

**Inspectors Louise Gibbons, Steven Lee,
and Benjamin Clarke**

c/o Robert Young (Programme Officer)

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Matter: 4

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Dear Inspectors,

Bristol Local Plan Review – Inspectors Matters, Issues and Questions

**Matter 4 – Development Strategy and Site Selection Process - Representation
prepared by Strutt & Parker on behalf of Structadene Group Ltd.**

Structadene Group Ltd. ('Structadene') maintains an interest in the redevelopment of two sites in the north-west quadrant of St Philip's Marsh ('SPM'), one abutting Camwal Road and one abutting Feeder Road.

Issue 4.1: Whether the development strategy and strategic policies of the Plan are positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy?

Q4.1: Are the specific areas of growth and regeneration justified, consistent with the development strategy and the Plan's overall Vision and Objectives?

1. Structadene is generally supportive of the ambition to redevelop SPM, one of the UK's largest regeneration areas and the largest in Bristol. The regeneration of SPM is consistent with the development strategy and the Plan's vision and objectives, which *inter alia* seeks to promote urban living, support the thriving universities and create sustainable economic growth and across the city with a focus on the regeneration of brownfield land.

2. However, as set out elsewhere in our Representations (including our Matter 2 Hearing Statement), Structadene is of the opinion that whilst the development strategy may be consistent with the Plan’s vision and objectives, it does not go far enough in meeting the specific housing needs.
3. The growth and regeneration areas, of which SPM is the largest, have the potential to help meet those needs, and Structadene contends that Bristol City Council (‘BCC’) should accelerate the redevelopment of strategic redevelopment areas including SPM to make up the difference in the shortfall of housing over the Plan period, including, if necessary, by specifically allocating sites within these areas for more housing or mixed-use residential led development and building at higher densities.

Q4.2: Several of the policies for areas of growth and regeneration refer to development having to ‘accord’ with regeneration frameworks. Notwithstanding the Council’s response to PQ9, is it justified or effective for proposals to have to ‘accord’ with documents that do not form part of the development plan?

1. No.
2. Policy DS3 (St Philip’s Marsh) states under the sub-heading ‘Place Principles’ that “Development of St. Philip’s Marsh will be expected to **accord** with any approved masterplan and infrastructure delivery plan for the area.” (our emphasis)
3. Whilst such frameworks/SPDs are helpful to coordinate development, it is the policies of the Local Plan itself that should be strategic, and evidence based. Policy wording cannot be determined by any such framework/SPDs and must instead form part of the Development Plan and pass the tests of soundness set out by the NPPF.
4. It is not appropriate, nor consistent with national policy for proposals needing to ‘accord’ with documents that do not form part of the Development Plan and have not been subject to independent examination. The frameworks/SPDs should have the status of a material consideration.

5. The NPPF 2023 is clear at paragraph 139 which states:

*“Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to **reflect** local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to:*

*a) **development which reflects** local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and **supplementary planning documents** such as design guides and codes; and/or,*

b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.” (Our emphasis)

6. As such, it is suggested that to make the plan sound, the wording should be deleted or at the very least the word ‘accord’ should be replaced with ‘reflects’ in all relevant circumstances/policies, including Policy DS3.

Q4.3: Several of the policies for areas of growth and regeneration refer to comprehensive or co-ordinated forms of development. The response to PQ28 states that this would be guided by masterplans or development frameworks and established through design and access statements. Having regard to this, are the relevant policies sufficiently clear and unambiguous, such that it would be clear to either decision makers or applicants what would be expected on an individual site?

1. The NPPF 2023 is unambiguous (paragraph 131) that *“Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential...”* not least so *“that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable”* (NPPF paragraph 132).

2. Several of the policies for areas of growth and regeneration refer to development having to ‘accord’ with regeneration frameworks. As set out in our response to Q4.2 above, Structadene contends that this is unsound as it is not in consistent with national policy.
3. We note that the Local Plan is seeking to refine the proposed land use arrangement across SPM in Policy DS3 through the policy wording. With regard to north-west SPM, we contend that placing a single knowledge-based employment and innovation land use on the quadrant could stifle or prevent viable and sustainable mixed-use redevelopment that could be delivered in this location. In other words, while we believe minimum housing and employment targets should be set for the wider SPM regeneration area, we equally feel that sufficient flexibility on land use within each quadrant needs to remain to allow comprehensive mixed-use communities to come forward, which are led by spatial planning policies but also influenced by the market.
4. The masterplans or development frameworks that will follow should then only form a material consideration in the determination of any planning application.

Q4.4: The reasoned justification for several policies refer to potential housing capacity figures. The response to PQ23 confirms that these are not meant to be a target or a requirement. Notwithstanding this, are the anticipated capacities justified? Without a requirement for each area, and no specific allocations within any of the areas, will the relevant policies be effective in delivering the anticipated levels of housing?

1. Please see our response to Q4.13 d) below and Matter 2 - Q2.3a).

Q4.5: Several of the policies for areas of growth and regeneration set out the expectation for a range of uses to come forward over the plan period. Other than for housing (as set out above) there is no indication in any policy or reasoned justification as to the scale of development expected. Are the relevant policies sufficiently clear as to what type and scale of development is envisaged?

1. Please see our response to Q4.13 d) below and Matter 2 - Q2.3c).

Q4.6: The reasoned justification for several of the policies for areas of growth and regeneration include reference to possible housing densities. Are these justified and, to be effective, should they be included in policy? How do these densities relate to other relevant policies, such as policies UL1 and UL2?

1. It should be noted that Diagram 5.1 clearly shows that SPM is included within the City Centre and Temple Quarter area for the purposes of identifying minimum density.
2. However, the table in UL2 policy text only refers to 'Bristol City Centre'. For the avoidance of doubt, the policy text should be amended to also include reference to SPM in the table, especially given the Plan is inconsistent in identifying SPM as being within the city centre policy area for some issues and not for others.

Issue 4.2: Are the policies relating to Central Bristol justified, effective and consistent with national policy?

Q4.13: Is Policy DS3 justified, consistent with national policy and effective? In particular:

a) Is the policy sufficiently clear in defining what uses would be acceptable within the area?

1. Please see our response to Q4.13 d) below and Matter 2 - Q2.3a) and c).

b) Is there an anticipated housing capacity for this area and if not, why not? To be effective, should the policy identify the expected level of housing, office and employment delivery in this area?

2. Please see our response to Q4.13 d) below and Matter 2 - Q2.3a) and c).

c) Is the boundary shown on the diagram at page 25 of the Plan appropriately defined?

3. As set out in our previous representations, it could be clearer. The diagram should be modified by the addition of labels to show the sub-areas which are subsequently referred to in the policy text.

North west St. Philip’s Marsh

d) Is the aspiration for this area to be a knowledge based, employment lead innovation area justified having regard to the evidence base, and will the policy be effective in this regard?

1. SPM is the largest of the growth and regeneration locations which is a particular focus for change and development in the city.
2. Policy DS3 (St Phillip’s Marsh) states under the subsection - North west St Phillip’s Marsh - that *“this location close to Bristol Temple Quarter will be developed as a knowledge based, employment led innovation area. It is suitable for higher intensity workspace/offices/ research and other more intensive forms of use appropriate to a location adjacent to the city centre.”*
3. Structadene is of the opinion that in addition to the knowledge and employment uses proposed by the policy, the north-west area of SPM is also suitable for a mix of other uses including residential and student accommodation, both of which there is acute need for.
4. The location near other student development in Temple Quarter as well as the proximity to transport services, blue infrastructure / amenity space and the city centre make this an ideal location for denser, car-free and accessible living.
5. A mix of uses including both residential and knowledge / employment would, Structadene believe, contribute to making this ‘gateway’ area feel alive throughout the day and evening and improve the attractiveness of entering the rest of SPM, helping also to kick-start and revitalise this regeneration area.
6. In light of our general concerns about the specificity of the sub-area policy, we therefore suggest the second sentence of the North West St Philip’s Marsh text is modified to *‘it is suitable for higher intensity workshop/offices/research and other more intensive forms of residential and other mixed-use development...’* This will help maximise the delivery

of residential development, and mixed communities generally, on a highly sustainable and appropriate site.

7. Structadene is committed to the delivery of its sites in SPM in the plan period and sees housing as being a key part in the delivery of a mixed-use scheme. Structadene recognises that SPM has a reasonable quantum of employment use and that the wider area will likely retain an element of employment floorspace.
8. Furthermore, Policy DS3 sets out a generic, unquantified requirement for student accommodation but this is not specifically referred to within any of the sub-areas. The policy wording should be amended to not only quantify minimum supply, but also state that the north west area is appropriate for student accommodation, again given its proximity to the university campus and wider city centre area.
9. Unless amended, the policy cannot be considered to be justified as there is no evidence it represents the most appropriate strategy

e) Are the requirements in relation to the River Avon frontage and Feeder Road justified?

10. Structadene strongly supports the ambition of enabling the greater use of local green and blue infrastructure, and in particular of creating an active frontage onto the canal across Feeder Road.
11. The success of this part of policy DS3 will however be dependent on the thoughtful integration of placemaking, green infrastructure, transport and flood mitigation considerations in future planning and design.
12. It should also be noted that the success of this element of the policy may also require the rerouting of Feeder Road inland to provide additional space to enable pedestrianisation of the canal-front in tandem with the required flood-risk mitigation works.

13. Given the early stage of the recently commissioned masterplan for the area, we suggest that the policy should remain flexible to enable the ideas to be developed through the masterplan and community and stakeholder engagement process.

Q4.14: Are the requirements set out in Policy DS3 justified, consistent with national policy and would they be effective in securing sustainable development? In particular:

a) Will the Place principles be effective in achieving the aspirations for the sub areas?

1. No comment.

b) Is the requirement to enhance Sparke Evans Park justified and will it be effective?

2. No comment.

c) What measures would a decision maker expect to be provided for development in demonstrating enhancement of social inclusion and community cohesion?

3. This could be made clearer and should therefore be expanded upon in the emerging framework for SPM. Obvious examples to incorporate in the emerging framework include affordable and inclusive housing and design, public realm enhancements including green and play space, and contributions to the delivery of community facilities and spaces, where appropriate.

d) Is the requirement for new workspace and other commercial development to assist in access to employment for local residents justified and will it be effective in this area?

4. Yes.

5. The growth and regeneration areas proposed in the Plan, including SPM, will each have unique challenges in terms of infrastructure and development requirements. However, collectively they will deliver a significant proportion of Bristol's future homes and jobs.

6. In SPM specifically, mixed use development, can increase housing provision, economic activity and employment opportunities, in a highly sustainable location, which is central to the overarching development strategy, vision and objectives of the plan.
 7. Whilst the policy does not preclude the following, it may also be desirable to make explicit that redevelopment could include the introduction of mixed uses including for example residential or student accommodation and where appropriate, in order to maximise the capacity of sites in locations where such a mix might be desirable – and to prevent the policy from being an unintentional barrier to realising such opportunities. Furthermore, live-work units could be appropriate mixed-use solutions for certain redevelopment areas such as SPM.
- e) Is the requirement for facilitating and contributing towards delivery of an eastern access to Temple Meads Station applicable to all new development and if so, is this justified?***
8. It is unclear what this means in practical terms, given the eastern access to Temple Meads Station is not within SPM. Furthermore, given the fractured land ownership in SPM, it may not be possible for some developments to facilitate this.
 9. We suggest that this part of the policy text is deleted or at the very least changed to the following wording: *‘New development should facilitate walking and cycling connections towards the eastern access to Temple Meads Station where possible and feasible to do so.’*
- f) Are the requirements set out under the remaining place principles (design, mix of housing, connectivity, green infrastructure, and pedestrian and cycle links) and transport, and flood risk clear and unambiguous such that it would be evident to a decision maker how to react to a proposal, and will they ensure the aspirations of the policy are met?***
10. With regards to Flood Risk, Policy DS3 should make clear that the Council is taking the lead in developing the comprehensive approach to flood mitigation in SPM.

11. Furthermore, whilst a sequential test is a requirement set out by national policy, there appears to be a clear contradiction with paragraph 12.2.6 of the Plan, the supporting text to Policy FR1.
12. Paragraph 12.2.6 of the Plan states that “*the level and distribution of development set out in the Local Plan is considered to pass the sequential test*”, confirming that development within a regeneration area passes the sequential test.
13. The emerging development framework should therefore be supported by a sequential test justifying the proposed uses in the specific locations and Policy DS3 should be amended to state that an additional sequential test is not required for sites wholly within the growth and regeneration areas “*provided the proposed development is consistent with the use for which the site was allocated and provided there have been no significant changes to the known level of flood risk to the site, now or in the future which would have affected the outcome of the test.*”¹
14. Without amendment, there is a significant risk of development not being delivered in the largest regeneration areas in Bristol, which will undermine the vision and objectives of the Plan.
15. Lastly, with regards to Transport, the policy wording should be modified to note the need for a comprehensive approach to traffic management and connectivity, to enable the delivery of intensive forms of development and a high-quality waterfront public realm. We understand that strategic movement issues are to be considered by the current masterplan.

WORD COUNT – 2841

¹ PPG - Paragraph: 027 Reference ID: 7-027-20220825



Yours sincerely,



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