

**Executive – 2 December 2004**

## **SHERFORD –THE OUTCOME FROM ENQUIRY BY DESIGN (EbD)**

### **Report of the Head of Community Regeneration**

**Statutory Powers:** Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

**Financial Implications:** None arising from this report, but there are implications for the Council in dealing with the Sherford project. These are dealt with under the Budget papers circulated separately.

**Purpose** To seek Members' endorsement of the outcome from the recent Enquiry by Design for the new community proposal at Sherford.

**Links to Council Priorities** The new community proposal at Sherford links to all Council priorities and commitments.

### **Recommendation**

**That Members resolve to:**

- a) **endorse in principle the new masterplan for Sherford resulting from the Enquiry by Design process as the basis for testing and consultation to enable production of detailed planning documents, and**
- b) **invite Plymouth City Council and Devon County Council to do likewise.**

### **Background**

1. The proposal for a new community at Sherford has now been confirmed through the Devon Structure Plan which proposes a mixed use new community of at least 4,000 new homes to be developed at Sherford by 2016. The Structure Plan sets out various policy requirements associated with the new community, including the provision of high quality, high capacity public transport from the outset, and this Council has sought to reinforce the requirements for quality and sustainability through local planning policy.
2. In January 2002 the South Hams Local Plan Review made a proposal for a new community at Sherford, including an extensive "shopping list" of requirements and an underpinning concept statement showing the four linked village concept. The Local Plan proposal and concept statement established a benchmark for quality and succeeded in engaging an increasingly wide range of stakeholders in the process. Several working groups have been established, comprising members of the public and private sectors, to investigate such matters as master planning and design, transportation, community infrastructure, affordable housing and viability.
3. Earlier this year, with the objectives of continuing to drive up quality and deliverability and engage a wider range of stakeholders, particularly from the local communities, the Council successfully promoted the involvement of the Prince's Foundation for Architecture and the Built Environment to run an Enquiry by Design (EbD) workshop for Sherford. The Prince's Foundation is an educational charity established by the Prince of Wales, dedicated to improving quality of design and development in our towns and cities. The Foundation has an excellent

track record and has been involved in many successful development projects around the country, applying their unique EbD process. The Foundation's involvement in the Sherford project was largely secured as a result of the basis for quality established through the Council's concept statement and the Council's aspirations to achieve high sustainability credentials.

### **The Enquiry by Design (EbD) events**

4. EbD workshops took place on two consecutive days in July, a one day technical workshop in September and an intensive three day workshop in October. A wide range of stakeholders was involved in the process, including public, private and voluntary agencies and with a significantly increased representation from local community bodies and organisations.
5. Integral to the EbD process is the importance of testing designs and constantly referring back to stakeholders. This inclusive and technically competent process results in the production of effective outcomes over a relatively short period of time. The best of everyone's visions and ideas is teased out and drawn together. The result for Sherford is a new vision together with a new masterplan, driving up the quality of the development and setting a new benchmark to work to and improve against.
6. The full presentation given by the Foundation at the close of the October EbD workshop is available on the Council website. It demonstrates that the Council's commitment to quality, sustainability and local distinctiveness has been maintained and enhanced by the EbD process and, importantly, that the involvement of such a wide range of stakeholders has helped to tackle many of the objections raised to the development. Some objections have been resolved – in many other cases wider engagement of stakeholders has diminished the level of objection. The new EbD masterplan is attached to this report, together with key extracts from the closing EbD presentation.
7. The new masterplan does not mark the end of the plan-making process. There remain a range of issues which must be tested further in detail. For example, the masterplan establishes the Sherford valley as an eastern edge to the future development of Plymouth but the edge at the north-eastern corner of the development is not sufficiently clearly defined. This should be firmed up as the masterplan is developed further. Specific locational choices for school sites, landscape details and a wide range of other matters all remain to be resolved in detail.
8. Successful progress will also depend on real engagement and ownership by others. In particular, since it defines an eastern edge with an expectation that future development will progress westward back towards the city, it will be critical that Plymouth City Council also endorse the masterplan in principle. Similarly, in view of the need to secure joined up transport and other infrastructure solutions, Devon County Council's in principle endorsement is also important.

### **Risk Assessment**

9. The EbD process has proved to be a very effective means for the Council to progress with its objectives for Sherford. If the Council were not to endorse the outcome of the process the principal associated risks would include:
  - a) Failure to build on the inclusive processes which led to the production of the new masterplan;

- b) Failure to deliver a high quality, sustainable, mixed use new community at Sherford;
- c) Alienation of stakeholders;
- d) Damage to partnership working with Plymouth City and Devon County Councils and others;
- e) Delaying the production of the planning documents required in order to deliver the required development as set out in the Devon Structure Plan;
- f) Additional resulting pressures on the Council to produce an alternative quality framework for Sherford;
- g) Delay in the delivery of Sherford, probably resulting in major planning applications / appeals for other large development sites (or for Sherford itself) in the Plymouth sub region, with the attendant resource demands;
- h) Diversion of resources to deal with those pressures, not only impeding the required delivery of Sherford but also frustrating progress with delivery of Council priorities elsewhere as a result of diverted staff resources;
- i) Developer-led mediocre suburban development failing to address and meet the local needs which gave rise to the proposal in the first place.

### **Human Rights Acts**

10. Human rights are protected under planning legislation.

### **Conclusion**

11. The EbD process has moved the Sherford proposal several significant steps forward, but there remains a great deal of work to be done. The masterplan provides a new basis for the further work required, setting a new and raised standard for quality which the Council should expect to see at least delivered or improved upon.

12. Members are recommended to note the success of the EbD process, to endorse the resulting masterplan as the new "in principle" basis for testing and consultation to enable the production of detailed planning documents in the context of the emerging South Hams Local Development Framework, to invite Plymouth City Council to do the same in relation to the Plymouth LDF, and to invite Devon County Council to give similar in principle endorsement.

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Head of Community Regeneration

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**Background Documents**  
Sherford EbD presentations