

Report to Cabinet



Date of Meeting	21 October 2021
Portfolio	Cabinet Member for Economy and Communications
Report Author	Paul Moore
Public/Private Document	Public

Lower Falinge Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report summarises the outcome of the public consultation on the draft Lower Falinge Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and the Council's response to these, and recommends Cabinet adopts the amended SPD in response to the outcomes of the consultation.

Recommendation

- 2.1 To note the representations received in response to the consultation on the draft SPD and agree to the Council's amendments to these set out in the Schedule of Comments included within the Statement of Consultation
- 2.2 Adopt the Lower Falinge Supplementary Planning Document SPD.
- 2.3 Delegate authority to Head of Planning (subject to discussion with the Portfolio Holder) to make typographical corrections and any other necessary non-material amendments to the Lower Falinge SPD prior to the formal publication of the SPD in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

Reason for Recommendation

- 3.1 To formally approve and adopt the Supplementary Planning Document under regulation 14 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and section 23 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which will be afforded weight as a material planning consideration.

Key Points for Consideration

4. Background

- 4.1 Lower Falinge has been recognised as needing investment in order to provide the tenants and residents with a better mix and quality of homes and better opportunities. Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) commissioned Levitt Bernstein and GVA (now Avison Young) in early 2017 to produce a Masterplan for an area that included Lower Falinge to explore possible options for long term investment in the area.

A Draft SPD for a wider area was produced and consulted on in 2019. However, as a result of comments raised during consultation in respect of part of the area covered by that SPD it was decided that the document would be amended to remove that area from the document before consultation was undertaken on a revised document.

As such, a revised Draft SPD was produced which relates to an area principally focussed on the Lower Falinge estate and the land to the east up to Whitworth Road. The boundary on the area covered by the SPD is shown on the map within the SPD.

This Draft SPD was consulted on early in 2021. This SPD builds on the Masterplan and has been prepared to establish an appropriate framework to guide and deliver development by setting out the development, design and accessibility principles.

Purpose of a SPD

The SPD, once adopted, will provide a development strategy for the Lower Falinge area. It outlines potential development opportunities within the area including options for the scale and mix of future proposals on a number of different sites. The SPD will provide further detailed guidance in order to achieve coherent and comprehensive development within the area and ensure the delivery of the necessary new infrastructure and a better mix and quality of homes.

The SPD includes clear reference to ensure that investment at Lower Falinge is linked to the wider Rochdale Town Centre regeneration programme. The Masterplan was developed in the context of ensuring that investment in this location contributes to a stronger and more diverse residential market to support the ambitions for the Town Centre.

The SPD will be used by the Council as a material consideration when determining future planning applications.

The SPD elaborates upon policies within the Rochdale Core Strategy (2016), The SPD will therefore provide further detail on how relevant policies in the Local Plan will be applied to the sites and principles for how development of the sites would best be taken forward. Notably policy C2 – Focusing on regeneration areas and economic growth corridors/areas, specifically part 7. 'Falinge, Spotland and Sparth, Rochdale, where we will improve the

residential environment including new high quality housing where opportunities occur’.

The Supplementary Planning Document content

The following is a summary of the content and structure within the SPD:

Introduction, vision, purpose and status of the SPD and relationship to previous masterplan	Explains why the SPD has been produced and how it is structured. It also sets out how this SPD relates to the previous masterplanning work in the wider area.
Background, planning policy framework, relevant plans and strategies	Sets out the broad policy framework that applies to the site, highlights the main Local Plan policies and relevant key plans and strategies that have informed the SPD.
Context	Describes the SPD area and provides a spatial portrait of the site. It also looks at the relationship with the adjoining areas.
Development Principles	Establishes the principles and parameters to guide future development for the next 10-15 years in the surrounding area. Specifically looking at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connectivity and Movement • Streets and Public Realm • Public open spaces and play provision • Non-residential uses and new facilities • New and improved homes
Design Principles	Sets out an approach for landowners to follow when designing their schemes which will help ensure a high standard of design comes forward. Specifically looking at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access and Movement Strategy • Streets and Public Realm Strategy • Open Spaces and Play Strategy • Land Use Strategy • Scale and Massing
Transport and Access	Explains what connections are required within the SPD area and how transport issues will be considered in policy terms.
Focus areas	Sets out four broad areas of focus – each with different development considerations and guidance suitable for that area. It also sets out principles for the form and the types of uses which would be permitted within the potential focus areas, such as improving and creating new connections and public spaces, consideration of some level of clearance within areas with long term sustainability issues,

	<p>providing a mix of types and styles of homes for the community.</p> <p>The four focus areas are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abbeydale Road • Redcross Road • St. Mary's Gate • Future area of focus
Delivery and Implementation	Explains how the development set out in the SPD, and the infrastructure that is needed to support it, will be secured and delivered.

Public Consultation

Rochdale North Township considered the draft SPD at its meeting on 10 February 2021 and approved it for consultation.

The draft SPD was subject to consultation in accordance with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

The consultation period commenced on 12 February 2021 for six weeks and closed on the 26 March 2021. The consultation process included:

- a. Notifying all the consultees on the Council's Local Plans database who have indicated they are interested in Planning Policy consultations;
- b. Publishing the Draft SPD and details of the consultation on the Council's website, including the relevant supporting documents; and
- c. Social media coverage, both by the Council and RBH, throughout the consultation period

The actions outlined above met and exceeded the statutory requirements for consultation on a draft SPD, having regard to the temporary guidance on consultation that is in place as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic.

Responses to the Consultation

As a result of the consultation arrangements outlined above, there were a total of 10 responses to the consultation. The comments form did not specifically seek a view on whether or not the respondent supported or objected to the plan but instead just sought comments. Although some respondents did welcome the SPD there were some comments which raised concerns or issues that they wished to see addressed or clarified.

A schedule of the representations received, alongside the Council's responses and proposed amendments can be found in the Statement of Consultation. The main issues raised are summarised below along with a brief response in *italics*:

Traffic and car parking

Most of the comments made by residents identified concerns relating to traffic through the estate and car parking. More specifically this included:

- Concerns of increased traffic along Abbeydale given the reference to a 'boulevard' within the SPD;
- Overall concerns regarding increased vehicular movements through the estate and related air quality issues;
- Objections to the proposed parking area in front of the shops on the ground floor of the Thetford block and nuisance that this could cause to residents living above these shops; and
- Concerns relating to loss of car parking for existing residents.

In terms of the first point, it was never the intention that Abbeydale would be developed as a primary vehicular link through the estate. However in order to be more clear, text has been added to the SPD within the relevant sections to clarify that this 'boulevard' is intended as a green boulevard and shared space for walking and cycling alongside vehicles that will provide a safe and attractive north-south route through the estate. The SPD makes it clear that the Council would not accept proposals that result in 'rat-running' through residential areas

In responding to more overall concerns relating to traffic, it is considered that the movement, transport and access sections within the SPD provide a clear focus on creating an environment which delivers safe and welcoming walking and cycling routes. This is an overarching aim made clear within the introductory section of the Movement and Access section and therefore will be a guiding principle in the development of the estate.

On the issue of car parking in front of the shops this was identified as a potential option on one of the plans in the Draft SPD. However, it has been considered that such parking would not be necessary given the existing spaces on Spotland Road and taking on board the concerns of residents. Consequently, this proposal has been removed from the SPD and deleted on the relevant plan.

The last point reflects concerns that although the new development would have new parking, the parking for existing residents may be affected. Whilst it is not appropriate to set out specific requirements in respect of car parking within the SPD, a paragraph has been added to the end of the Transport and Access section to address these concerns. This added paragraph includes a statement that site specific proposals that come forward will need to demonstrate that they deliver appropriate levels of car parking to meet the needs of existing and future residents

Scale and massing of development

Some of the comments raised concerns in relation to the height of development and the impact that could have on local amenity. Particular mention was the reference to 5-storey buildings.

The SPD states that the higher development and 'marker buildings' (up to a maximum of five storeys) will be focussed in appropriate locations (e.g. development edges) and would be subject to their sensitive design and appropriateness alongside the wider development. This clarification has been added to ensure that any new development incorporating up to five storeys is located and designed in a way which takes account of the residential amenity of existing and new residents. In addition, text and plans have been amended to clarify that the blocks shown seek to reference development edges rather than indicate a specific form of development.

Open spaces and biodiversity

Natural England (NE) responded to the consultations as a statutory consultee. Whilst they did not wish to provide specific comments, they did set out a number of issues to consider in relation to the SPD linked to green infrastructure and biodiversity.

In addition to the suggestions from NE, there were some resident comments in relation to open spaces within the estate, primarily regarding loss of some existing open spaces and how new open spaces would be created.

In response to NE suggestions, the SPD was reviewed but it is considered that it does include appropriate guidance to ensure that the local area is well served by a network of good quality open spaces. One area that it was considered could be strengthened was in relation to biodiversity and text has been added in relation to opportunities to enhance biodiversity within the area as part of any new development.

In terms of the second point, it is considered that the SPD contains sufficient requirements in respect of open space and play provision which is also supported by existing policies and SPD's relating to open space provision in new developments.

Listed buildings

Comments were received from Historic England (HE). Whilst HE generally welcomed the overall aims of the SPD, they made reference to the fact that there should be reference to the listed Hope Street Chapel and Parsons House and the surrounding Victorian buildings within Focus Area 4 – Future Area of Focus.

In response, it was considered that there is benefit in referencing these listed assets. Consequently, text has been added to the Focus Area 4 section which also notes that any development within this area should have regard to the setting of this listed building, including the historic street pattern which remains fairly well intact.

Other comments

There were some detailed comments that related to specific housing needs and circumstances of some residents. This included comments linked to the previous consultation that has taken place in the area and the Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA).

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) generally supported the SPD but submitted a range of comments for consideration and additional text. Many of these were points of clarification and additional detail. They also made comments relating to the delivery of affordable housing across the area.

The comments relating to specific housing needs issues are, in some instances, very detailed and cover a number of areas and personal experiences that are outside the scope of the SPD which is primarily aimed at guiding the physical development of the area. It is understood that RBH have been working with the community in Lower Falinge since late 2016 to shape the detail of the regeneration proposals. RBH are working with residents on an individual basis to support them to move to a new home which meets their needs and rehousing preferences.

Where appropriate, comments made on the EqIA will be passed to the relevant officer within the Council for consideration into that wider process.

In terms of the comments made by RBH some changes have been made to pick up some issues where this would assist in clarity and provide more accurate up to date information. However, some suggested changes are considered too detailed for inclusion in the SPD, particularly those that add further text in respect of background and context. On the issue of affordable housing, some changes have been made to clarify how affordable housing will be delivered through the regeneration of the estate.

Proposed Amendments

In light of the representations received and the Council's response to them (summarised in the section above), a number of the amendments have been incorporated into a revised SPD. As noted above full details can be found in the 'Schedule of Comments' contained within the Statement of Consultation.

In addition to these, some other minor changes have been made to the SPD to improve clarity or improve presentation.

It should also be noted that some additional, minor changes to the SPD may need to be made before publication to provide clarity, improve grammar, spelling corrections and factual changes where needed. In addition, prior to final publication, the SPD may be subject to desktop publishing to improve its presentation and/or to update mapping. Any such amendments will not change the content, but would be focused on improving the appearance and clarity of the document.

Alternatives considered

If this SPD is not adopted it will undermine a co-ordinated place making strategy for Lower Falinge; instead having to deal with this via stand-alone planning applications. Proposals for investment and development would have to be considered on a piecemeal basis, rehousing residents within the local area, close to their existing home and the Town Centre, would become challenging, and housing market failure will not be addressed. There is the risk that the opportunity for a significant number of new homes within this area, adjacent to the Town Centre, is not delivered.

Costs and Budget Summary

5. There are no specific financial implications arising from the recommendations within this report or for the Council's involvement in the process at this stage.

Risk and Policy Implications

6. There are no specific risk issues for members to consider arising from this report.

Consultation

7. As set out above this document has been the subject of public consultation. If the final SPD is approved, an Adoption Statement will be published in line with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

Background Papers

Place of Inspection

8. Lower Falinge Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Statement of Consultation

Circulated with covering report

For Further Information Contact:

Paul Moore, ,
Paul.Moore@Rochdale.Gov.UK