



Guidance on the Preparation of Masterplans

**V1.1
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Guidance on the Preparation of Masterplans sets out Wyre council's requirements for the preparation and approval of masterplans as required by the Wyre Local Plan.
- 1.2 The Local Plan at paragraph 9.1.5 requires the preparation of 'masterplans' for certain residential and mixed use allocations before planning permission will be granted. The nature of these sites varies from purely residential (50+ dwellings) to more complex mix use sites of several hundred dwellings. In some cases these allocations represent a significant extension to an existing settlement.
- 1.3 Allocated sites will contribute significantly towards meeting the borough's identified development needs in the period up to 2031. Although meeting housing and other needs is a requirement of national planning policy, it is important that the development that comes forward on these sites takes place in a manner that respects and integrates well with the existing settlement. It is also important that new developments create high quality environments – including the provision of green infrastructure - for future occupiers and existing residents. In addition, a number of allocations require the careful planning of supporting infrastructure such as education and health provision. Also whilst some sites are in single ownership, others involve several landowners. The requirement for a masterplan is therefore essential to ensure that each site is brought forward in a comprehensive and cohesive manner that contributes to the creation of sustainable places. The preparation of a masterplan will require the collaboration of all landowners and stakeholders and consultation with local communities.
- 1.4 Where an approved masterplan is required for a specific site this is identified in the allocation policy for that site as a Key Development Consideration.

2.0 What is the purpose of this guidance?

- 2.1 This Guidance is set out in the form of answers to a series of questions. It has been considered and endorsed by the Planning Policy Working Group¹ and approved by Wyre council Cabinet.
- 2.2 The Guidance has been prepared to assist landowners/developers and stakeholders in preparing masterplans where this is required by the Wyre

¹ The Planning Policy Working Group is a cross party advisory group set up to assist in the preparation of the Local Plan.

Local Plan. The Guidance also serves to ensure that there is transparency for local communities with regard to the process of masterplan preparation.

3.0 What is a masterplan?

- 3.1 *“Master plans are about setting out a vision for an area undergoing change and a strategy for implementing that vision. They are about taking the initiative in terms of design, layout, houses, jobs and services... Critically, they must show local people what an area might look like in the future.”* (Our towns and cities: the future - Delivering an Urban Renaissance, DETR, 2000)
- 3.2 Masterplanning is about place making. A good masterplan should tell a ‘story’ about the place as it is now and how it will be in the future through the development of the site in question.
- 3.3 A masterplan is a document that – through plans, drawings and text - will determine key aspects of the future development such as the:
- Distribution and interrelationship of activities/uses.
 - Relationship between spaces and buildings (existing and new).
 - Degree of ‘permeability’ – visual and physical.
 - Best location of different type of uses.
 - Movement networks within and out with the site.
 - Provision of infrastructure.
- 3.4 The foundation of a masterplan is a good understanding of the site and its surroundings.
- 3.5 Developing a masterplan will be a collaborative process between landowners and stakeholders involving setting a shared vision, agreeing objectives and priorities, generating options and resolving issues. The process will include effective community engagement and consultation.
- 3.6 Preparing a masterplan often involves applying urban design principles to the site in question with the aim of producing drawings, images and text which combine to provide illustrations of the layout, form and character of the development.
- 3.7 Relevant urban design principles include –
- a. Achieving connections and links – a place that is safe but easy to get to and move through
 - b. Creating clear development blocks

- c. Creating a public realm where public and private spaces are clearly distinguished
- d. Ensuring legibility – a place that is easy to understand with gateways and landmarks
- e. Ensuring mix of uses where relevant
- f. Protecting and, where appropriate, enhancing, the environment and biodiversity
- g. Creating a rich and delightful visual experience
- h. Achieving flexibility and adaptability - a place that can respond to changing needs.

4.0 How is a masterplan going to be used in the planning process?

- 4.1 Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The policy requirement for an approved masterplan where required through a site allocations policy will therefore have a significant weight in determining a planning application.
- 4.2 The Local Plan requires development proposals on sites which require a masterplan to be in line with the relevant approved document. The approved masterplan itself will therefore be a material consideration of significant weight in the determination of planning applications.

5.0 What should a masterplan contain?

- 5.1 The extent and contents of a masterplan, and the process by which it is produced, will depend on the scale and complexity of development proposed. The council will therefore adopt a proportionate approach to its requirements for masterplanning. For instance where a site is in a single ownership and a single use is proposed, with no supporting on site infrastructure required, such as a school, health facility or community and shopping facilities, the masterplan could take the form of an enhanced design and access statement containing more detail than is usually the case and written with reference to the Masterplan policy requirement and this guidance.
- 5.2 Where a site of more significant scale – over 100 dwellings – or a mix of uses is being considered, a more detailed document will be required.
- 5.3 However, all masterplans should include written text and ‘visual’ material including, as appropriate, plans, drawings and photographs. All masterplans should demonstrate a clear vision and rationale for the design of the

development supported by the appropriate evidence. All masterplans should establish spatial principles relating to land use, transport, design and green infrastructure and provide the framework for the development for the whole site. All masterplans should identify as appropriate how the Key Development Considerations for the site in question are, or can be, addressed.

- 5.4 The masterplan should be supported by a series of technical studies which provide a robust evidence base for the masterplan. The extent and depth of these studies will depend on the nature of the site in question, with more complex and larger scale sites requiring a more in-depth supporting evidence base. The relevant 'Key Development Consideration' and the Core Development Policies of the Local Plan should be a starting point in determining what technical studies are needed.
- 5.5 The written text should cover where appropriate and relevant:
- Site description and context including a plan showing the physical area of the masterplan and the wider context.
 - Planning policy context.
 - Summary of the main findings / issues from the technical assessments, including a reconnaissance plan.
 - Strategic vision for the site and series of development objectives.
 - The masterplan framework which will guide the quantum and layout of development across the site and address matters such as residential density.
 - Development principles which will guide development relating to for example transport, green infrastructure, design including built form and public realm.
 - Framework for delivery including infrastructure requirements.
 - A phasing plan.

6.0 Does the masterplan need to cover an area with an extant planning permission?

- 6.1 The masterplan will need to cover the whole allocation inclusive of land with planning permission. An extant planning permission can be implemented, however where the planning permission lapses a subsequent application will need to be prepared in accordance with an approved masterplan.
- 6.2 A landowner with an unimplemented planning permission will be invited to participate in the masterplanning exercise. The final masterplan may or may not reflect the planning permission. That landowner will effectively have two options until the planning permission lapses.

- 6.3 In circumstances where an existing permission has been granted but a new application is submitted for a scheme that materially differs from that approved, the requirement for a masterplan will apply taking into account the advice contained in this guidance and key development considerations in the relevant Local Plan allocation policy. The new application will need to comply with an existing masterplan where one has been prepared or an appropriate masterplan covering the whole allocation will be required before the new application can be determined.

7.0 What are the implication of a landowner not participating in the masterplanning process?

- 7.1 A landowner may not be willing to participate in the exercise because the development of the site is not an immediate priority. In such circumstances the masterplan must consider the entire allocation and set down the framework for more detail work at a later stage for the parcels of land involved. The masterplan must ensure that the required mix of uses is planned for rather than deferring provision to the later stage.

8.0 What is the process for producing a masterplan?

- 8.1 Masterplanning is the process by which key elements of the development and its context are identified. When a planning application is submitted most key decisions would have been made as part of the masterplanning exercise.
- 8.2 Producing a masterplan is the responsibility of the landowner(s) / developer(s) with input from relevant stakeholders. The role of the council is primarily to facilitate and steer the process, host necessary meetings, ensure a robust and effective document and that due process is followed to give the masterplan credence.
- 8.3 The outcome is a document which forms a material consideration of significant weight in the determination of planning application(s). Engagement with stakeholders and consultation with the local community is an essential part of the process.

Working arrangements

- 8.4 For more complex masterplans, it is envisaged that the process will be managed by two groups – a) Landowners Group and b) Stakeholder Group. In relation to relatively simple developments of less than 100 dwellings and where there is no on site infrastructure requirement a masterplan which meets the requirements of this guidance as to its content can be prepared without the need of specific landowner and stakeholder group meetings. In these

cases the masterplan must be supported by evidence of separate engagement with stakeholders.

a) Landowner Group

8.5 The Landowners Group will consist of the landowner(s) of the site in question and/or their appointed agent(s). This will include developers who have options on the land in question. The council will call the inaugural meeting and further meetings to ensure progress on the preparation of the masterplan. The purpose of the group is to agree:

- Working relationship between landowners and assignment of responsibilities
- Budget/resources
- Timetable
- The commissioning of survey work and technical studies

8.6 In most cases where the land is in more than one ownership, the landowners/ agents/ developers will need to separately appoint a surveyor/property consultant who will advise on an 'equalisation' agreement (i.e. the distribution of costs and values).

b) Stakeholder Group

8.7 The Stakeholder Group will consist of landowners, council officers and relevant ward Members, the Parish or Town Council where relevant and any relevant stakeholder organisations such as Highways England, Environment Agency, United Utilities, Lancashire County Council Highways Authority and Education Authority.

8.8 The purpose of the Stakeholder Group is to discuss and progress –

- A vision for the masterplan
- Scope of the evidence base
- Main issues to be addressed
- Master planning options
- Design principles
- Consultation exercise
- The draft masterplan for submission to the council for approval.

Key elements of the process

Understanding the place

- 8.9 Before starting planning the change for an area, it is necessary to look at how it works now, how it came to be that way, and how this understanding can be applied to shaping its future.
- 8.10 Understanding a place means much more than looking at a pattern of land uses at a point in time: you need to develop a rounded and inclusive view of how a place works.

Visioning

- 8.11 The vision is an expression of what a place could be like in the future. It a fundamental part of the masterplanning process.
- 8.12 It describes the kind of place we want covering the physical, economic and social elements.
- 8.13 A vision is about the future and it must be flexible enough to cope with change over time as the project progresses.

Reconnaissance / site surveys / technical work

- 8.14 **Site surveys** are detailed studies carried out to give an understanding and verify site information. Detailed surveys will focus on specific issues. A walkover survey will be essential and should include a photographic survey. This work will constitute a site appraisal(s).
- 8.15 The Landowner Group will need to identify and appoint necessary specialist consultants to undertake survey/technical work (to be agreed with the council), which might include:
- Topographical survey, including ground conditions
 - Environmental protection matters such as ground contamination, air quality and noise
 - Landscape and visual assessment incorporating a townscape and character appraisal
 - Phase 1 habitat survey
 - Tree and hedges survey
 - Open space analysis, to cover the immediate area
 - Flood risk assessment
 - Transport assessment
 - Heritage assessment including archaeological survey

- Utility services – electricity, gas, sewerage, drainage, water supply
- The requirement for community facilities in the immediate area, including educational provision.

8.16 Information should be prepared or obtained in a format which can be readily shared and used – map/plan form in most cases - wherever possible. There should be a series of maps or plans that feed into a site appraisal map.

8.17 Surveys, technical reports and documents relating to consultation will be published as part of the masterplan.

Public engagement and consultation

8.18 The input of the local community through engagement and public consultation in masterplanning is essential. Where there is a parish or town council it is expected that on-going engagement will be through membership of the Stakeholder Group. Wider public involvement is likely to be through consultation on masterplan options. The consultation undertaken should be appropriate to the nature of the masterplan (see para. 5.1 above). However, all consultation undertaken as part of the masterplanning process should be effective and the approach to be employed should be discussed and agreed at the Stakeholder Group. It should:

- Take place for a minimum period of three weeks;
- Be appropriately publicised, using existing community networks and organisations as appropriate;
- Include drop in session(s) in the local area;
- Set out the conclusions from the various studies on a map form; and
- Set out options where reasonable options exist.

8.19 In relation to less complex masterplans relating to allocations of less than 100 dwellings engagement with the relevant Parish or Town Council and / or relevant ward Member should be undertaken before the draft masterplan is finalised and published for public consultation.

8.20 It is important that the consultation process is open and transparent. To this end, the council will make available for viewing and downloading copies of the consultation material (including consultation form) on its web site. Consultation responses should only be sent to the council (planning policy team). Consultation responses will be placed on the council's web site (with personal details removed). Following public consultation there should be a transparent audit trail of how representations have been considered. The council will make available the responses received (with personal details removed) to the Landowners Group or their representatives who should produce a summary of the main matters raised and prepare an appropriate

response. The summary and response should be reported to the council and stakeholder group. The council will consider the appropriateness of the response to the issues raised when considering the masterplan for approval.

Approval process

- 8.21 All masterplans required under Local Plan allocation policies will be subject to internal consultation with members sitting on the Planning Policy Working Group, (PPWG) with a recommendation to Cabinet or Portfolio Holder as appropriate. A meeting of the PPWG will be held to consider all masterplans for development of over 100 dwellings or where otherwise considered to be necessary. Council Officers will present the masterplan to the PPWG in such circumstances.
- 8.22 For the avoidance of doubt, this approach will apply to all masterplans, regardless of the type or level of detail involved, including those that may be considered to be enhanced design and access statements. Where a site lies within a ward that is not represented on the PPWG, the relevant ward member will be consulted.
- 8.23 Approval of Masterplans will be by Cabinet other than where a masterplan relates to a residential allocation of over 50 dwellings and up to 100 dwellings where the allocation policy includes no specific infrastructure requirements such as a new school, health facility or other community and shopping facilities. In such cases approval is delegated to the Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder.
- 8.24 Approved masterplans will be a material planning consideration when considering relevant development proposals.

9.0 What happens if the council does not approve a masterplan?

- 9.1 If the council is of the view that a masterplan is in some way inappropriate or lacking in some respect, it will be referred back to the Landowner Group for further consideration. It may be necessary to bring the stakeholders together to resolve any outstanding matters prior to re-submission to the council for further consideration.
- 9.2 If a planning application is submitted without an approved masterplan, consideration will need to be given as to whether or not the application prejudices the comprehensive development of the allocation and delivery of a masterplan.