many concerns focus on suggestions or options still open to influence and future decision, and what change may mean for specific features and functions of the site, such as the bus station, Smithfield Road and historic buildings, rather than any opposition to the overall vision or design principles contained within the SDF. Similarly, concerns about flooding, traffic and accessibility

appear to be generated by the need for more detail and clarity of proposals. With these highlighted concerns, future stages of engagement can be targeted as the Smithfield Riverside Development Framework progresses.

10.2. Smithfield Riverside SDF sets out some of the next stages of work. This will include:

- Considering and agreeing delivery options.
- Identification of investment sources.
- Robust governance and due diligence to ensure effective financial management.
- Establishing of a project board.
- Site management to secure a sustainable approach and minimise any disruption.
- Planning and consultation; engagement with key consultees and members of the public.

10.3. Further engagement and consultations will include a Movement and Public Realm Strategy, reflecting that 'getting around' was a dominant theme from this consultation.

10.4. The SDF clearly demonstrates local priorities for the Smithfield Riverside area and sets an illustrative framework and set of parameters to shape development coming forward.

List of Background Papers

Cabinet report – Smithfield Riverside Strategic Development Framework
Shrewsbury 8 March 2021

Cabinet Members

Cllr Edward Potter (Portfolio Holder – Economic Growth, Regeneration and Planning)

Local Member

Cllr Nat Green (Ward – Quarry and Coton Hill)

Appendices

Appendix A: Smithfield Riverside Strategic Development Framework: Final Version

Appendix B: ESHIA for Smithfield Riverside Strategic Development Framework