
BLACKWELL GRANGE PLANNING AND DESIGN BRIEF FOR SITE HE4

**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Chris McEwan,
Economy and Regeneration Portfolio**

Responsible Director – Ian Williams, Director of Economic Growth

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To report the outcome of the consultation process for the Blackwell Grange Planning and Design Brief for Site He4.
2. To make recommendations regarding endorsement of the Brief to inform planning decisions for the site and the disposal of Council land.

Summary

3. The Planning and Design Brief (as shown at **Appendix 1**) was prepared in the context of existing Planning policies and followed a six week consultation on the Council's proposals for approximately 55 dwellings on Site He4 (see plan attached at **Appendix 2**) in July/August 2015.
4. The Brief was written following a thorough analysis of the area and in the light of a number of technical reports.
5. The Brief was developed by a multi-disciplinary officer team with involvement from independent consultants, where necessary, and by the Blackwell Neighbourhood Forum (BNF).
6. The BNF was consulted on the draft Brief and the Brief was modified to incorporate the Forum's comments.
7. Neighbouring residents were also consulted by the Council in May/June 2016 and the outcome is detailed in this report.
8. Once adopted, the Planning and Design Brief will be a material consideration in making decisions on planning applications and will guide the disposal of Council land.

Recommendation

9. It is recommended that Members endorse the Blackwell Planning and Design Brief for Site He4 to inform planning decisions for the site and the disposal of Council land.

Reasons

10. The recommendation is supported by the following reasons:-
- (a) The Planning and Design Brief is in line with the adopted Core Strategy, and the adopted Design of New Development Supplementary Planning Document.
 - (b) The Brief has been prepared in conjunction with the Blackwell Neighbourhood Forum and modified to take the Forum's comments into account.
 - (c) The outcome of the Council's consultation with Neighbouring residents on the brief is detailed within the report.

Ian Williams, Director of Economic Growth

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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S17 Crime and Disorder	Throughout the Brief reference is made to designing out crime, and natural surveillance of the public realm. The overriding ethos is to create a safe, accessible, mixed-use area with activity throughout the day and evening
Health and Well Being	Improved public access to the site as well as the creation of public greenspace all contribute to health and wellbeing
Sustainability	The Brief stipulates high standards of environmental performance for development in the area.
Diversity	Not applicable
Wards Affected	Park West
Groups Affected	None
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the Council's budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The Planning and Design Brief addresses a number of priorities within this strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) Delivery of outstanding design quality which will create a highly desirable place to live.(b) Delivery of development which reflects the Local Wildlife Site designation and improves the habitat for the great crested newts

	<p>(c) Delivery of development which increases public access from what it was when the golf course was operational.</p> <p>(d) Delivery of development which will pay for improvements and enhancements to the public open space and provide financial sustainability to maintain it in perpetuity.</p> <p>(e) Delivery of development, which creates good pedestrian, and cycle links to the Town Centre.</p> <p>Darlington has a number of economic aspirations set out in Prosperous Darlington such as attracting high quality well paid jobs, the building of a stronger economy and capitalising on Darlington's distinctive character. The Planning and Design Brief seeks to provide top-end executive housing in a high quality environment which will attract entrepreneurs and business owners to live and set up new businesses in Darlington.</p>
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MAIN REPORT

Introduction

11. The Planning and Design Brief relates to the area of the former Blackwell Grange Golf Course known as Site HE4, as shown edged red on the attached plan. It has been prepared to ensure that the development of the area is of the highest quality and respects the existing landscape and wildlife habitats. While the site area extends to almost 10 hectares, the Brief expects approximately 4 to 5 hectares to be public open space.
12. The Brief identifies opportunities and constraints and provides clear guidance for developers in terms of planning and design. It sets out the planning obligations required to make the development of this site acceptable. The Brief will provide certainty to developers that proposals, in accordance with the parameters set out, will be welcomed and encouraged. It will form the basis of discussions and dialogue between the Council and prospective developers regarding the sale of the land for residential development.
13. This Brief has been prepared through a process of engagement, including the Blackwell Grange Neighbourhood Forum in July/August 2015, with statutory consultees and Blackwell residents on the Council's proposal to allocate land on the former golf course for high quality housing, including top-end executive housing.
14. Cabinet's approval of the Planning and Design Brief will give the document the status of a material planning consideration in making decisions on planning applications on the site.

Objectives

15. A number of strategic objectives have been identified:-
- (a) Attainment of outstanding design quality which will create a highly desirable place to live.
 - (b) Delivery of development which reflects the Local Wildlife Site designation and improves the habitat for the great crested newts.
 - (c) Delivery of development which increases public access from what it was when the golf course was operational.
 - (d) Delivery of development which will pay for improvements and enhancements to the public open space and provide financial sustainability to maintain it in perpetuity.
 - (e) Delivery of development which creates good pedestrian and cycle links to the Town Centre.

The Scope and Content of the Planning and Development Brief

16. The Brief is in five parts; site description, analysis, policy background, design guidance for development and planning obligations.
17. In planning policy terms, the key considerations for any future development are the impacts on the:
- (a) Protected trees;
 - (b) Protected wildlife and the Local Wildlife Site;
 - (c) Green Wedge and open space;
 - (d) Any elements of historic or archaeological interest
18. The design guidance for developers covers areas such as layout, scale and massing, materials, landscaping and access. Throughout the guidance, reference is made to creating a high quality development incorporating substantial open space, designing out crime and creating a safe and accessible environment.
19. The planning obligations reflect the Council's adopted supplementary planning document and include:-
- (a) Provision of on-site renewable energy
 - (b) Provision of employment skills and training
 - (c) Financial contribution to affordable housing
 - (d) Financial contribution to education
 - (e) Financial contribution to public transport
 - (f) Financial contribution to off-site cycle routes
 - (g) Financial contribution to future maintenance of the open space

Methodology

20. A thorough analysis of the site was undertaken both in terms of physical characteristics and connectivity with the rest of the Town and the regional context. Physical analysis confirmed the presence of protected species, great crested newts, in two ponds one in the north and one in the south of the site. This information was used to inform the development of the brief, particularly in terms of protecting areas around the ponds from development and providing an open green space connecting the two ponds.
21. A series of technical reports were commissioned to support the development of the Brief to ensure a high degree of certainty for potential developers and to inform the ideas and options in the Brief. These included; a topographical survey, a tree survey, a drainage study, vehicular access study and environmental searches. These studies were published as part of the public consultation exercise in July/August 2015.
22. An inter-disciplinary working group was set up to prepare a draft Brief and meetings held with the Blackwell Neighbourhood Forum. The draft Brief was circulated to the Forum, who then circulated it to local residents, and the Forum's comments were incorporated into the final Brief.

Key Findings from the Consultation in July/ August 2015 with the Blackwell Neighbourhood Forum, statutory consultees and residents

23. Members may recall that the results of the public consultation were reported to Cabinet in November 2015, as part of the Local Plan consultation on proposals for residential development at Blackwell and Blackwell Grange. Residents who responded on this site, generally, supported the Council's proposals for 30-55 high quality executive houses rather than the Forum's proposals for 270 dwellings. Since then, the membership of the Forum has completely changed and the new members agree with the Brief for 55 dwellings.
24. The Forum identified six key issues:-
 - (a) The desire for five or six bungalows as part of the mix
 - (b) Opposition towards small semi-detached houses
 - (c) Opposition to footpath links which would increase crime
 - (d) The protection of trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders
 - (e) The desire for a developer contribution to improve the footpath alongside Carmel Road South
 - (f) The protection of the remaining open space from future encroachment by residential development.

Results from the Council's consultations with residents in May/ June 2016 and statutory consultees

Residents Name	Comments Received	DBC's response
Neighbourhood Forum	(1) They found it an extremely positive experience working with the Council on the preparation of the He 4	(1) Noted

Residents Name	Comments Received	DBC's response
	<p>Brief.</p> <p>(2) They are concerned about the weak use of words: “approximately, should and suggests” Wanted a “maximum of 55 dwellings”</p> <p>(3) Require rear gardens which should back on to existing properties “must “be a min of 20 m long to replace “should</p> <p>(4) Research by the Neighbourhood Forum” suggests “that there is a demand for 5/6 bungalows in the area. They require “evidenced”</p>	<p>(2) The development of this site is a Design- led scheme and we cannot be overly prescriptive. To achieve a quality scheme in certain instances it may require flexibility. The Cabinet report referred to ‘approximately’ 55 dwellings.</p> <p>(3) The brief states “should” be a minimum of 20m long. This is a Design-led scheme.</p> <p>(4) Noted. Developers will build out in accordance with market demand at the time.</p>
Resident at Briar Walk	<p>(5) Same comment as in (3) above.</p> <p>(6) Same comment as in (2) above. Consider 60 dwellings to be unacceptable.</p>	<p>(5) See comments in (3) above</p> <p>(6) See comments in (2) above</p>
Resident at Blackwell	<p>(7) Required clarity on mature weeping willow to rear of the property</p> <p>(8) Is the footpath in Carmel Rd South to be continued down to the roundabout?</p>	<p>(7) The assumption is that the tree would be retained, subject to detailed design</p> <p>(8) It is expected that all of the development would be accessible and comply and designed with security in mind. If there is a requirement for lighting it would be to current design standards</p>

Residents Name	Comments Received	DBC's response
	(9) Are lines of trees to the west side of the site to be retained?	(9) The assumption is that all trees are important and mature trees to be retained, This will be subject to design proposals received

Statutory Consultee Name	Comments Received	DBC's Response
Historic England	General comments on the development were received. The He4 site does not contain any designated heritage assets.	No key changes to the brief required
Highways England	In order to mitigate the potential development traffic, a white lining scheme will be required at Blands Corner roundabout. This may be around £15k.	Noted. To be picked up in the package of information for interested parties.
Natural England	Formal comments awaited.	N/A

25. Residents adjoining the site were consulted along with Statutory consultees. A response from the Neighbourhood Forum was received who were writing on behalf of Forum Members and residents.

Conclusions

26. Following local residents' support for the Council's proposals for high quality residential development on site He4, a Brief has been prepared to offer guidance to prospective purchasers of the site and to influence decisions on any future planning applications. The Brief has the support of the Blackwell Neighbourhood Forum.

27. Members are asked to support the Brief and recommend it to Cabinet.