REA VALLEY URBAN QUARTER SPD
Text Version – Sept 2020

Foreword

Birmingham is undergoing a renaissance. The city is experiencing high levels of investment with major development schemes on site and extensive infrastructure improvements planned and underway.

The continued evolution of the city centre is a vital part of Birmingham's regeneration and through the Big City Plan we have a clear strategy to grow the centre as an important economic hub. As the next phase in the delivery of the Big City Plan, the Rea Valley Urban Quarter will become one of the city's most exciting and diverse regeneration areas. This project will assist the climate change agenda with the River Rea proposals forming a key part of the city's Route to Zero (R20) transformation. The quarter will see a series of mixed use neighbourhoods created, potentially accommodating over 5,000 new homes and integrating innovative space for businesses, services and leisure to develop and grow.

Central to the area's future success will be the delivery of high quality infrastructure including a network of high quality public realm, green spaces and pedestrian routes. The centrepiece of this network will be a reimagined River Rea. Running through the heart of the area, the River Rea will be transformed into a green corridor with an environment which is adaptable, resilient and ecologically rich. Together with a rejuvenated Highgate Park, these two spaces will play a key role in supporting health and well-being benefits for local communities and achieving our overall aim for improved green infrastructure in the city centre.

After listening to businesses, communities and key stakeholders I am now delighted to be adopting this SPD as the planning framework for the area and continue the drive to secure the inclusive and sustainable growth of this great city.

We will continue to work closely with our key partners, including the Environment Agency, West Midlands Combined Authority, Transport for West Midlands, Homes England, landowners and others to secure the significant i investment that will enable us to realise the area's full potential.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Rea Valley Urban Quarter is the next chapter in the story of Birmingham's regeneration, capitalising on the growth to be brought about by the proposed Birmingham Smithfield development. The vision is for sustainable, well connected, liveable mixed use neighbourhoods, providing high quality residential environments alongside employment opportunities, local services and open space.

1.2 The approach to the Rea Valley Urban Quarter will be focussed on celebrating the River Rea. Hidden from view and unloved, the river is arguably one of Birmingham City Centre's biggest secrets. Away from the city's streets, running behind industrial buildings and derelict sites, the river is confined to a modest brick lined channel, far below street level. By bringing it to life and creating a sustainable solution to managing water and reducing flood risk, it will become the centre piece for one of the most exciting and unique developments in the city in recent years. The wider area will deliver new homes, jobs, infrastructure and significant environmental improvements.

1.3 The Quarter is made up of part of the area allocated in the Birmingham Development Plan (2017) as the Southern Gateway, and the area of Highgate which is directly south and east of the Southern Gateway. It excludes Birmingham Smithfield, which although part of the Southern Gateway, formed the subject of a separate master plan published in 2016.

1.4 The Southern Gateway was identified as the largest 'Area of Transformation' within the Big City Plan (2011). This Supplementary Planning Document will provide an up-to-date framework with specific guidance for the whole Rea Valley Urban Quarter. It will expand on the vision for the Southern Gateway set out in the BDP Policy GA1.2 'Growth and Wider Areas of Change', and also set out a broad vision for the areas around Highgate Park and Moseley Road. It is anticipated that further detailed proposals will be brought forward in the future for the areas not part of the BDP 'Area of Transformation' - potentially through collaboration with a development partner.

1.5 In 2019, Birmingham City Council declared a climate emergency and established the Route to Zero Taskforce. Tackling climate change became one of the authority's six main priorities, embedding the goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. The delivery of this will be supported by new planning policy, as well as an increase in the scrutiny of new development across the city. This will apply across the Rea Valley Urban Quarter, where development will be expected to be carbon neutral in construction and operation, as well as resilient in the long term.

Purpose

1.6 The purpose of this SPD is to set out a vision for the area, focused around the transformation of the River Rea corridor, offering a unique waterside development in the heart of the city centre, meeting the demands of urban living and climate change.

1.7 The transformation of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter will be supported by a range of infrastructure and services, employment opportunities, enhanced multifunctional public space, integrated green infrastructure, and improved connections to Highgate.

1.8 The SPD will provide detailed policy and design guidance for the future transformation of the area, building upon the strategic policies of the BDP. The SPD will specifically:

- Introduce the area and explain the policy and development context;
- Outline the 'Big Moves', the delivery of which will secure the vision for the Quarter;
- Establish the over-ridingdevelopment principles which will be used to guide the future layout and design of new development - resilience, design and connectivity;
- Identify distinctive neighbourhoods within the Quarter, within which different approaches will be taken to development, reflecting local history, heritage, character, culture and communities; and
- Set out the broad approach to the delivery of development, partnerships and the future procurement process.

1.9 The Rea Valley Urban Quarter Supplementary Planning Document is not part of the statutory development plan but it will be an important material consideration in determining planning applications in the area.

2.0 Context

2.1 The Rea Valley Urban Quarter is one of Birmingham's oldest neighbourhoods, an area rich in social and industrial history. Growing up at the crossing point of the River Rea, it is at the very heart of where Birmingham began in the 12th century. From its founding in medieval times, it became the first centre of industry in Birmingham, attracting iron merchants and skilled craftsmen to trade at its markets. A creative and industrious place at the outset, the energy and innovation which created the city hundreds of years ago is embedded in the area's DNA.

2.2 Although industrial today, the Rea Valley Urban Quarter was the product of an 18th century town planning exercise, when the Bradford Estate in Cheapside was formally laid out for housing plots. From here, a dense pattern of streets, courtyard housing, shops and pubs expanded rapidly southwards towards and over the River Rea. Then, during the 19th and 20th centuries, the area was redeveloped many times, and today it is predominantly industrial. However important local landmarks such as St Anne's Church, the Rowton Hotel, the White Swan, the Anchor and Market Tavern pubs hint at a much larger residential population in years gone by. Now, with an increasing number of residential conversions, the tide is turning again and the opportunity exists to reimagine a resilient, dense and vibrant community in the Quarter for the 21st Century.

2.3 The River Rea flows north east into the Quarter from Birmingham's southern suburbs and passes between Rea Street and Birchall Street, hidden behind buildings and car parks. Subject to grand engineering schemes in Victorian times, the 1890s engineered brick channel is coming to the end of its anticipated lifespan and is in need of replacement to support the next era of development. The Rea's flashy and unpredictable nature, exacerbated by dense urban development, multiple land ownership issues, and climate change, has led to Birmingham's often forgotten river being subject to fluvial and surface water flooding events impacting properties and infrastructure over the last decade. However, with the right approach, the River Rea can become an opportunity and the catalyst for regeneration.

2.4 On the southern edge of the Quarter is Highgate Park, the first public park in Birmingham created by the Town Council and opened in 1876. It covers three hectares between Alcester Street and Moseley Road. At the top of the Rea Valley, its hillside aspect affords excellent views towards the city centre, and it has tree lined avenues and woodlands as well as children's play facilities. Although an important asset and breathing space for local communities, it is poorly connected to local housing in Cheapside and Highgate, and is in need of investment to truly reach its potential.

2.5 South of the park, the Rea Valley Urban Quarter includes part of the Highgate residential estate, which was developed in the 1960s as part of the post-war slum clearance programme, and this still provides valuable affordable housing today. The 1990s saw some investment, but there is a need to review the housing provision to meet changing needs, and create an improved environment for people to live which is popular, attractive and fit for the future.

2.6 The Quarter is surrounded by areas that are now experiencing unprecedented growth and investment. Following the redevelopment of New Street Station, High Speed 2 rail link is the next part of the story, with its future terminus just five minutes' walk away. The Midland Metro, with a stop at Digbeth, and the introduction of Sprint– the planned West Midlands bus rapid transit service - will reinvigorate public transport across the city.

2.7 The realisation of the Birmingham Smithfield Masterplan will provide an exciting new urban quarter that includes a new home for the city's historic Bull Ring retail markets, a unique family destination including a leisure and cultural offer, independent retail and business space, a new public square, integrated public transport and more than 2,000 homes with a public park and community facilities. This will act as a catalyst for the wider area.

2.8 On the doorstep of the Quarter is Digbeth, an exciting creative quarter, which has become the centre for creative and digital businesses, with a unique urban and industrial character. Its distinctive retail, culture and leisure offer has contributed to its young and vibrant scene and there is tremendous potential for it to grow.

2.9 Just to the west, the district of Southside hosts Chinatown, the theatre district and Gay Village. A diverse and inclusive area, Southside is a renowned cultural asset to the city of Birmingham and is key to its balanced growth. Further to the south-west, the former site of St Luke's Church, 'B5 Central' will provide up to 800 homes on a 22 acre site, and a new residential neighbourhood on the edge of the city centre.

2.10 The Rea Valley Urban Quarter has very close links with the Irish community of Birmingham, and along with Digbeth is often known as the Irish Quarter. The Irish Quarter, centred on St Anne's Church, has a long history of cultural traditions and a strong sense of community in its pubs and venues.

2.11 Despite its unique and pivotal location within the city centre of Birmingham, the potential of the Quarter is currently untapped, characterised by areas of low intensity industrial premises that make it feel underutilised and disconnected from the rest of the city centre.

3.0 Vision

3.1 Through the creation of a series of distinctive neighbourhoods, the Rea Valley Urban Quarter will become a truly sustainable, diverse and vibrant place to live, work and spend leisure time.

3.2 With the River Rea at its heart, a network of green infrastructure and spaces will create an environment resilient to climate change, rich in biodiversity, promoting the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors alike. A variety of new and innovative housing types will attract a diverse community, which will benefit from a range of services and facilities and a dynamic mix of employment spaces, as well as public transport connectivity which makes car use a less attractive option.

3.3 This vision will be secured through the delivery of a series of Big Moves and underpinned by key development principles.

BIG MOVES

3.4 Transforming the River Rea into a unique natural public space

For the first time in over a hundred years, locals and visitors will be able to see and experience the river flowing through their city centre. A corridor rich in biodiversity, the green and blue environment will provide sustainable urban drainage and be resilient to climate change. It will be busy and attractive, overlooked by a range of active uses such as cafes, shops and bars with residential above. New pedestrian walkways and cycleways will promote health and wellbeing.

3.5 Park Link

Forming part of a network of green routes and spaces, the Park Link will become the City Centre's first Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS) street and a major pedestrian route linking Birmingham Smithfield to Highgate Park. Street tree planting will be low maintenance and have significant biodiversity benefits.

3.6 St David's Place

A vibrant mixed use neighbourhood, offering a mix of appropriate ground floor uses and living in a high quality environment, around the transformed River Rea. New routes and connections will create a truly connected and walkable neighbourhood.

3.7 Cheapside

Important local employment uses will be integrated alongside new city centre living, including a mix of apartments in new build development and converted industrial buildings. New development will build on Cheapside's historic character and identity.

3.8 Highgate Park Neighbourhood

Focussed around a transformed Highgate Park, this neighbourhood will become an attractive family housing area with appropriate community uses. Highgate Park will become a destination green space for all.

3.9 The indicative layout, shown in Plan 5 illustrates the preferred development scenario for the future of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter. It is based on the essential set of development principles described in the SPD which will need to be embodied in all the proposals which come forward.

4.0 Development Principles

4.1 A set of development principles is central to informing the creation of a distinctive, high quality urban environment for the Rea Valley Urban Quarter.

Resilience

4.2 The Rea Valley Urban Quarter aims to adopt a pioneering approach, embedding resilience into all aspects of its regeneration. The focus, through delivery of infrastructure and development, will be to create a sustainable neighbourhood which will stand the test of time. The Quarter will meet the necessary challenges faced by the climate emergency by being carbon neutral and adapting to climate change.

Design

4.3 The design of the Quarter's buildings streets and spaces, will take a 'place making' approach, focussed on delivering distinctive environments, putting the health and wellbeing of residents at its heart. New developments will be required to seek to design out crime and create safe and accessible environments where crime and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion. The mix of uses throughout the Quarter will deliver a new sustainable residential community, supported by healthcare and education services, as well as local amenities and employment opportunities.

Connectivity

4.4 The approach to movement and accessibility will support the city's vision for a sustainable, green, inclusive, go-anywhere network. Low carbon, low emission and active forms of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport will be prioritised. This will mean enhancing existing streets and connections, introducing new links and legible routes, and creating a consistent, safe and high quality public realm which is easy to understand and navigate. Access for private cars will be limited and a segmented approach to traffic routing will be supported to discourage through trips in the city centre.

Resilience

4.5 At the heart of the successful regeneration of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter will be the creation of an environment which is flood resilient, green, biodiverse, durable, energy efficient and adaptable to change. Tackling climate change applies across the Rea Valley Urban Quarter, where all development should be carbon neutral in its construction and operation, and resilient in the long term. Integrating low carbon, low emission and active transport needs at the earliest possible stage in the design process will support decarbonisation of transport, the largest emitting sector of greenhouse gas emissions in the UK.

Green infrastructure

4.6 Urban green infrastructure is recognised as one of the most effective tools in managing environmental risks such as flooding and heat waves. Greener neighbourhoods and improved access to nature can also improve public health and quality of life and reduce environmental inequalities. A network of integrated green space running through the Quarter is an essential component of the overall vision. This will connect the Smithfield neighbourhood park, the River Rea corridor, Moseley

Street Park Link and Highgate Park. This will then link up to the wider green infrastructure network including St Luke's, Park Central and Calthorpe Park, connecting the city centre out to the city's suburbs to the south.

4.7 As well as these strategic interventions, features at a more localised scale will include green walls, green and brown roofs, SuDS features such as bio swales, pocket parks and green spaces, as well as street tree planting, where space allows. Even in the highest density areas, shared private gardens for apartments at the centre of perimeter urban blocks should be provided at real-ground level and only at deck level where other design and place-making objectives are required to be met. Not only will all these elements add up to positive gains for natural capital, the green infrastructure will be multifunctional, with roles in enhancing the appearance of streets, spaces and buildings, improving air quality, delivering biodiversity net gain, providing shade and urban cooling, and creating places for people to enjoy. Planting should include wildlife and pollinator friendly planting, and be robust and low maintenance.

River Rea Transformation

4.8 At the heart of the SPD is the need to address the current flood risk associated with the River Rea, with Flood Zones 2 and 3 in parts of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter proving an issue for development. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has a presumption against residential development within areas identified as at high risk of fluvial flooding, which has stalled development near the river corridor. To overcome this challenge a comprehensive approach is needed to enable the project to be delivered and maximise its benefits.

4.9 Between Moseley Street and Gooch Street, the Rea will be broken out of its narrow channel, restored, realigned and allowed to flow naturally within a blue and green corridor of at least 35 metres in width subject to detailed site specific assessment and development proposals. A 35m green and blue corridor will allow sufficient space for flood risk to be safely managed, and support the delivery of development without constraint. Transforming the channel will involve creating a naturalised two stage profile to increase the river's capacity by slowing water flow and allowing it to store water in times of flood. With a more sinuous course and shallow, safe, accessible banks, a natural river bed of gravels, boulders and cobbles will encourage aeration, regulate water speeds and help the formation of riffles, pools and beaches. The design will also include details such as native trees and riverside planting.

4.10 Terraces, mounding and low seating walls, integrated into the landscape design will form additional flood defences protecting nearby streets and development in times of high water flow, building in resilience for the future. Step-free access will be provided within the new adjacent green space to ensure that it can be enjoyed by everyone. Suitable, sympathetically designed maintenance access to the river will be provided to allow upkeep and emergency works to be carried out safely.

4.11 Between Digbeth High Street and Moseley Street, a more conservative approach will be taken to the River Rea, where the water course will remain in its existing alignment. Here, in-channel mitigation measures and other landscape features will increase its flood capacity, and a more intensive urban waterside landscape will include features such as native tree and shrub planting, hedges and green walls.

4.12 By linking the proposed park within Smithfield through to Balsall Heath and the green network in the south of the city, these significant changes to the River Rea will form an enhanced natural corridor for urban wildlife and provide new habitats. They will also contribute to the city's ambitious air quality agenda and help with urban temperature regulation.

Water sensitive design

4.13 Future climate change may increase the frequency, intensity and probability of rainfall events that could cause surface water flooding. A holistic (SuDS) strategy to manage on-site surface water will ensure that buildings, streets and spaces are protected during intense storms. A water sensitive design approach will need to be taken in all developments, and SuDS integrated into public realm interventions and projects.

4.14 The Park Link will be a showcase for this, becoming Birmingham City Centre's first SuDS street. A variety of sustainable urban drainage solutions will drastically reduce the run off from highways and buildings entering the combined sewer and the river. Features will have significant biodiversity benefits and range from attenuating rainwater planters, rain gardens, permeable paving, filter strips and specially engineered tree pits. Planting will be low maintenance, with a bias towards native species and nectar rich plants. Elsewhere, new areas of green space, green roofs, and permeable surfaces will form part of the overarching SuDS strategy.

Building Sustainably

4.15 New buildings should be designed to be robust and adaptable to meet changing commercial demands and reduce their impact on the natural environment. Sustainable design and construction need to consider whole life costs. Construction to low carbon Passivhaus standards will be encouraged. Ensuring that development is constructed in the most sustainable way will involve measures that reduce energy and water consumption, minimise waste and use sustainable, locally sourced building materials. Waste management and resource recovery is an essential community service that protects the environment recovering valuable resources for reuse. The orientation of buildings should be considered to maximise thermal energy efficiency, and opportunities should be taken to utilise green infrastructure within the fabric of the building.

4.16 Minimising energy demand, whilst ensuring the community's needs are met over the long term, will play a key part in achieving carbon neutrality. Low to zero carbon energy supply and generation should be achieved through a range of technologies such as the use of Combined Heat and Power and local distribution networks.

Design

4.17 The cornerstone of design in the Rea Valley Urban Quarter will be to create a vibrant and liveable environment, which marries the unique character of the local area with the best in modern design and placemaking.

Reflecting local character and protecting Heritage Assets

4.18 The historic environment contributes to local distinctiveness and provides a sense of place. The rich history of the Quarter should be reflected in the design of new development, retaining and enhancing what makes the area special and distinctive. This begins with retaining the area's traditional street grid, with the layout of new development reinforcing the scale and pattern of city blocks. There is also the opportunity to retain a number of attractive heritage buildings and frontages (statutorily listed, locally listed and non-designated heritage assets) which provide an authentic link to the past, creating a dynamic contrast between old and new. These should be refurbished, given new uses and a new lease of life. The city's historic environment local list buildings document will be maintained and developed so it is a tool for planning decision-making. Plan 7 identifies the heritage buildings within the Rea Valley Urban Quarter. Existing buildings which detract from the quality of the place should be replaced with high quality architecture fit for purpose and fit for the future.

4.19 Height, scale and massing

The height of new development should take into account factors such as the relationship with retained buildings, existing urban character, street hierarchy, aspect, shadowing, daylighting, amenity, enclosure, and appropriate separation distances for residential privacy. The range of appropriate building heights in the urban quarter is set out in Plan 8, which provides illustrative guidance on appropriate building heights. There will be opportunities for additional height in appropriate locations, for instance to enclose major public spaces, mark gateways, or create landmarks. Future planning applications will be assessed on their individual merits against the SPD development principles and the way they respond to the distinctive neighbourhood character of the site. Schemes will need to address key considerations such as scale, massing, amenity and privacy, and demonstrate that high quality design can be achieved.

Building design and layout

4.20 Innovation in design and construction will ensure a truly exemplar development, to the highest standards in architecture, detailing and materials. The use of natural materials will be supported. Corners should be built positively to enhance legibility, and to provide definition and architectural interest. Designs will consider whole life costs and future maintenance. Perimeter block development within the existing street pattern will allow a clear distinction between public and private areas. Continuous active frontages (doors, windows and clear glazing) will face onto existing and new streets and public spaces, generating activity and natural surveillance that promotes public safety. Storage areas and private gardens will be provided to the rear. The majority of developments should be car free, however where essential parking is necessary this should be appropriately incorporated into the design of the building.

4.21 Measures will be sought to create and maintain environments that design out crime and create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder and the fear of crime do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion. The need to design out crime and ensure its continued maintenance in all new developments is a cornerstone to successful sustainable communities.

Public Art

4.22 There is enormous potential in the Rea Valley Urban Quarter for artists to work with built environment professionals to maximise opportunities for creative collaboration in the public realm. Different forms of arts and culture, from temporary installations or events to permanent artworks, bring people together and are enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. There is a particular opportunity for the River Rea transformation to reveal the history and significance of the river through art, with collaboration between designers, engineers, local communities and businesses.

Activity

4.23 At the core of the transformation of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter will be a new residential neighbourhood, supported by a mix of uses to create an attractive and appealing place to live. Varied housing types, sizes and tenures will attract a diverse demographic to create a balanced and vibrant community. Family housing will complement the apartment based residential development which will be established in Smithfield. This will include a mix of affordable homes, private dwellings and live/work accommodation. More people living locally will help support local facilities and services, and create demand for new social and cultural infrastructure.

4.24 New housing should be a model for modern urban living, at the forefront of sustainable residential design. Residents' needs for space, natural light, and privacy will need to be met, along with space for storage, waste, recycling and bicycles. All housing will require some outdoor amenity space; shared and communal gardens and balconies will be provided where apartments are proposed. The River Rea will be a new focus of activity, with the potential for cafes, bars, restaurants, and commercial units overlooking the attractive new green space, with apartments above.

4.25 A mix of active uses at ground floor will be appropriate on key routes such as High Street and Bradford Street, where a cluster of cafes, retail and commercial uses is already developing. The SPD will look to support the retention of live music venues and pubs in the Gay Village and Irish Quarter around Bradford Street given their importance to the community and culturally. A number of venues are currently under threat of closure but the adopted BDP recognises the importance of these venues as key destinations for creating a diverse offer in the city. Other uses such as hotels, leisure, community and commercial space should ideally be located alongside existing bars and late night music venues to enhance the general mix of uses and activity in the area.

4.26 The introduction of the agent of change principle in the NPPF 2019 para 182 provides protection for existing business, leisure, community and cultural facilities from proposed residential development. Where any new development is proposed that could be noise-sensitive, and could be adversely affected by nearby sources of noise such as music venues, community and sports clubs, then the developer of the new use bears the responsibility of protecting both the existing business and the new development. In particular the city's Development Management in Birmingham Development Plan Document (DMB) policies on noise and amenity will be used to assess the impact of future residential planning application proposals on such existing uses.

4.27 New noise generating development within the urban quarter, such as pubs, community and music venues proposed close to residential and other noise-sensitive development uses should put in place measures such as soundproofing to mitigate and manage any noise impacts for neighbouring residents and businesses.

4.28 Along with commercial uses, innovative solutions are needed to accommodate health centres and business units within ground floors of developments. An assessment of need for community facilities such as a primary school and health centre will be carried out, and potential locations for these uses will be identified. A clear creative approach will be taken to employment with a focus on providing appropriate small workshops and commercial spaces within ground floor units to retain and enhance local employment opportunities and to enliven streets. Any loss of employment will need to comply with the BDP, and a Relocation Strategy will be developed as part of the Delivery Plan.

Connectivity Streets and spaces - walking and cycling

4.29 The future success of creating a sustainable, carbon neutral place will depend on improving its permeability and legibility, whilst reconnecting it into its wider context to support and encourage travel by walking**,** cycling and public transport. Transport measures should align with the up-to-date Birmingham Transport Plan which set out a future vision for transport in the city, reducing car dependency and achieving a low carbon, clean air environment.

4.30 The reinvention of the wholesale markets site at Birmingham Smithfield will radically improve the accessibility of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter by re-creating the historic street grid and introducing new routes and connections through the development. Additional measures within the Quarter itself will strengthen the connectivity of the area both to the city core, to the wider city beyond the Middleway, and National Cycle Network 5 along Gooch Street.

4.31 Birmingham has embarked on a journey to clean air. Poor air quality is the greatest risk to public health in the UK and tackling air pollution is a priority. A number of measures have been set up to tackle air pollution in Birmingham including the Clean Air Zone (CAZ)[i] .The CAZ will cover all roads within the A4540 Middleway Ring Road (but not the Middleway itself) and the Rea Valley SPD boundary area is within this zone.

4.32 The CAZ encourages use of more sustainable and active travel which in turn can improve people's health whilst cutting air pollution. Even if people own a vehicle which meets the CAZ standards, they are encouraged to consider using alternative means of travel, to help reduce congestion and further reduce pollution. As an alternative to the use of cars, the Clean Air Zone encourages sustainable means of travel such as walking or cycling for shorter journeys. For longer journeys people are encouraged to consider using public transport, car sharing and even car hire.

4.33 Pedestrians and cyclists will have priority over vehicles within multiple streets of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter, and this will be reflected in their design, with wide footways and segregated cycle routes provided where space allows. Routes and delivery will align with the Birmingham Cycling and Walking Strategy, which includes an infrastructure plan for a city-wide cycle route network and priority areas for walking improvements. In line with the City's Birmingham Transport Plan, a clear street hierarchy will be established, with key routes identified for vehicular traffic, with the other streets designed to facilitate access and servicing whilst discouraging rat running. As part of transport plans to transform the city centre, a segmenting approach will be taken which allows access in and out of the city but prevents through trips across the city centre for private cars.

4.34 New and improved streets will be complemented by a number of smaller, intimate public spaces, designed to be safe and welcoming, providing opportunities for social interaction, outdoor relaxation, site specific arts, cultural and community activities.

4.35 Moseley Street, the 'Park Link' between the proposed Smithfield Neighbourhood Park and Highgate Park will be a significant pedestrian priority route, whilst the opening up of the River Rea will also allow for the inclusion of enhanced, safe cycle opportunities separated from vehicular traffic, connecting to the city's wider cycle network and public transport.

4.36 A number of new links will create connections through existing long street blocks, improving permeability. In particular, new east to west connections south of Moseley Street, including new crossings over the River Rea, will help unlock sites for development.

4.37 A consistent and high quality public realm shall be delivered or contributed to as part of new developments and projects, with a robust, maintainable and distinctive palette of materials and street furniture that will contribute positively to the area's unique character and identity. Investment in the long term management and maintenance of new streets and spaces, including integrated artworks, will be vital to ensure the quality established at the outset becomes a long term legacy for future residents and generations.

Public transport

4.38 The Rea Valley Urban Quarter will benefit from significant improvements to public transport. Existing bus services will be complemented by the extension of the Midland Metro, and introduction of Sprint bus services along the High Street and through the Smithfield development. Potential options are being explored for routeing a future South Birmingham extension of the Midland Metro through the Quarter, to provide quick and convenient connections to New Street, Moor Street and Curzon Street (HS2) stations and improved access to the wider West Midlands network. Encouraging use of public transport will help reduce traffic congestion and carbon dioxide emissions as well as improvements in air quality.

Parking and servicing

4.39 Parking and servicing will not be allowed to dominate the environment in the Quarter. The Birmingham Transport Plan encourages a positive strategy to manage parking provision and make more effective use of land. Within the tight street grids of Cheapside and St David's Place, all essential parking for residential properties will need to be provided within the block and not on frontages. In these neighbourhoods, whilst vehicular access for deliveries and servicing will be provided, a 'car free' approach will be encouraged. High levels of accessibility in this area will reduce the need for car ownership, supported by access to car club vehicles for essential car journeys. However, electric vehicle charging points should be planned for and disabled parking provided. Cycle parking will be provided as an integrated part of new development.

4.40 A strategic approach will be taken to ensure good levels of provision for on-street facilities such as electric vehicle charging, car club bays, disabled parking, cycle hire and cycle and motorcycle parking. Care must be taken to ensure such facilities are well integrated with the public realm and are delivered and/or contributed to as part of new developments and projects. In addition other types of on-street parking will be controlled and managed carefully to ensure parking levels are appropriate and do not impede cycling and walking.

5.0 Distinctive Neighbourhoods

Introduction

5.1 The transformation of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter will involve creating a series of neighbourhoods, responding to their local character and setting. Together these will create a cohesive and integral part of the city centre.

5.2 Each neighbourhood will have its distinctive character arising from the local context - the existing topography, natural features, street pattern, and heritage assets.

High Street Frontage

5.3 The High Street (Digbeth, Deritend and Bordesley High Streets), a historic road of medieval origin, defines the northern boundary of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter. There is the opportunity to create a street of city scale with a strong identity and character, inspired by the cultural vibrancy of the creative industries in Digbeth. Proposals in conjunction with the implementation of the Midland Metro Eastside Extension are set to transform this important route, introducing tree planting and creating an improved environment for pedestrians. Developments at Connaught Square and Lunar Rise will bring new street activity regeneration, and new landmark buildings. However, there is the opportunity to build on these beginnings, with high quality contemporary architecture to complement the historic buildings on the opposite side of the High Street.

5.4 ***Design and Layout***

- A strong continuous frontage onto the High Street with a building line at back of pavement.
- Opportunity for additional connections between High Street and Bradford Street to integrate Digbeth more effectively into the Quarter.
- An active frontage onto the High Street, with a mix of active uses at ground floor (retail, commercial, cultural, restaurants and bars) with front doors and a high level of glazing to animate the street.
- A maximum 'shoulder height' of fifteen storeys for development along the High Street.
- Potential for taller signature buildings at key corner locations. However proposals will be assessed on their own merits, and scale will always need to be justified taking into account the factors listed in the Development Principles.
- The opportunity for a landmark building on the corner of Camp Hill and Bradford Street.
- High density city living - a range of apartment types and sizes to meet the needs of a range of demographic groups.
- Protection of important sightlines towards the city centre.
- High quality contemporary architecture to complement the historic buildings on the opposite side of the High Street.
- Provision of residential outdoor space where possible.
- Opportunity for public art in key locations, celebrating the gateway to the creative quarter, and responding to the neighbourhood's heritage and future ambitions.

Cheapside

5.5 Cheapside has a clear, distinctive character and identity, defined by its strong, permeable grid street pattern and dramatic topography. Although at present it is characterised by low intensity industrial and commercial premises, it will become a mixed use area providing the best in city living. Extending out from Birmingham Smithfield, there will be space for new enterprise, cultural, commercial and leisure activity, supported by appropriate infrastructure. Viable businesses will continue to be supported given the importance of jobs and services to the local economy and the aspiration to create a balanced community.

5.6 Over the last 15 years, there has been some regeneration of this area, with the conversion of large-scale historic warehouse and industrial buildings, as well as new build apartments, centred on Bradford Street, Cheapside and Moseley Street. In these locations a larger scale of development is now apparent and this trend is set to continue; however it is important that the special character of this area is protected and built upon.

5.7 Bradford Street is a wide primary route, with a distinctive and coherent character, including a concentration of significant and attractive 19th Century frontages. The slope of the Rea Valley is a defining feature, with long views from Camp Hill towards the city centre sky line, but the river itself is largely hidden and is an untapped asset. New development will make the most of these unique features which define Cheapside's strong character and identity.

5. 8 ***Design and Layout***

- A clear hierarchy of streets, with Bradford Street the primary route through the area.
- Retention refurbishment and re-use of the attractive heritage buildings and frontages, which bring authenticity to the area and reflect its rich history.
- Capitalising on the dramatic east-west views across the Rea Valley.
- Revealing the River Rea and opening it up to public access - as part of an ambitious flood alleviation and place making strategy.
- Transforming Moseley Street into the Park Link - an attractive, green and leafy pedestrian focussed route connecting Smithfield Neighbourhood Park to Highgate Park. As well as an enhanced environment for pedestrians and cyclists, small terraced pocket parks or 'city gardens' in setbacks along the street will be a haven for urban wildlife and provide new habitats. Capitalising on long views down the valley over the city centre, this will become a lively active environment overlooked by buildings, with places to pause and relax and the focus for art within the public realm, cultural activity and community events.
- Residential led regeneration of the neighbourhood, of medium to high density - creating a predominantly apartment-based residential community.
- Perimeter block development with strong built frontage at back of pavement, with windows and doors facing the street, and shared amenity space and parking to the rear.
- Treating corners differently, taking opportunities to create interest and enhance legibility, in the spirit of the local landmark corner pubs.
- Opportunity for a more vibrant mix of uses at street level along Bradford Street, to include retail, cafes and bars, along with leisure, arts and cultural uses to serve the day to day needs of the expanding residential community.
- A scale of development in keeping with the recent residential apartment schemes in the neighbourhood. A range of four to ten storeys is likely to be most appropriate, however proposals will be assessed on their own merits, and scale will always need to be justified taking into account the factors listed in the Development Principles.
- Opportunities to reflect local Irish heritage and culture in the regeneration of this area.

St David's Place

5.9 Within a few minutes' walk of Smithfield and the bustle of the city centre, St David's Place has the opportunity to become a unique waterside residential neighbourhood with the River Rea at its heart. The re-imagined river corridor will be a driver of large scale change, breathing new life into the area, creating a vibrant place with a distinctive identity. This neighbourhood will have a diverse mix of housing types and a variety of appropriate ground floor uses to create a balanced community.

5.10 St David's Place was once a densely populated residential area, but lost its status as a parish when it was zoned for industrial uses after the Second World War. Whilst there are some high quality Victorian facades, the hard urban character of the streets currently creates a poor physical environment, blighted by unattractive functional buildings and cleared open sites. A new vision for St David's Place will deliver a high quality residential area with attractive streets and pocket green spaces. New routes and connections will make the traditional street grid more permeable, creating a truly walkable neighbourhood.

5.11 ***Design and Layout***

- The key intervention in this area will be the opening up, naturalisation and realignment of the River Rea. This scheme which will have multiple benefits in terms of flood risk management, creation of sustainable development plots, provision of an attractive new walking and cycling route, a high quality green setting for residential development, biodiversity enhancements and placemaking.
- New east-west aligned routes breaking the long impermeable blocks, improving connectivity and creating a more walkable neighbourhood. Combined with this, additional foot and cycle crossings over the Rea increasing opportunities to interact with the river.
- An improvement in connectivity to the River Rea corridor, Smithfield and the city centre, with the potential for a new strategic route between Pershore Street/Sherlock Street and the western entrance to Highgate Park on Alcester Street.
- Perimeter block development with front doors facing the street, and private amenity space to the rear.
- Commercial units for a range of retail and compatible business, health or community uses on ground floors on key routes.
- In terms of scale and massing, a scale of four to ten storeys is likely to be appropriate. However, proposals will be assessed on their own merits, and the height of development will need to be justified taking into account the factors listed in the Development Principles.
- Retention of heritage buildings of value, maintaining an authentic link to the past.
- In particular on the Sherlock Street boundary, development should be designed to ensure that established noise generating venues within the Gay Village remain viable and can continue or grow without unreasonable restrictions being placed on them.
- The potential for street tree planting to enhance the environment of MacDonald Street, a key route to Southside, Bristol Road and Park Central.

Highgate Park Neighbourhood

5.12 The Highgate Park neighbourhood has the potential to become a popular and successful place to live comprising of town houses and innovative housing for families. A comprehensive approach to development will unlock the opportunity in this area. A future masterplan will deliver a well-connected place with public and private spaces that feel secure and attractive. New and remodelled housing will be provided as part of a mix of uses focused around a refurbished and extended Highgate Park. Varied housing types, sizes and tenures will attract a diverse demographic to create a balanced and sustainable urban family neighbourhood.

5.14 Highgate Park will become a destination green space attracting not only visitors from the immediate area, but also from Birmingham Smithfield, Digbeth and across the city.

5.15 Development in this area will need to ensure the necessary infrastructure and facilities are in place to support the community. The future development strategy in this 'area of change' will require extensive community engagement and potentially procuring an investment partner to ensure the neighbourhood is comprehensively developed in line with the SPD vision and principles.

5.16 ***Design and Layout***

- Investment into the historic Highgate Park, including a potential extension, and additional facilities to meet the recreational needs of the future residential population. Creation of new street frontages to improve access and visibility, repositioning it as the centre of the community.
- Rationalisation of existing 'left over' open space would provide the opportunity for new high quality family housing, whilst retaining as many mature trees as possible, creating a green and leafy setting.
- Relocation of the commercial businesses in the anomalous industrial pocket should be considered as part of the masterplan, in order to expand the quantity of family housing in Highgate.
- Development will need to satisfactorily link to and address existing properties outside the plan area.
- Potential interventions to the Shawbury Estate to create a better connected layout based on a perimeter block form, with clear definition of public and private space, with well overlooked, active streets.
- A medium density will be the predominant form for residential development, focussing on traditional family housing typologies. A greater scale of development may be appropriate on the streets overlooking Highgate Park, capitalising on views into the open space and creating enclosure.
- The potential for a cluster of retail, and cafes alongside arts, culture, leisure and community uses, arranged around a public space at the junction of Mac Donald Street, Charles Henry Street and Alcester Street should be considered as part of the masterplan. This would provide facilities and services for the day to day needs of the residential community, and also serve the St David's Place neighbourhood.
- In this more intimate and suburban character neighbourhood, street tree planting will be appropriate, and reference the leafy environment of Highgate Park.
- There is the potential to develop blue infrastructure and sustainable drainage assets to manage the risks associated with climate change.
- There are opportunities for permanent and temporary public art in Highgate Park, the surrounding streets and other public spaces.

Moseley Road

5.17 There is the opportunity for some high quality residential infill to expand the housing offer in this location. Bounded by the Ring Road, Moseley Road and Bradford Street, this neighbourhood feels quite separate from the rest of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter and contrasts with the industrial character of the surrounding area. There is a disparate mix of community uses, including two schools, a church, a pub, offices, and a police station. South of Ravenhurst Street is more residential in nature, with a range of housing types, and several attractive buildings including the listed Lench's Trust Almshouses and Housing Association properties. Along Moseley Road there is a fine and distinctive row of listed Regency villas overlooking Highgate Park.

5.18 ***Design and Layout***

- The Grade II listed Regency villas on Moseley Road must be retained and protected, as they create a positive sense of place which contributes to the setting of the park. There is the opportunity for further residential development and infill along this street, and it must respect and complement this character, including set back from the street frontage, scale and grain.
- Residential development must overlook the street, have secure amenity space to the rear, and accommodate parking within the plot.
- Any development should relate in scale to its surroundings.
- Additional street tree planting will be encouraged.
- The Grade II* 17th Century Stratford House is currently isolated and surrounded by highway. Reconsideration of the road layout in this area will provide the opportunity to enhance the setting of this important landmark, improve its relationship to Highgate Park, facilitate appropriate development, and knit it back into its urban context.
- New and enhanced pedestrian crossings are needed to create safer and more attractive connections for pedestrians and cyclists across the Middleway and into Highgate.

6.0 Delivery

6.1 In order to achieve the quality of development and place that is required by the BDP and this SPD, a comprehensive approach to site planning, development, delivery and long term management and maintenance is needed. Due to the site's size a phased approach to development is anticipated and an appropriate delivery model will need to be developed to ensure the delivery of essential infrastructure across the whole site.

Delivery Plan

6.2 To deliver the vision, the Rea Valley SPD will be supported by a comprehensive Delivery Plan which will focus on steps to implement the strategy, including funding, flood risk mitigation, infrastructure programme, business relocations, Investment Strategy, utilities coordination and social and cultural infrastructure. A working group will identify funding streams and take forward a site-wide delivery and infrastructure phasing plan.

6.3 Developers will need to contribute towards the site-wide plan, and individual schemes will need to demonstrate how they contribute to the overall plan for the Rea Valley Urban Quarter. To enable a comprehensive approach and to deliver the change anticipated there is a need for a Property Acquisitions and Employment Relocation Strategy to identify key strategic sites and to consider the potential use of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs). Businesses will be supported with relocation, or assisted with integration into future development.

Partnership working

6.4 There is a history of partnership working in Birmingham and the implementation process is anticipated to continue to be driven forward and co-ordinated through joint working between Birmingham City Council, West Midlands Combined Authority, Homes England, the Environment Agency, Transport for West Midlands, landowners, developers, local residents, business communities, the Police and Crime Commissioner for the West Midlands, health and education service providers and other key organisations who have a stake in the future of the area.

Flood Resilience Management Scheme

6.5 Birmingham City Council and the Environment Agency (EA) have been working in partnership to assess the opportunities to reduce flood risk within the area to support the ambitious transformation of the river corridor. A combination of sustainable drainage infrastructure, the provision of flood storage areas and channel improvements would manage flood risk within the Rea Valley Urban Quarter.

6.6 The measures require a whole catchment approach to managing water. These will include a network of flood storage areas in the south of the city to reduce flows through the river in the city centre, and a new river corridor that contains high flows within a green channel. The new river channel will include passive flood defence structures which can be incorporated into the urban design and are not visually intrusive. All new development will support the enhancement of the River Rea corridor to facilitate the delivery of a comprehensive flood risk management strategy, and contribute to the construction of flood storage areas within the wider catchment. There is also a need to ensure that flood risk management assets and infrastructure are fit for purpose for the anticipated development lifespan of the new developments, and where possible they are enhanced.

6.7 Until these measures are fully implemented planning applications within the Rea Valley Urban Quarter, in areas at risk of flooding will be assessed on a case by case basis and their contribution to the deliverability of the wider flood risk catchment scheme. The development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere, taking into account the predicted impacts of climate change. To ensure the deliverability of the overall scheme it is essential to ensure that there is space to support that naturalisation of the river.

6.8 The EA are working with partners to secure funding and this includes a collaborative approach with Birmingham City Council to ensure that the SPD supports the delivery of a business case for the River Rea enhancements.This will provide a detailed assessment of the opportunities to sustainably manage water and maximise the enhancement of blue and green infrastructure to reduce the risk of surface water flooding, as well as providing net gains for biodiversity, amenity, health and wellbeing by supporting adaptation to the impacts of climate change.

Infrastructure planning

6.9 Infrastructure is an essential part of the plan making process. Planning policy recognises that in order to create sustainable communities it is not sufficient to provide housing and employment opportunities alone; we also need to ensure that development is supported by the necessary physical, social and green infrastructure.

6.10 The City Council will be working with developers, house builders, public sector agencies, voluntary and community organisations, residents and businesses to bring forward developments and the supporting infrastructure. Infrastructure to be adopted by the City Council must be built to appropriate standards. Where infrastructure is not adopted by the City Council, the developer will need to demonstrate that City Council standards have been applied, it meets recognised quality standards, and it has long-term management and maintenance arrangements in place.

6.11 The costs of infrastructure will be met by developers and landowners, including the City Council from the value generated by the development. These are expected to be secured through Section 106 Planning Obligations and in the long term Community Infrastructure Levy where appropriate. The Delivery PIan will develop in line with the BDP Policy TP27 'Sustainable Neighbourhoods.' New housing in Birmingham is expected to contribute to making sustainable places, whether it is a small infill site or the creation of a new residential neighbourhood, as is the case with the Rea Valley Urban Quarter. All new residential development will need to demonstrate that it is meeting the requirements of the policy and creating sustainable neighbourhoods. In line with BDP Policy TP47 'Developer Contributions,' development will be expected to provide, or contribute towards the provision of physical, social and green infrastructure to meet the needs associated with the development.

Social and cultural infrastructure

6.12 With the creation of a significant number of new homes in the Rea Valley Urban Quarter and Birmingham Smithfield, investment will be required to ensure the appropriate services are in place so that they become functioning and sustainable neighbourhoods. This will need to regard existing facilities in the area and demonstrate how the proposals will complement this provision. Clear trigger points to provide this infrastructure will need to be made to ensure that essential services are provided. Funding will support education, health, digital and community facilities, arts, culture,

heritage and leisure offers, along with social initiatives including skills and training that are vital to creating attractive places to live, supporting both new and existing communities including businesses.

Green infrastructure

6.13 Green Infrastructure in the Rea Valley Urban Quarter will be a planned adaptable network of green spaces and routes which can provide a healthy and rich environment. The Delivery Plan will include site specific projects, including the comprehensive proposals for the River Rea, an improved Highgate Park and mechanisms for delivery.

6.14 The SPD area is vulnerable to surface water flooding, which is why all major developments will be required to submit a Sustainable Drainage Assessment and Operation and Maintenance Plan in line with BDP Policy TP6. This policy prioritises sustainable drainage to minimise flood risk taking into account the future impacts of climate change. Wherever possible the natural drainage of surface water from new developments will be managed as close to its source as possible, through onsite provision of green infrastructure. These will include features such as green/ blue /brown roofs, swales, and rainwater water gardens which are well suited to urban mixed use neighbourhoods. Where buildings are repurposed and it is unviable to incorporate SuDS within the development, applicants can make a financial contribution to community green and blue infrastructure such as the SuDS community streets.

6.15 The quarter wide green infrastructure will help to regulate extreme temperatures, improve water quality, and assist in sustainable management of water through storage, retention. This will reduce peak flows into the sewer and river network to reduce flood risk from all sources.

Sustainable transport and movement

6.16 A key requirement of the SPD is to improve movement throughout the area with walking, public transport and cycling routes prioritised. The strategy will cover all movements from the development, both on and off-site, including links to shops, schools, green space and other facilities. Future transport assessments and travel plans will inform the Rea Valley Urban Quarter transport modelling work. The integration of public transport will be at the heart of creating an accessible destination in the city. Discussions are ongoing with Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), to identify potential options to run the Midland Metro extension and Sprint services through the area and beyond, towards Selly Oak, the University of Birmingham and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Arts and culture within the public realm

6.17 Opportunities for site-specific contextual arts practice and artist collaborations will be identified through an area-wide arts strategy, underpinned by contributions to place making. Led by an arts specialist, this strategy will review the characteristics, contexts, culture, history and narratives of each neighbourhood, along with the future aspirations for the area.

6.18 Artists and arts organisations will engage with the public and the multidisciplinary partnerships involved to realise the ambitions of this SPD, reflecting local character, social and cultural infrastructure, connectivity, biodiversity and SuDS engineering schemes.

6.19 The strategy will outline a range of approaches for integrating arts practice within the re-visioning of the area, from innovation and design to construction. This will include specific opportunities within identified sites such as along the course of the Rea and within public squares and other green spaces. Early opportunities for artists will be identified to collaborate on aspects such as building design and layouts, public realm design, landscape, and lighting schemes.