

**ST IVES WEST
URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK AND MASTERPLAN
(Report by Head of Planning Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of the responses to the draft St Ives West Urban Design Framework and to consider the Council's response. A revised document is recommended for adoption as Interim Planning Guidance (IPG).

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The three sites in question were allocated within the Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alteration of June 2002, taking account of the Inspector's specific recommendations regarding the extent of site boundaries and potential housing yields. The Inspector also recommended the production of a comprehensive development brief for the area to protect the important landscape gap between St Ives and Houghton and to provide a framework for the residential development of these sites. This Urban Design Framework presents the planning policy context for the development of these sites and important design parameters that should lead forthcoming proposals.
- 2.2 The document was released for a period of consultation by Cabinet on 4th November 2004. This period expired on 14th February 2005. During this time, public exhibitions have been held in Houghton and St Ives, in addition to consultation with statutory organisations. Public notices were posted in St Ives and Houghton, and nearby properties were leafleted.
- 2.3 The adoption of the Framework and Masterplan as Interim Planning Guidance is an important step towards achieving the most appropriate form of re-development for these important edge-of-town sites and it will ensure that forthcoming schemes will be of a high architectural and urban design quality.

3. THE CONSULTATION RESPONSE

- 3.1 45 written responses have been received from statutory agencies, local organisations and members of the public, containing 218 separate comments for consideration. A summary of the respondents and their comments is contained within Annex 1. Concerns requiring a more lengthy response are expanded in Annex 2. If the proposed responses and amendments contained within Annex 1 and 2 are acceptable to Cabinet, they will then be incorporated into the revised, adopted document.

- 3.2 Most responses, where justified, have led to minor text or graphic changes. The most significant concerns are as follows: the principle of development; the infilling of the landscape gap between St Ives and Houghton; highway congestion; the loss of greenery and drainage/flooding. The Council's response to these issues is presented below.
- 3.3 The principle of housing development on these three sites is already established by the allocation in the Local Plan Alteration 2002. The Council cannot therefore resist the principle. It is the intention of the Urban Design Framework, however, to ensure that developments coming forward are of the highest standard and respond to the character of the wider area, not least the remaining open land between St Ives and Houghton.
- 3.4 The Inspector at the Local Plan inquiry, in allocating the three sites, noted the importance of protecting what remains of the landscape gap between St Ives and Houghton. Given that these sites are now allocated and will now come forward for housing development, it is the Framework's intention to set parameters in layout and design that will ensure sympathetic forms of development. These include protection for vegetation and the appropriate positioning, density and height of built form to achieve suitable development on this edge of the town.
- 3.5 Highway congestion has been raised as a concern in four principal respects: firstly, the overall contribution of the developments to increased congestion on the A1123; secondly, the likelihood of the developments compounding existing rat-run problems through the High Leys/Green Leys area; thirdly, increased access and egress to properties along Houghton Road; fourthly, the further impact on egress from Houghton village onto the A1123. In allocating these sites, the Secretary of State has already been satisfied that the existing highway infrastructure has the capacity to accommodate the additional traffic generated by these allocations. Looking forward, the Highway Authority is in the process of detailing improvement to the highway to provide suitable access to the sites. At the same time, it is also seeking to promote public transport in the form of an additional bus lane, as well as cycling and walking in the form of improved tracks and crossing points. These are intended to reduce car use. Of the other issues raised relating to the A14, a northern bypass and rat-running, these will not influence the validity of the existing allocations and some will be considered as part of the forthcoming Market Town Transport Strategy (MTTS) for St Ives. The MTTS looks strategically at the transport system in the town and will then prioritise funding for further improvements. These developments will be directly funding such improvements.
- 3.6 Any loss of greenery in the area has the potential to dramatically alter local character. The Framework acknowledges the risk of vegetation removal associated with the formation of accesses and the widening of roads and seeks to minimise loss in the first instance. However, improvements to the road system are required to service these allocated sites and some impact on hedgerows and trees will be unavoidable. Where this is the case, the Framework makes it clear that suitable re-planting will be required in all instances.

- 3.7 Surface water drainage and the threat of flooding is a concern of those residents along Houghton Road but also those further afield who feel that they may be affected by run-off from the developments. This is an existing, known problem and discussions with the relevant authorities continue to ensure that current problems will not be compounded. The most likely outcome will comprise improvement to the drains on either side of Houghton Road as part of the roadworks, and suitable attenuation of surface water on the development sites.
- 3.8 It should be noted that some of the principal objections raised can only be properly resolved at a more detailed stage. For example, although it is proper to raise concerns over drainage, the exact detail of drainage provision cannot be presented so early in the development process as much depends on the development form and layout.
- 3.9 On 21st February 2005, the Development Control Panel supported the provisions of the Draft St Ives West Urban Design Framework.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 That the Cabinet considers the responses to comments presented in Annex 1 and 2 and agrees to adopt the revised Urban Design Framework, incorporating the specified changes, as Interim Planning Guidance.
- 4.2 That the Cabinet authorizes the Head of Planning Services to make any minor consequential amendments to the text and illustrations necessary as a result of these changes, after consultation with the Executive Member for Planning Strategy.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Draft St Ives West Urban Design Framework and Masterplan
Report to Cabinet 4th November 2004
Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alteration 2002 Sites 15-17

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