

Rea Valley Urban Quarter Draft Supplementary Planning Document

May 2019

Overview

The Birmingham Development Plan (BDP) was adopted by the City Council in January 2017, and is part of the city's statutory planning framework, guiding decisions on development and regeneration. The wider Southern Gateway area is identified within the BDP as the largest 'Area of Transformation' within Birmingham City Centre, and includes Birmingham Smithfield and the area around the River Rea. This SPD will expand on the vision for the Southern Gateway set out in the BDP Policy GA1.2 'Growth and Wider Areas of Change,' and provide an up-to-date framework with specific guidance.

The Southern Gateway has been renamed the Rea Valley Urban Quarter, given the focus of the SPD on the transformation of the River Rea to create a unique waterside development. It is one of Birmingham's oldest neighbourhoods and comprises parts of Digbeth, Southside, Cheapside and Highgate

Rea Valley Urban Quarter Draft SPD







The purpose of this SPD is to set out a vision for a sustainable mixed-use neighbourhood, focused around the transformation of the River Rea corridor, offering a unique waterside development in the heart of the city centre.

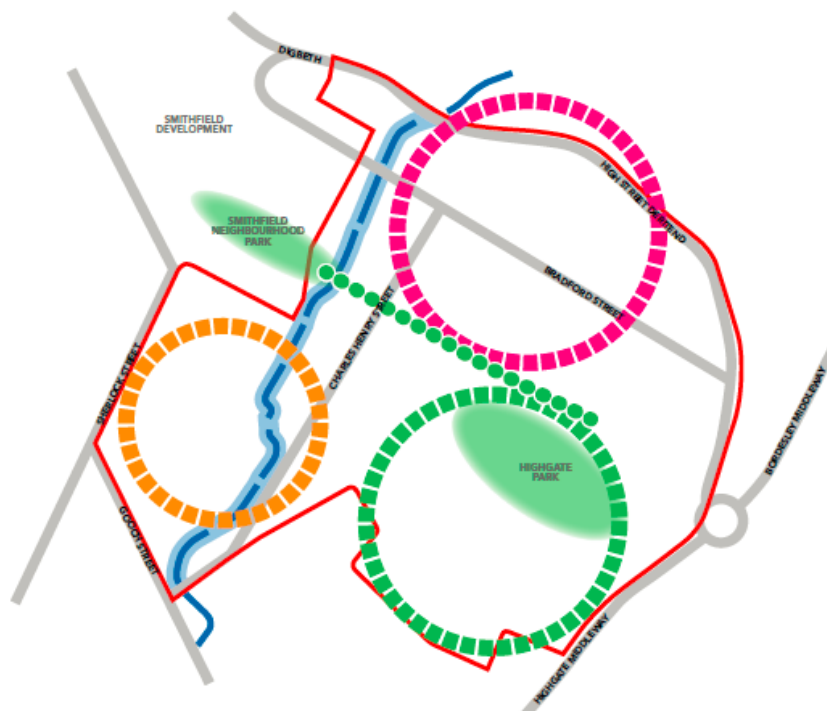
The SPD will specifically:

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

PLAN 3 BIG MOVES

Key

-  Masterplan boundary
-  River Rea corridor transformation
-  Park Link
-  Cheapside mixed use neighbourhood
-  St Davids residential led neighbourhood
-  Highgate Park neighbourhood



The document is available to view below, and your comments can be submitted to us via the online survey.

Why we are consulting

We are interested in your views on our vision and plans for the Rea Valley Urban Quarter, and would particularly welcome suggestions and comments from residents and local businesses to help shape change in this important part of Birmingham city centre.

An online survey has been set up for people and organisations to provide their comments on the draft SPD (a copy is available to download below). People can also provide comments by email or post (**Planning & Development, Birmingham City Council, 1 Lancaster Circus, Birmingham, B4 7DJ**).

A number of public drop in sessions have been organised for people to attend, ask questions and provide their comments. Details for these sessions are set out below.

The draft SPD can also be viewed at Birmingham Central Library, B3 3AX, and at 1 Lancaster Circus, Birmingham, B4 7DJ.

Meetings will also be held with key stakeholders throughout the consultation period.

Frequently asked questions (FAQs) on particular matters such as housing and open space, health, education and transport are available to view below. A link has also been provided to the Birmingham Development Plan.

Introduction

1 What is your name?

Name (Required)

2 What is your email address?

If you enter your email address then you will automatically receive an acknowledgement email when you submit your response.

Email (Required)

3 What is your organisation?

Rea Valley Urban Quarter Vision

The Rea Valley Urban Quarter will become a new dense mixed use urban neighbourhood which is a vibrant, well connected and sustainable place for people to live, work and spend leisure time. With the River Rea at its heart, a network of green routes and spaces will create a resilient environment, rich in biodiversity that promotes the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors alike. A variety of new and innovative housing types will attract a truly diverse community which will benefit from a range of services and facilities. Across the Quarter, employment space will be planned for, and new and existing businesses supported.

The Vision for the Southern Gateway will be secured through the delivery of a series of Big Moves and underpinned by key development principles:

Transforming the River Rea into a unique public space

The River Rea will become one of the city's most distinctive natural spaces. A rich green and blue environment, it will be busy and attractive, overlooked by a range of uses such as cafes shops and bars. . 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.

Park Link

Forming part of a network of green routes and spaces, the Park Link will become a major pedestrian route linking Smithfield to Highgate Park.

St David's Place

A vibrant mixed-use neighbourhood offering a mix of workspace and living in a high-quality environment around along the transformed River Rea.

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.

Highgate Park Neighbourhood

Focussed around a transformed Highgate Park, the neighbourhood will become an attractive family housing area.

4 Do you have any comments on the Vision and Big Moves?

If you wish please provide comments below to expand your answer

Site-wide development principles will, alongside the Big Moves, be at the forefront of delivering the vision for Rea Valley Urban Quarter and creating a truly exemplar development and legacy for future generations.

- Connectivity
- Resilience
- Design

Connectivity

The approach to movement and accessibility will focus on promoting walking, cycling and public transport. This will mean enhancing existing streets and connections, introducing new links and legible routes, and creating a consistent and high quality public realm which is easy to understand and navigate.

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. New routes and connections will make it easier and more

convenient to get around. Parking and servicing will not be allowed to dominate the environment.

New and improved streets will be complemented by a number of smaller, more intimate public spaces which create a consistent, high quality environment. Pedestrians and cyclists will have priority within the streets of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter, and this will be reflected in their design, with wide footways provided where space allows.

Moseley Street, the 'Park Link' between the proposed Smithfield Neighbourhood Park and Highgate Park will be given pedestrian priority, whilst the opening up of the River Rea will allow for the inclusion of enhanced, safe cycle opportunities separated from vehicular traffic, connecting to the city's wider cycle network and 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. Encouraging the use of public transport will help reduce traffic congestion and carbon dioxide emission as well as improvements in air quality.

5 Do you have any comments on this Development Principle?

If you wish please provide comments below to expand your answer.

Resilience

The Rea Valley Urban Quarter aims to adopt a pioneering approach, embedding sustainable design into all aspects of the development. This is essential to creating a resilient neighbourhood which will stand the test of time, and which can adapt to future economic, social, technological and environmental / climate change.

At the heart of the SPD is the need to address the current flood risk associated with the River Rea and its floodplain. Whilst this will require a whole catchment approach and a range of projects over a wider area, a major intervention to the Rea within the Rea Valley Urban Quarter is an essential part of this package.

The Rea will be broken out of its narrow channel, restored, realigned and allowed to flow naturally within a 35 metre wide blue and green corridor. Transforming the channel will involve creating a more sinuous course with a naturalised two stage profile to increase the river's capacity, slow water flow and allow it to store flood water. The design will also include a natural river bed, safe, accessible banks, riffles and pools, native trees and riverside planting. The proposal also needs to provide suitable, sympathetically designed step free access to the river to ensure that it can be enjoyed by everyone. This will also allow maintenance and emergency works to be carried out safely.

A variety of sustainable urban drainage solutions will drastically reduce the run off from highways and buildings, reducing the risk of surface water flooding and protecting streets and spaces during intense storms.

A network of green space will run through the site, connecting 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.

6 Do you have any comments on this Development Principle?

If you wish please provide comments below to expand your answer.

Design

The design of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter, its 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.

The cornerstone of design in the Rea Valley Urban Quarter will be to retain and enhance what makes the area special and distinctive from other parts of the city centre. This begins with retaining the area's traditional street grid, with the layout of new development following the scale and pattern of city blocks. There is also the opportunity to retain a number of attractive heritage buildings and frontages which

reflect the rich history of the area and provide an authentic link to the past, creating a dynamic contrast between old and new.

New development should reflect local context and create a vibrant and safe environment with a strong sense of place. Factors which influence the design of new development include the relationship with retained buildings, existing urban character and scale, street hierarchy, and the need to create 'active frontages' overlooking streets and public space. Architecture, detailing and materials will be of a high standard.

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 balanced and vibrant community. A mix of active uses at ground floor will be appropriate in locations such as High Street, Bradford Street, and along the River Rea, where cafes, retail and commercial uses will be encouraged. The need for new community facilities such as a primary school and health centre will be assessed.

7 Do you have any comments on this Development Principle?

If you wish please provide comments below to expand your answer.

Distinctive Neighbourhoods

The transformation of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter will involve creating an authentic piece of city, integrated into the existing city centre, but distinctive, with a strong sense of place. Each neighbourhood will have its distinctive character arising from the local context - the existing topography, natural features, street pattern, and heritage assets. When planning for change, aspects such as legibility, connectivity, scale, density and land use will need to be considered, as well as the need to secure high quality buildings, urban realm and public space. To support this design approach, indicative neighbourhood areas have been identified:

- **High Street Frontage**

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, and presents the opportunity to create a vibrant street of city scale with a strong identity, characterised by landmark architecture, high density city living, retail, restaurants, bars and a high quality public realm.

- **Cheapside**

Cheapside will become a mixed-use neighbourhood with a balanced community and an improved public realm. 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.

- **St David's Place**

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 become a focus for family housing, with a diverse mix of housing types to create a balanced community, and a variety of appropriate ground floor uses.

- **Highgate Park**

A comprehensive approach to development will unlock the opportunity in this area, with a re-planned layout delivering 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.

- **Moseley Street**

There is the opportunity for some high quality residential infill to expand the housing offer in this location. Bounded by the Ring Road, Moseley Street and Bradford Street, sensitively designed new development alongside fine historic buildings will create a desirable place to live which is well connected to Highgate and the city centre.

8 Do you have any comments on this approach and would you like to comment on a specific Distinctive Neighbourhood'?

If you wish please provide comments below to expand your answer.

Delivery

In order to achieve the quality of development and place that is required by the BDP and the SPD, a comprehensive approach to the site's planning, development, delivery and long term management and maintenance is needed.

A site-wide strategy will be developed with key partners, including all landowners and taking into account other matters to secure and co-ordinate infrastructure delivery. Developers will need to contribute towards the site-wide masterplan and individual schemes will need to demonstrate how they deliver the overall plan for the area including delivery of infrastructure. Further details will be included in the final SPD.

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 BCC, WMCA, HE, EA, landowners, developers, local residents, business communities, service providers and other key organisations who have a stake in the future of the area.

Birmingham City Council has a pivotal role to play in this process, through:

- Development Management as the Local Planning Authority;
- Facilitating the implementation of the required infrastructure;
- Providing advice at feasibility/design stage;
- As a landowner and development partner;
- Utilising land assembly powers;
- Working closely with land owners, businesses and the local community; and
- Promoting investment opportunities.

9 Do you have any comments on this section?

If you wish please provide comments below to expand your answer.

10 Do you have any other comments on this SPD?

If you wish please provide comments below to expand your answer.