

17<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2008

**CABINET**

**DESIGN BRIEF  
MAYFIELD ROAD, HUNTINGDON  
(Report by HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for the Cabinet to consider the representations made regarding this Design Brief during the recent period of public consultation and to adopt the proposed revised brief as interim planning guidance.
- 1.2 The Design Brief examines the development opportunities in relation to this on the area of open space along Mayfield Road, Huntingdon. It presents the design context for the potential partial development of this site for affordable housing.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 In light of the recent Government confirmed mandatory rating against the Code for Sustainable Homes, for all new homes from 1 May 2008, the Council has considered that we should set an example of sustainable development by delivering an exemplar high quality eco-friendly (the new housing would have a minimum rating of Level 5 in the range of 1-6, with Level 6 being zero carbon) affordable housing scheme on a site in District Council's ownership. The site under consideration is an area of grassed open space currently designated as an 'open space and gaps for protection', in the 1995 local plan. It is however a very sustainable location close to schools, shops, and accessible by several bus services.
- 2.2 As members will be aware there is an acute shortage of affordable housing within the district. Increasing the availability of affordable housing is a high priority for both the Sustainable Community Strategy and the District Council's corporate plan, 'Growing Success'. The need identified per year in the recently published Strategic Housing Market Assessment is greater than the average annual build rate for housing as a whole identified in the core strategy. It is fair to say the Council are never going to achieve enough to satisfy the need but that conclusion could also be considered to reinforce the need for the Council to set a positive example regarding direct provision.
- 2.3 Planning Policy Guidance note 17 sets out national planning guidance for open space, sport and recreation. Paragraph 10 specifically refers to existing open space not being built upon unless an assessment has been undertaken that clearly shows the open space or the buildings and land to be surplus to requirements, and this should include consideration of all the functions that open space can perform. The guidance

emphasises that not all open space, sport and recreational land and buildings are of equal merit and some may reasonably be made available for alternative appropriate uses.

2.4 In January 2006 the Council appointed consultants to undertake such an open space, sport and recreation needs assessment across the whole district. The assessment identified the Mayfield Road open space as an 'amenity space'. It also concluded that Huntingdon (linked with Godmanchester for the purposes of this study) had sufficient provision of informal 'amenity space' across the geographical area, evenly distributed. The study measured a 'surplus' of 16.67 hectares of amenity green space, compared to a surplus of 1.24 hectares of natural and semi natural open space and a deficit of 14.57 hectares of parks and gardens. The nearest alternative open spaces are the Riverside Park situated 150 metres to the south east on the southern side of Hartford Road, and at French's Field, 15 metres to the south west, on the western side of American Lane.

2.5 Funding is currently available to support sustainable growth and the delivery of affordable housing within the Cambridge sub-Region. The Council, in partnership with Cambridgeshire Horizons, has secured Housing Growth Funding of £1.35 million to enable the proposed development to take place. This grant funding will enable a minimum of Level 5 under the Code for Sustainable Homes to be reached. The following commitment is made in association with the funding:-

*This scheme will demonstrate that highly sustainable, affordable homes can be delivered. The funding will enable development of a Council-owned site to provide approximately 30 affordable homes, some rented and some low cost home ownership. The Council will provide the land at below market cost to support affordability of the development and it is intended that the development will be an 'exemplar' incorporating the latest energy-saving technology. Some of the properties will be made accessible to other interested parties and 'cost in use' studies will be conducted to demonstrate how highly energy efficient construction can be achieved.*

2.6 Therefore it is considered that the overwhelming recognised need for additional affordable housing could outweigh the potential loss of some of this open space.

### **3.0 THE DESIGN BRIEF**

#### **CONSULTATION**

3.1 A period of public consultation was undertaken between 21<sup>st</sup> May and 20<sup>th</sup> June. This has included 3 public exhibitions, one in Huntingdon Market Square in consultation with the Environment Strategy launch, one at the Mayfield Road shops, and one at Hartford Infant School for the parents of children at Hartford Infant and Junior Schools. 950 dwellings in the immediate vicinity of the site were given a leaflet advertising the consultation events. In addition to this a newspaper article regarding the draft Design Brief, the public consultation events was published in the Hunts Post on 21 May 2008. The draft Design Brief was also advertised on the front page of the Council website with a link to the brief and online questionnaire for the duration of the

consultation period. Strenuous efforts were made to ensure as many local people as possible were informed. A presentation was also given to the Town Council and the Hartford Infant School Premises meeting. The draft Design Brief was discussed by the Development Control Panel at its meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2008.

- 3.2 A summary outlining all the results of the public consultation are attached for member's information.

### **OUTCOMES**

- 3.3 There are several major issues that the Design Brief seeks to address and it has been revised in light of the consultations and comments received. One significant factor is the amount of open space on the site. It was recommended by the Development Control Panel that approximately one third of the site be retained for open space, and a significantly high proportion of the public responses were that some open space on the site should be retained. In light of the comments received it has been put forward that a minimum of 30% of the site be retained as public open space.
- 3.4 One question put forward was how open space on the site should be treated and used. The majority of responses felt that it should be left as grass or planted with shrubs. The proposal allows the opportunity for the area(s) of open space on the site to be significantly improved and as such the revised Design Brief puts forward that the areas of open space are planted with grass to maintain an open feel with sympathetic planting of trees and shrubs, thus complementing and enhancing any development and encouraging wildlife.
- 3.5 The potential locations of the proposed open space and development were considered by the draft brief. The two options put forward were either to place development to the south of the site having open space to the north of the site adjacent to the hedgerow (option A) or to place development towards American Lane and locating open space adjacent to Mayfield Road (Option B). A mix of comments and ideas were received on both options, however Option B was considered more popular. In light of these comments Option B has been revised as the favoured option for the approximate location of open space and development.
- 3.6 The existing mature hedgerow to the north of the site was considered to be of high value, both for wildlife and amenity purposes. The vast majority of respondents recommended that this be retained. Given that the hedgerow is the only significant natural feature on the site the revised Design Brief will ensure that it is retained as an aspect of any development.
- 3.7 To the east of Mayfield Road there are 2 footpaths which link the rear of Hardy Close to Mayfield Road. The opportunity exists to link these 2 footpaths across the site to the bridleway along American Lane running along the south western boundary of the site. These 2 links would cater for both pedestrians and cyclists alike.
- 3.8 Vehicular access to the site will be via Mayfield Road. A mix of locations were suggested by residents and an access towards the southern end of

Mayfield Road was highlighted. An access in this location may be suitable thus helping to frame the open space and development (subject to the access route within the site). Comments received from Hartford Infant School and the public regarding the existing parking of cars along Mayfield Road are noted and the revised brief will ensure that all parking generated by the development will be located on the site itself. This is to ensure that occupants and visitors do not park along Mayfield Road thus not disrupting the free flow and safety of traffic using Mayfield Road.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 The potential loss of some of this open space could be justified for the reasons explained above and the building of 30 affordable homes is welcomed as a positive proactive response to the identified acute local need. The issue of traffic generated by the development is unlikely to be detrimental to the free flow of traffic on Mayfield Road. Given that eco-friendly sustainable development is proposed, provision for cycle storage for each dwelling will be incorporated and thereby giving alternative transport options for residents. The site lies on several bus routes and is within walking and cycling distance to local facilities and the town centre.
- 4.2 Production of a Design Brief is best practice and will help to secure the most appropriate form of development over this site in response to the issues raised by the local community.

#### **5. RECOMMENDATION**

- 5.1 Members are requested to endorse the contents of the revised Design Brief and adopted it as Interim Planning Guidance.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPG June 2007  
Huntingdonshire Landscape & Townscape Assessment SPG June 2007  
Huntingdonshire District Council Open Space, Sport and Recreation Needs Assessment and Audit September 2006

**Contact Officer: Alison Wood**  
 **01480 388476**

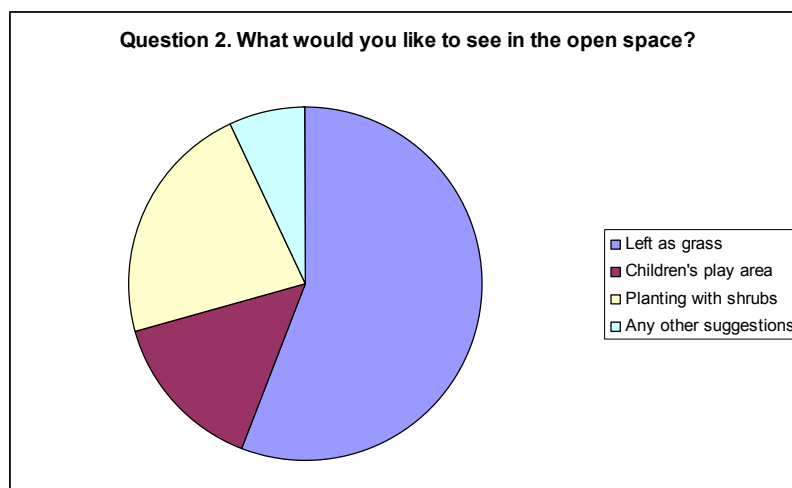
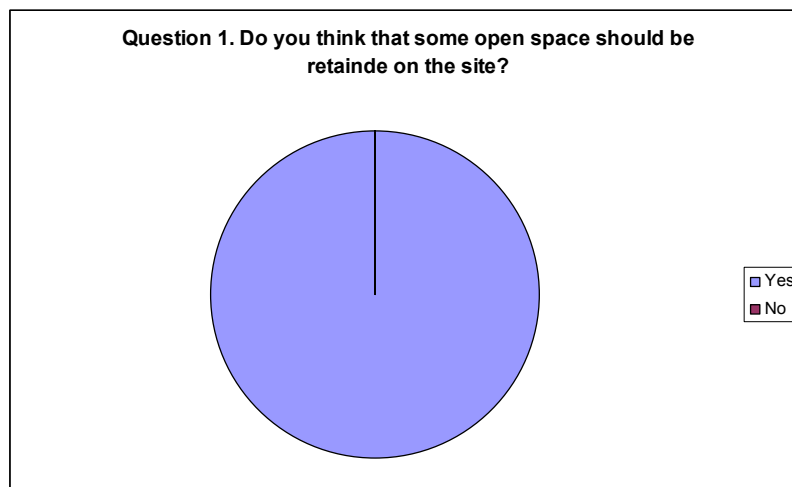
## Mayfield Road draft Design Brief - Public Consultation

Schedule of responses

a) **84 questionnaires, 7 emails / letters received**, précised as follows:-

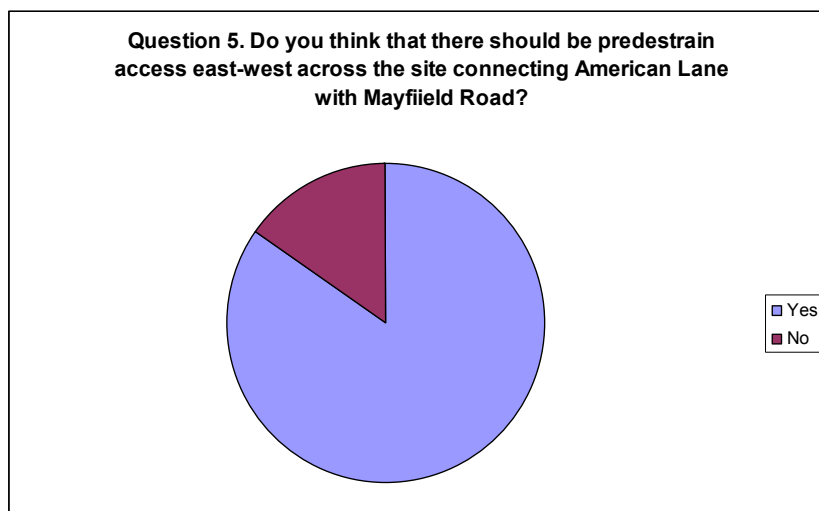
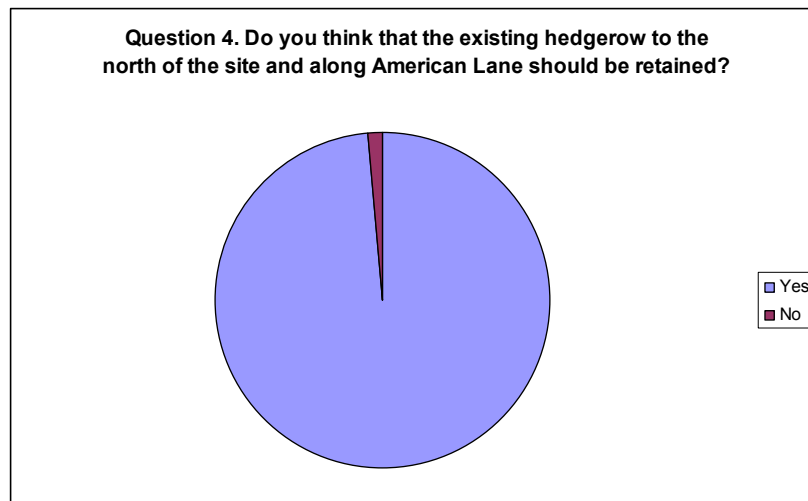
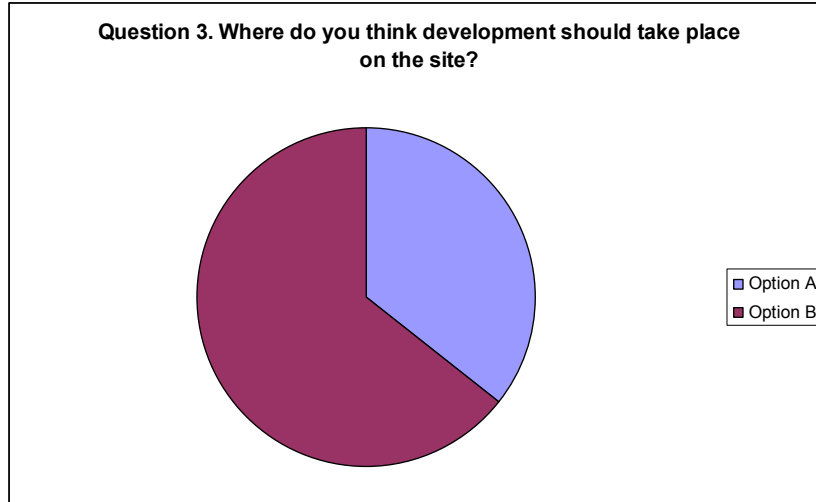
### Responses regarding the development brief...

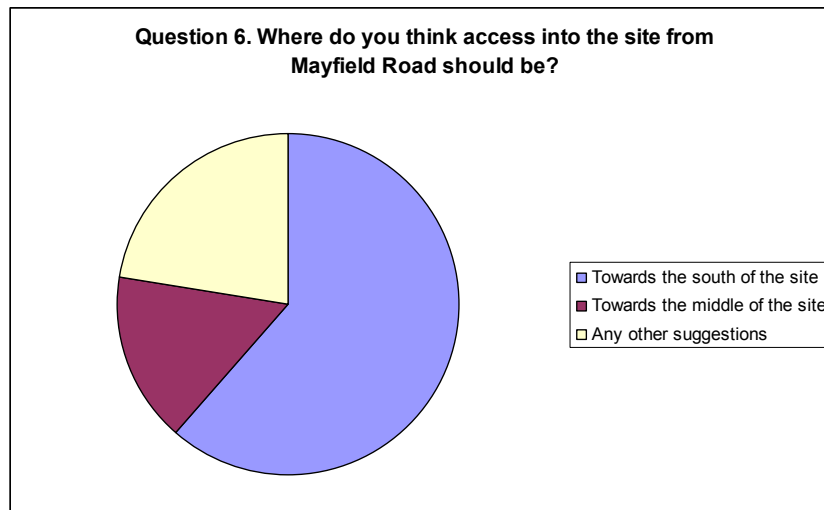
- Everybody has expressed that some open space must be retained on the site.
- Mixed response of how the remaining open space is to be treated and used, slight majority would like it left as open grass, but some felt it could be planted with trees and shrubs and have a children's play area.
- Mixed responses regarding the location of development on the site however option B - keeping an area of open space along Mayfield Road is the response which has been suggested most.
- The hedgerow to the north of the site and along the footpath (American Lane) should be retained.
- Footpath provision across the site connecting American Lane and Mayfield Road should be provided in any scheme.
- Majority of responses prefer any access into the site from Mayfield Road at the southern end of the site.
- The site cannot accommodate 30 dwellings they will be very small with no gardens.



Other suggestions included the following:-

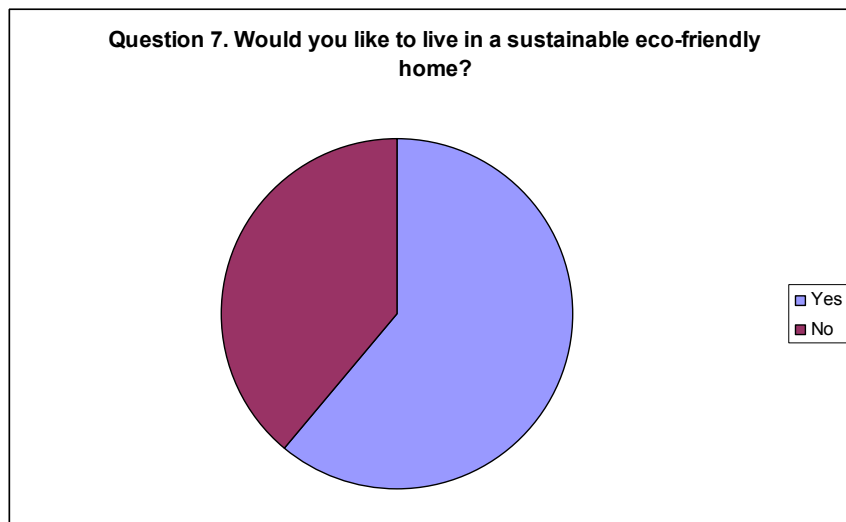
- provide parking spaces for the school
- provide seating with planting, esp. more trees
- provide bungalows not houses
- erect dog waste bins
- leave as open space





Other suggestions included the following:-

- Via Hunters Down
- Using the same entrance as St Johns Ambulance
- Near existing development



Other comments from the public

- The vast majority of the public do not want this development to take place as it is taking away green space within this residential area which is used by dog walkers, children to play on and is an environmental pleasure to see.
- Questions asked as to where will the children play with a loss of green open space.
- There is a strong feeling that the Council are taking away green space on Oxmoor and within the town generally, French's Field is being eaten up by the Olympic Gym expanding and talk of St Johns Ambulance expanding taking away further open space.
- Residents along Desborough Road are aggrieved by the new development at Hunters Down saying that they are overlooked and any development on the Mayfield site will enclose them, causing overlooking and overshadowing.

- Residents feel that the homes built will be ugly and quote the recent development along Buttsgrove Way as an example of ugly housing the Council has allowed.
  - Mayfield Road has significant traffic problems with congestion especially at school opening and closing times with traffic parked all down Mayfield Road, any further development will exacerbate this problem.
  - The traffic lights at the junction of Hartford Road and Desborough Road do not allow traffic exiting from Desborough Road onto Hartford Road to exist for enough time and as such traffic backs up along Desborough Road and Mayfield Road causing congestion, further development will make this situation worse.
  - The pedestrian and cycle path running along the edge of the site is not called American Lane.
  - The site lies over a gravel pit and the land is therefore not suitable for development.
  - The site contains sewer pipes running across it.
  - Consultation is a waste of time as the Council has already decided on the development and made up their mind, the Council never listens anyway.
  - Residents don't want affordable housing by a registered social landlord as this will bring in trouble makers and de-value their properties.
  - Question of who will live there, being immigrants.
  - There is not sufficient capacity at the schools to take on additional children living in the area.
  - Disruption to the area while building works take place.
- b) **Huntingdon Town Council** "strongly opposed to the design proposals on the following comments:-
- That the plans would lead to an overdevelopment of the area and that the land should be preserved as green space;
  - That additional residential development would cause an unsustainable level of traffic at a location already facing increasing traffic levels owing to the local school and expansion at the Gym Club and at the St John Ambulance Centre;
  - That none of the design proposals presented were in keeping with the character of surrounding properties; and
  - That the land was unsuitable for development due to previous contamination."
- c) **Development Control Panel** "resolved that the content of the Design Brief for Mayfield Road, Huntingdon be endorsed and the Cabinet recommended to adopt the document as Interim Planning Guidance subject to the retention of approximately one-third of the site as open space."
- d) **Hartford Infant School** verbal comments précised as follows:-
- Concern that the development will generate further traffic along Mayfield Road.
  - Mayfield Road already suffers from parked cars and congestion; additional development will cause more parked cars and traffic problems along Mayfield Road and within the vicinity of the school.
  - The local schools are up to capacity with no additional places for any more children in the area.