

WEST OF CHICHESTER: Concept Statement Community Workshop

INTRODUCTION

The West of Chichester Planning Concept Statement workshop took place on Monday 2nd June 2014. The session was well attended with representatives from a wide range of organisations.

The session was co-ordinated and facilitated by Design South East with support from Chichester District Council officers.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the workshop was to engage stakeholders, including local residents and interested organisations, in the formulation of a Planning Concept Statement for the West of Chichester site.

West of Chichester has been identified as a strategic development site in the Local Plan, and is one of a series of sites which form the strategic allocations both East and West of the City. As part of the Council's desire to manage the successful development and delivery of strategic sites they have a policy to produce Planning Concept Statements (PCS) for major developments. The PCS should provide a simple, clear expression of the kind of place that a new development should create, identifying what the key issues are and how they might be addressed.

As such this workshop allowed local stakeholders to consider, contribute and help formulate their vision for the proposed development, as well as discuss and explore key themes which will influence the shape and feel of the project.

The Workshop addressed two issues:

1. Vision: What kind of place is West of Chichester going to be?
2. Themes: How can we successfully engage with particular challenges to ensure it can meet the commonly agreed vision?

Next steps:

The feedback from the workshop is collated here as a record of the day. The content of this report and the additional knowledge gathered during the discussions has helped feed into the Council's development of the PCS.

WORKSHOP 1.

VISION FOR WEST OF CHICHESTER

In considering 'What kind of place West of Chichester will be?' the participants were encouraged to aim high and think positive, not to be overly focused on potential constraints, but rather think of the opportunities afforded by the site.

The Vision, even for a large site, must:

- Be brief and succinct; it will say a lot in just a few words, so those words must be very carefully chosen.
- Think of things in a long-term, broad sense, without resorting to generic statements.
- Not be overly focused on detailed issues.

In considering the vision for West of Chichester, participants were invited to reflect on:

- The role of the City in the (sub-) region,
- The role of this site in relation to the City and other strategic developments in the area,
- The relationship of the site with its context,
- Who could be expected to live within the new development, and what daily life would be like,
- If there are examples of existing places from which this development could draw lessons.

FEEDBACK

The feedback from this session focused on what kind of place the new development will be and how it will be characterised. The key themes from each of the group discussions included:

A new part of Chichester – not an isolated community, but one that is integrated with its neighbours and with the city centre.

A distinct community – it will have its own identity as a neighbourhood, even if the character of the place is informed by its connection with the city.

A compact and sustainable place

A green and open place drawing on its rural setting to inspire its character

The initial feedback from Workshop 1 vision statements produced by the four groups was summarised as:

- A village/neighbourhood in Chichester.
- Of the City but distinct; drawing on its city/rural edge location to develop a sense of itself and clear identity.
- A friendly (culvert-less) place, where movement will be easy (foot+bike) to allow social interaction between neighbours (new and old)
- Sustainable (especially with regard to environmental factors)
- A place where you can hear bird song

General feedback:

- Of Chichester but with distinct identity (possibility polycentric – meaning it could have more than one identifiable centre or character)
- More than just a residential community, school and/or other facilities will help make the new development feel like a proper community, not solely based around commuting out by car.
- Not an enclave – the streets and facilities provided should be public and accessible to the whole community of Chichester, some physical space where the community can gather to share a cup of tea/coffee
- New generous greenspaces will be attractive to residents and wildlife, helping deal positively with technical issues including water management.

WORKSHOP 2.

THEMATIC DISCUSSIONS

The second workshop took the opportunity to look at key areas which are likely to inform the success of any development on this site. These themes were pre-selected and covered:

1. Movement and connections
2. Greenspace and drainage
3. Ecology
4. Character and historic environment
5. Social and community

The feedback here is presented around these five themes, with additional crosscutting commentary where necessary.

1. MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIONS

Commentary:

The discussion focused on encouraging non-car movement, through privileging and encouraging the use of cycles and pedestrians over the car.

In reflection of the Vision, the new neighbourhood should be well connected to the City. New routes should allow future and existing residents as well as visitors to pass through and across the site, rather than acting as a private enclave.

Feedback:

New routes and connections should respond to desire lines

- These will include the City centre and station, but should also be aware of destinations to the west. New routes (or preservation of existing routes) should connect existing residents to new facilities and to the countryside beyond.
- Thought needs to be given to on-site and off-site infrastructure if the shift away from car uses will be successful; this will likely require 'unpicking' certain off-site bottlenecks (Westgate cycle route being one example).
- New development should not frustrate either existing connections (especially Centurion Way) or existing communities.
- New routes should be attractive and safe as well as direct (straight) and quick.

The quality of routes is as important as the quantity

- Their design and character should be responsive to their role in the site.
- Certain residential streets should be considered as 'quiet streets' which are safe for play and walking routes for children.
- Key junctions and points on connection should be considered as public spaces rather than solely as roadway
- The use of shared surface can help bring this about, letting drivers know that they are community (rather than highway) spaces.

2. GREENSPACE AND DRAINAGE

Commentary:

Greenspace will make up a significant portion of the allocated site, and as such should be the subject of a significant attention and planning. The understanding of this site must respond to its wider landscape setting, in defining the existing condition. Any new greenspace, especially substantial areas of open land, will need very careful consideration and assurance about its delivery and long-term management.

Feedback:

Identify and preserve the site's present qualities:

- This must first be supported by clear understanding of the current state of the site, through comprehensive survey and analysis,
- Neither urban nor suburban – new greenspace could take on a natural role akin to its current state.
- Given the number of streams and drains on the site the need to manage water will be acute; minimise technical solutions to drainage, maximise value to ecology and future residents.

New open spaces should cater for community needs, including those of existing residents, to maintain and enhance their connection to the countryside.

3. ECOLOGY

Commentary:

The main headline commentary, in acknowledging the wealth of ecology already on site, should be bring about a *net-gain to nature*. In achieving this any development should acknowledge the existing

situation including habitats and networks on site and adjoining land, including buffers where necessary.

The current situation is rich and complex, and will need to be met with an equally thorough and thoughtful response.

Different areas of the site have different levels of sensitivity with regard to water, ecology and wildlife. These differences should be understood and reflected in the choice of development areas and greenspace and in design decisions.

Feedback:

Wildlife and ecological aspects of the new neighbourhood should be seen as positive assets in adding value to the development and in attracting future residents .

Design and development decisions should be made to support the principle of improving habitats and conditions for wildlife; allowing the new development to work in harmony with the existing condition of the site, this will include:

- The location of routes (for residents/visitors and wildlife)
- The design of greenspace – these should be led by an informal response to existing state of the site not ‘sterile’ spaces
- How water is dealt with; the principle of celebrating ecology would suggest the avoidance of man-made culverts which are prevalent in other developments which hide away what could be natural and beautiful educational environments,
- Care needs to be taken in the smaller details of design too; the choice of surface materials and the impact of lighting are only two areas which can either support or undermine this principle.

4. CHARACTER AND HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Commentary:

There are many cues which can be picked up to help guide and inform future development, these will include historic field patterns, and other landscape features as well as historic routes and connections. There are also designated and non-designated historic assets which need to be understood and respected and will need to be sensitively incorporated into any design on the site.

Feedback:

- Protect views of the cathedral from key public vantage points especially along the B2178 on entering the city.
- The view of the cathedral from within the site provides the area with an important direct visual link to its wider setting and as such should be celebrated.
- The scale of development would allow for a diversity of character and environments across the new neighbourhood; however it should be recognisable as a single community. The height of buildings and density of new homes, will also be diverse, responding to the desired qualities of each character area
- Design of new homes can establish a new character (or characters) for the development, helping to generate focal points at key points responding to openspace or mixed use centres
- A hierarchy of streets will allow for diversity of environments
- The topography of the site should be used to inform the design and layout
- New affordable housing should be carefully integrated into the neighbourhood
- Elements of preserved landscape and heritage must not be viewed as 'buffers' but rather as positive and integrated elements, while respecting their intrinsic value
- The palette of materials should respect those of its context, and be sensitively applied to create high quality new buildings

5. SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY

Commentary:

The new residents who will live within the new development will represent a truly mixed community. The neighbourhood will be designed to bring people together, with streets and routes allowing for social interaction. There is scope for the new community to bring a wide range of new people to the site who will benefit from new community facilities, the cornerstone of which will be a new school.

Feedback:

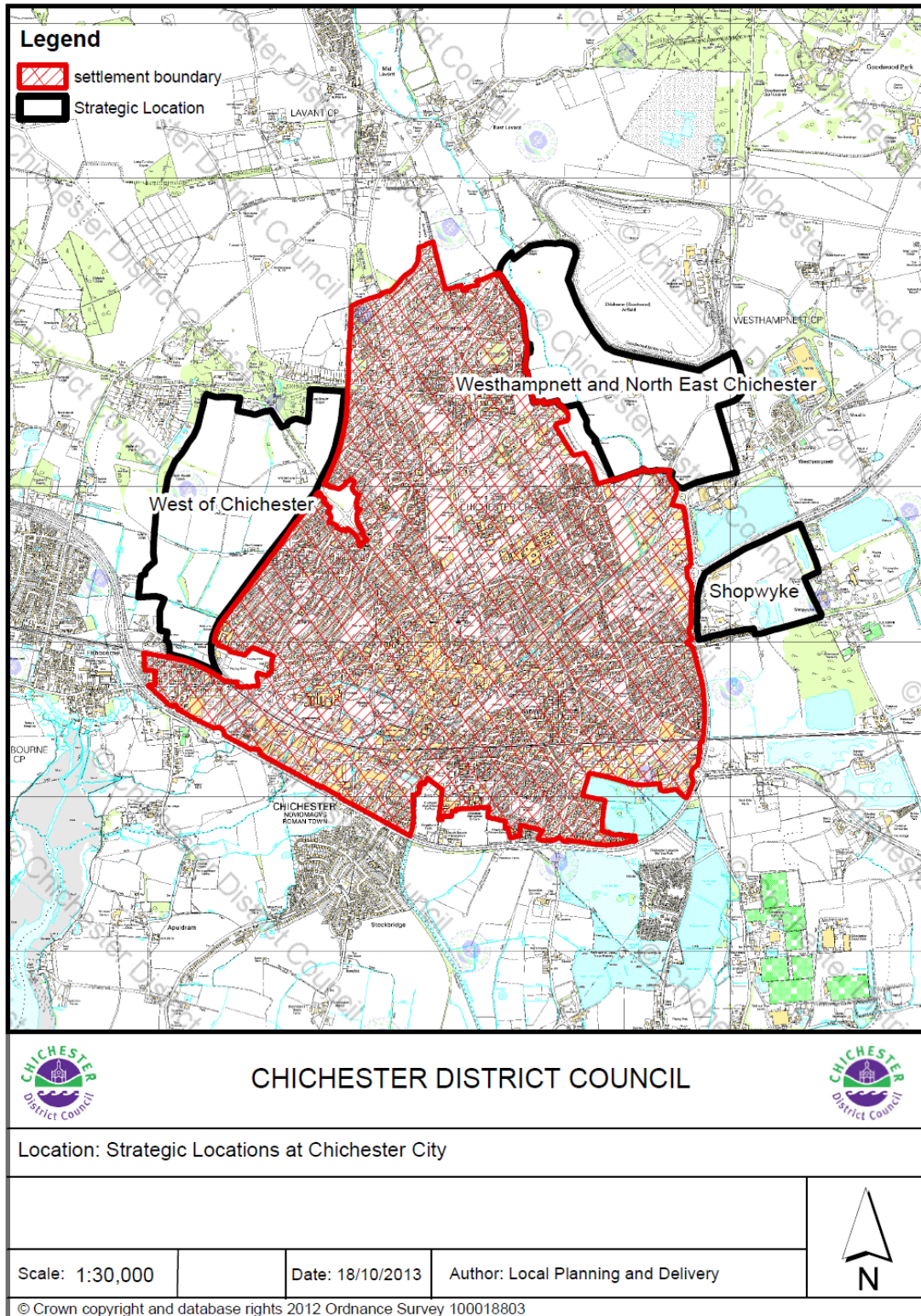
- Any mixed use facilities on site, including the school, should be easily accessible by means other than by the car, ideally by foot
- The provision of a new school could give the opportunity to share facilities with the community
- New community facilities could also extend to openspace and landscape; allotments and community orchard are examples
- Possible commercial space on site offers the opportunity for local employment, perhaps maximising links with higher education in the area
- The desire for an integrated and mixed community should be supported by a mix of homes, all designed to the highest standard ensuring they are tenure blind
- In the future the development could represent a new residents association, and/or parish

NEXT STEPS

At the close of the workshop participants were thanked for their open and fruitful contribution to the various discussions. Additionally an invitation was extended by the joint development and design teams to join future workshop sessions which would respond in further detail to the themes and comments established on the day.

APPENDIX

Site Plan:



Agenda:

West of Chichester Strategic Site Planning concept Statement Workshop

Monday 2 June 2014

The Assembly Room, Chichester City Council, Council House,
North Street, Chichester

PROGRAMME

- 13.30 Registration. Tea/Coffee available
- 14.00 Welcome – Carol Purnell, Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning
- 14.10 Introduction to the Day – Robert Offord – Design South-East
- 14.25 Planning Policy Context – Background to the Strategic Site – Mike Allgrove
- 14.35 Introduction to Planning Concept Statements – Lone le Vay
- 14.45 Introduction to the Visioning Exercise – Robert Offord – Design South-East
- 15.00 Workshop Session 1: Defining the Vision for the site (5 groups)**
- 15.30 Group Feedback and Discussion - Facilitators
- 16.15 Refreshment Break – Teas/Coffees etc available
- 16.45 Introduction to Themed Workshop – Robert Offord
- 17.00 Workshop Session 2: Themed Groups – Setting out the Development Principles to Deliver the Vision (5 groups)**
- Movement and Connections
 - Environment and Ecology
 - Environmental Infrastructure (Open Space and Drainage)
 - Character and Historic Environment
 - Social and Community
- 17.45 Working Group Feedback and Discussion - Facilitators
- 18.30 Summary of the Outcomes and what happens next – Robert Offord
- 19.00 Close

Sample Worksheets:

Worksheet 1; formulating the Vision

West of Chichester:

VISION

What kind of place will this be?

Key-words:

Ethos:

Precedents:

Who will live here:

A day in the life:

West of Chichester:

THEME – Environmental Infrastructure (Open Space and Drainage)

Baseline:

1) Existing condition

2) Policy setting

Theme + Vision:

How can your theme compliment and support the vision?

Think Site:

How is your discussion directly applicable to this site + this place?

Place *not* numbers:

We are interested in the attributes which will define the new place: Quality not Quantities.

You may draw!:

Principles:

Prioritise and be able to justify!

1)

2)

3)

Workshop materials (sample):



Attendance (organisation only):

Affinity Sutton
Bishop Luffa School
Chichester Chamber of Commerce
Chichester Society

City Centre Partnership
CRAG
East Broyle Residents Association
Sussex Wildlife Trust

West Sussex County Council
Transport
Conservation Area Advisory

Chichester District Council
West Sussex County Council
Lavigne Lonsdale
West Sussex County Council
Transport
WYG
Parklands Residents Association
Linden Homes
Conservation Area Advisory
Committee
Hyde Martlett

Parklands Residents Association

Committee
Friends of Brandy Hole Copse

Sustrans
Chichester City Council
East Broyle Residents Association
Vectus

Orchard Street and Old Somerstown
Area Residents' Association
Chi Cycle Group
Design South East
EDP