

<p><b>Cabinet</b></p> <p>28 July 2021</p>	 <p><b>TOWER HAMLETS</b></p>
<p><b>Report of:</b> Ann Sutcliffe, Corporate Director Place</p>	<p><b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted</p>
<p><b>Adoption of the South Poplar Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document</b></p>	

<b>Lead Member</b>	<b>Councillor Eve McQuillan, Cabinet Member for Planning and Social Inclusion</b>
<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Matthew Wong
<b>Wards affected</b>	Poplar, Canary Wharf, Blackwall and Cubitt Town, Island Gardens
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes
<b>Reason for Key Decision</b>	Significant impact on wards
<b>Forward Plan Notice Published</b>	1 June 2021
<b>Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome</b>	1 – People are aspirational, independent and have equal access to opportunities. 2 – A borough that our residents are proud of and love to live in.

## **Executive Summary**

The South Poplar Masterplan SPD provides supplementary guidance to ensure the vision and objectives set out in the Local Plan and Isle of Dogs and South Poplar Opportunity Area Planning Framework are delivered. South Poplar is a key opportunity and growth area within the borough as highlighted in a number of the Local Plan's site allocation including the sites of North Quay, Billingsgate Market and Aspen Way. The masterplan will help facilitate comprehensive development whilst also ensuring that practical requirements are deliverable and viable.

It is intended for South Poplar to share in the benefits of good growth, improved transport capacity and connectivity, be provided with social infrastructure alongside development, benefit from joined up development across different land ownership and be protected against the construction impacts of future developments. The masterplan will optimise land around a transport hub and provide more certainty within the development management process. Furthermore, the SPD seeks to help to deliver the Mayor's manifesto pledges to increase the number of homes for local people, deliver full employment, promote good and healthy lives while reducing the health impacts of poverty, to work with residents to build one community and make development work for local people.

The South Poplar Masterplan SPD has been through an extensive preparation process that has included masterplan baseline analysis (July 2020 – September 2020); early engagement including 1-to-1 stakeholder meetings, public workshops, regeneration board updates, an online survey and an online exhibition (from August 2020-December 2020); preparation of draft document (January 2021-March 2021); and public consultation (March 2021-April 2021). A wide range of community groups, residents, landowners/developers and other stakeholders made formal responses to the South Poplar Masterplan SPD as part of the consultation process.

It is now necessary to adopt the South Poplar Masterplan SPD to further enable clear and robust guidance to inform and be implemented in development proposals coming forward in the very near future. This will ensure the appropriate public benefit is extracted from development opportunities and the benefits of growth is delivered and shared across the wider South Poplar community.

## **Recommendations:**

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. approve the South Poplar Masterplan SPD (appendix 1) for adoption and authorise officers to prepare an adoption statement and publish the Regulation 18(4)(b) Statement and adoption statement so it can be considered a material planning consideration in the assessment of planning applications within the designated South Poplar Masterplan boundary.
2. authorise the Corporate Director of Place to make any necessary factual or minor editing changes prior to publishing the final South Poplar Masterplan SPD.
3. note the Representation schedule summarising representations received during the consultation and the responses to these representations as set out in appendix 2.
4. note the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening Report and consultation responses attached in appendix 3.
5. note the Equalities Impact Assessment Screening as set out in Appendix 4.

# 1 **REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 1.1 Within the adopted Local Plan, Tower Hamlets Council has a housing target to deliver a total of 58,965 additional homes by 2031. 31,209 of these homes are targeted to be delivered within the Isle of Dogs and South Poplar sub area – accounting for approximately 57% of the overall borough target. Within the adopted London Plan and the Isle of Dogs and South Poplar Opportunity Area Planning Framework, the Isle of Dogs and South Poplar Opportunity Area is projected to deliver an additional 110,000 jobs by 2041. Given these ambitious targets, careful planning and guidance is considered necessary in order to ensure the required growth and development is delivered in accordance with the Council’s overarching principles to share the benefits of growth.
- 1.2 The area of South Poplar will play a crucial role in contributing on the aforementioned targets as a result of its strategic location, future infrastructure opportunities and spatial context. However, the future development of sites within the South Poplar area is complex. Fragmented land ownership, Poplar DLR Depot operational constraints together with varying development timescales make delivering legible new connections which negotiate multiple level changes very challenging. While many sites in this area could come forward individually, there is significant potential for the sites to complement and integrate with one another, particularly in addressing the challenges around level changes across the area, co-ordinated open space areas and cohesive connection strategies. These benefits can only be achieved through a joined-up masterplanning approach.
- 1.3 Significant development is proposed to come forward across South Poplar. Within South Poplar there is substantial public land that could assist in delivering new homes across the area, particularly affordable homes and employment opportunities. There is also an opportunity to deliver improved north-south and east-west connectivity, and address the issue of severance currently caused by Aspen Way. The South Poplar Development Area incorporates the following key sites and surrounding public realm:
- Billingsgate Market (City of London / LB Tower Hamlets)
  - North Quay (Canary Wharf Group)
  - East End Community Foundation
  - New City College
  - DLR Depot and Aspen Way (TfL Commercial Development)
  - Trafalgar Way
  - Housing Estates along Poplar High Street

Also of note within the South Poplar area is the impending opening of the Elizabeth Line (Crossrail) within Canary Wharf. The opening of the Elizabeth Line as well as the existing Jubilee Line will bring unique and critical opportunities to the area and must be supported to ensure the

continued development of South Poplar.

- 1.4 The area of South Poplar contains a number of low-density Council owned public housing estates, with relatively little private housing and few private development opportunities. The Poplar ward is the most deprived ward within the Isle of Dogs and South Poplar. It adjoins Lansbury, which is the most deprived ward in the borough. The area contains particular concentrations of deprivation, in particular in terms of skills, employment and child poverty. There is the opportunity for potential regeneration work to be explored across the wider area in tandem with work being undertaken for the South Poplar Masterplan. This would allow consistent social objectives, utilisation of research and public consultation opportunities and facilitate local buy-in to regeneration projects.
- 1.5 The proposed South Poplar Masterplan study area comprises a unique location in reference to the Council's designated Tall Building Zones – Canary Wharf and Blackwall. Aspen Way marks the edge of the Canary Wharf Tall Building Zone and guidance is required to ensure heights and massing is delivered in a coherent manner that provides defined and engaging streets and spaces. This would additionally ensure an appropriate transition in scale from the high-rise context of the Canary Wharf Tall Building Zone to the south.
- 1.6 Feedback received throughout the project's early engagement and formal consultation from residents and community groups has highlighted important issues relating to the impact of tall building design, lack of open space, the need for new homes and employment opportunities, lack of relationship/connection with Canary Wharf from Poplar and physical and social barriers.

## **2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 The adopted Local Plan provides a vision and strategic development principles for development to occur within the South Poplar Area. This is primarily through the site allocations for the North Quay, Billingsgate Market and Aspen Way Sites. An alternative option would be to rely on this document and its site allocations to support and guide the development and delivery of physical and social infrastructure in South Poplar, without further detailed guidance.
- 2.2 This option was considered inadequate as it would not provide a sufficiently detailed understanding of the finer grain in terms of challenges within the area as well as the opportunities in gaining a holistic understanding of site delivery and phasing. Without the additional guidance provided by the SPD, the Local Plan would not provide in itself the necessary level of detail to address key principles including connectivity, open space, housing, community cohesion, employment, sustainability, heritage and identity.

### **3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

#### **Background**

- 3.1 The Strategic Planning service has prepared a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) that provides additional guidance on the development of sites within the South Poplar Area. The SPD supports the new Local Plan to 2031, in particular the allocated sites of Aspen Way, Billingsgate Market and North Quay. The project helps to deliver the Mayor's manifesto pledges to increase the number of homes for local people, deliver full employment, promote good and healthy lives while reducing the health impacts of poverty, to work with residents to build one community and make development work for local people. This responds to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and new London Plan, and has been prepared and will be adopted in accordance with the provisions in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 3.2 The development of the masterplan's strategies and principles has been led by architectural and urban design consultants Maccreeanor Lavington whilst the text and guidance has been drafted by Council officers. During the early stages of the project, Soundings (Community Engagement Specialists) were brought on board to assist in the overall scoping, analysis and early consultation of the masterplan. The document is being developed in partnership with the GLA and TfL. The SPD is to be adopted by the Council in Summer 2021.
- 3.3 The masterplan responds to the adopted Local Plan's site allocations, the Mayor of London's Isle of Dogs and South Poplar Opportunity Area Planning Framework and the new London Plan.
- 3.4 The project's main objective is to help ensure that South Poplar shares in the benefits of good growth, improved transport capacity and connectivity, be provided with social infrastructure alongside development, benefit from joined up development across different land ownership and be protected against the construction impacts of future developments. The masterplan will allow a robust and deliverable framework for development to come forward which will address physical and social barriers and contribute toward the Council's growth priorities. It will also enable stakeholders, such as residents, Members, developers and officers, to better understand the South Poplar area, its complexities and opportunities.

## **SPD Process**

### **Baseline Analysis and Early Engagement**

- 3.5 Given the complexities, demographics and socio-economic profile within the South Poplar Masterplan area, and in order to inform and provide a robust basis for drafting the supplementary guidance, extensive analysis has been carried out. This analysis was undertaken to robustly understand constraints, opportunities, the spatial and policy context of the area. Engagement also took place with stakeholders early into the project timeline to ensure a holistic understanding of community needs. Baseline analysis and early engagement with stakeholders took place between July 2020 and September 2020. This analysis and evidence gathering builds on work that has already been done, for example the Local Plan and the Isle of Dogs and South Poplar OAPF.
  
- 3.6 Using demographic information, stakeholder workshop meetings were setup with identified stakeholder groups as part of initial project scoping and analysis. In all, 11 meetings were held reaching 14 groups/organisations. To account for the large Muslim community within the Poplar area, we engaged with the Poplar Mosque and Community Centre. To capture the large youth and young resident population, we engaged with the Spotlight youth organisation and New City College. Other community groups we engaged with specifically include Neighbours in Poplar, Poplar HARCA, Poplar Union, Friends of Island History Trust, Seeds of Growth, the East End Community Foundation and the Canary Wharf Cycling Community. Going through this process, we have ensured we have reached a wide demographic profile of the area, allowing us to capture the key issues, themes and aspirations of the community.
  
- 3.7 To ensure appropriate understanding of site constraints, infrastructure opportunities and delivery barriers, extensive engagement was also undertaken with landowners within the masterplan area. This was particularly important as the masterplan area contains a number of recently consented schemes and applications currently being considered by Development Management officers for the North Quay (PA/20/01421) and 2 Trafalgar Way (PA/20/01402) proposals. The considerable sloping land profile across the masterplan area and technical considerations in relation to the UKPN substation, DLR Depot and live DLR lines were also important to understand at an early stage to ensure eventual principles and strategies were developed with appropriate knowledge.

- 3.8 A Baseline Analysis was produced by Maccreanor Lavington with support from Council Officers which:
- Established physical and technical constraints;
  - Reviewed existing planning policy and proposed, consented developments;
  - Reviewed connectivity and movement across the area;
  - Outlined a high-level brief for the development of the Masterplan SPD.

### **Further Engagement**

3.9 Additional stages of engagement were undertaken with a range of internal and external stakeholders such as ward Members, key public sector agencies, landowners and relevant Council departments. This is an important part of the preparation process, to ensure key issues are identified and resolved at the earliest opportunity.

3.10 Between September 2020 and December 2020, an additional two public engagement activities were undertaken in the form of an online poll and an online exhibition. Given the impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic and as a result of the clear Government guidance to stay at home and avoid all unnecessary travel, the engagement events supporting the SPD were held online using Microsoft Teams.

3.11 The online poll was live for three weeks in September 2020 where it was promoted with physical flyers in and around the masterplan area as well as on social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The poll attracted 835 responses and covered core themes around community priorities and cultural, social and heritage aspects of the area. The feedback and responses received from the online poll informed the next stages of the project where overarching masterplan principles were developed which responded to community feedback.

3.12 The online exhibition was live for three weeks between November 2020 and December 2020. The exhibition contained an interactive map, ideas board, survey and developed masterplan principles identifying draft strategies to achieve overall objectives. The exhibition attracted 6000 website visits and 43 completed surveys.

### **Document Development**

3.13 The research and engagement outlined above informed the first draft of the masterplan guidance document. The drafting process spanned from January 2021 to March 2021.

3.14 Through a variety of methods such as briefings, updates to the Lead Member and the Isle of Dogs and South Poplar Regeneration Board, drafting workshops, co-design workshops and various presentations, feedback was sought on options for guidance and recommendations. Some of the stakeholders engaged were Developers, Services across the Council with support from TfL and the GLA.

### **Formal Consultation**

3.15 Consultation was undertaken in accordance with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), the Corporate Handbook and in collaboration with the Council's Communications Team. The public consultation on the draft was designed to test the content of the SPD and also to bring to attention the social and physical infrastructure being aspired to within the South Poplar area. A summary of the consultation methods include:

- Advertisements on the Council's social media platforms;
- Publication of an interactive project page on the Council's engagement 'Let's Talk' platform;
- A series of online (Microsoft Teams) events between March and April 2021. The events and exhibitions were designed to be accessible and open to everybody and tailored to address a range of audiences;
- 1-to-1 stakeholder meetings with key landowners;
- Email updates to project contact database;
- Providing a telephone hotline and email address for queries on the SPD.

3.16 The consultation web-page featured FAQs, project information, a feedback survey, online consultation events, the draft SPD document, early engagement summary report (Soundings) and an SPD document breakdown. The web-page attracted over 4000 website visits and 1000 document downloads.

3.17 Over 45 people attended the consultation events led by Council officers. In addition, 29 written representations were received via email and/or online survey from local residents, statutory consultees (including, Greater London Authority (GLA), Transport for London (TfL), Sports England, Natural England, Historic England, Marine Management Organisation), landowners and developers.

3.18 The Council has collated the individual comments made on the draft South Poplar Masterplan SPD and formulated responses to themes (see Appendix 2) that have been used to inform the finalisation of the

South Poplar Masterplan SPD. In accordance with Regulation 12 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, a statement setting out a summary of all of the representations received and the Council's proposed response to them has been appended to this Report, together with the final SPD, for approval.

### **Overview of Consultation Feedback**

3.19 The overarching vision for the South Poplar Masterplan SPD to create liveable and sustainable neighbourhoods is supported by the community and key stakeholders. The identified opportunities and principles guiding the masterplan were broadly supported through submitted responses and representations. There was particular support for:

- Addressing the physical and social severance caused by Aspen Way through infrastructure initiatives;
- The strong emphasis on movement and connectivity within the document;
- The coordination of development within the masterplan area to ensure high quality design and the aspiration for good growth;
- The emphasis on the provision of a mix of housing and employment uses across the masterplan;
- The identification of significant housing opportunity in the site area north of Aspen Way;
- The overarching sustainability and liveability principles contained at SP6 of the document.

3.20 Representations expressed concerns on:

- The draft SPD's heights strategy, with particular references to:
  - The prescriptive nature of the masterplan heights strategy and its impacts on development viability and capacity;
  - The identification and protection of One Canada Square as a landmark building;
  - Impacts on the optimisation of land in a highly accessible location;
  - The focus on the impacts to the Canary Wharf and Blackwall Tall Building Zones;
  - The provision of housing is not given enough weight in reference to building heights.
  - Lack of robust assessment evidencing how the heights strategy was developed;
  - A limited ability for development to come forward which would result in infrastructure opportunities failing to come forward;

- The draft SPD's emphasis on a deck/overbuild opportunity located over Aspen Way with particular references to:
  - The implications that aspirational infrastructure initiatives would have on site delivery and phasing;
  - Concerns around the feasibility and viability of providing a deck structure over Aspen Way;
  - The lack of identification of the key constraints and issues affecting the ability to deliver this aspiration.
- The lack of references to emerging development opportunities including on the Billingsgate Market, East End Community Foundation and the New City College sites.
- Elements of the Masterplan (Use and Heights Strategy) going beyond what is permitted within an SPD.
- Further emphasis required on the use of the masterplan's water spaces.
- Inaccuracies with the live North Quay and 2 Trafalgar Way applications.
- The oversight of specific listed buildings and structures.
- The delivery of housing and affordable housing should be included as a masterplan opportunity.
- More areas of green and open space should be provided.
- The cumulative impact on economic viability.

3.21 The SPD document has been amended to respond to the representations above. Specifically:

- The masterplan heights strategy has been amended to remove the height ranges identified in figure 65. Council officers are of the view that whilst the setting of illustratively appropriate height ranges in an SPD document is in accordance with relevant regulations, legislation and policy, such guidance would be more appropriately located in the Council's separate but emerging Tall Buildings SPD project. The masterplan's tall building principles, identification of key views, guidance, and indicative height shadings has been retained. Further references to the balancing of public benefit and the urban design analysis that led to the heights strategy has now been included in this section.
- The SPD's emphasis on the deck/overbuild infrastructure opportunity has been amended to reflect submitted concerns. This has ensured that deliverability and viability concerns around the aspirational deck/overbuild opportunity over Aspen Way has been fully elucidated within the SPD document. This has made it clear that whilst the opportunity is still a key aspiration for stakeholders, there are key matters that would need to be

addressed for it come forward, which may not happen. The overall vision and principles within the masterplan would still be delivered if the infrastructure opportunity does not come forward.

- Section 2.4 (Permitted and proposed developments) of the masterplan has been amended to include broad references to emerging development opportunities on undeveloped sites within the area.
- Language used in the SPD has been amended to ensure the document is used as 'guidance' rather than new policy.
- There have been clear references provided to the images, strategies and figures contained within the SPD document as being illustrative and/or indicative. This will ensure flexibility during the design, planning and determination process of future development applications.
- Corrections have been made to the document in regard to the minor inaccuracies, oversights in relation to listed buildings and application details.
- The green, open and water space sections within the SPD have been amended to provide further references to the activation and innovative uses that could be delivered in the area.

### **Next Steps**

- 3.22 The next steps for the SPD project is to make any necessary factual or minor editing changes prior to publishing the final South Poplar Masterplan SPD.
- 3.23 To prepare an Adoption Statement to accompany the South Poplar Masterplan SPD in accordance with Regulation 11 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The Adoption Statement sets out:
- a. date which the South Poplar Masterplan was adopted; and
  - b. notice that any person with sufficient interest in the decision to adopt the supplementary planning document may apply to the High Court for permission to apply for judicial review of that decision, and
  - c. that any such application must be made promptly and in any event not later than 3 months after the date on which the supplementary planning document was adopted; and.

- 3.28 Subject to Cabinet adopting the South Poplar Masterplan SPD, both the SPD and an adoption statement, will be finalised and published on the Council's web site and made available in the borough's Idea Stores, libraries and planning reception at the Town Hall. On adoption the South Poplar Masterplan SPD will become a material consideration in the assessment of applications within the designated masterplan area.
- 3.29 Under Regulation 11 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulation 2012 section, an application can be made within three months of adoption to the High Court to have a judicial review of that decision. However, we can still put full weight on the policies in the plan during the challenge period. Therefore, following adoption of the South Poplar Masterplan SPD there will be a statutory three months legal challenge period. The three months will commence from the date of adoption which will be the date of the Cabinet meeting. In the event of such a challenge, a further report will be presented to Cabinet to provide a suitable update on the expected process and associated risks.

#### **4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 An Equalities checklist has been completed and is provided as appendix 4.

#### **5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:
- Best Value Implications,
  - Consultations,
  - Environmental (including air quality),
  - Risk Management,
  - Crime Reduction,
  - Safeguarding.
  - Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.
- 5.2 No other statutory implications.

#### **6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications emanating from this report which provides guidance for developments within the South Poplar Masterplan area.
- 6.2 The cost of producing the South Poplar Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document has been funded using the Tower Hamlets Local Infrastructure Fund and with a financial contribution from Transport for London.

## **7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

- 7.1 The Executive (Mayor and Cabinet as defined in section 9(c) of *the Local Government Act 2000*) is authorised to consider the proposed recommendations in this report by virtue of the SPD comprising a 'Key Decision' as defined in Section 3 of the Council's Constitution. Paragraph 6 of Section 3 of the Constitution defines 'Key Decision' as an executive decision which is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions. As stated above in this report, this SPD if implemented will have a significant effect on all wards in the borough as it will comprise a material planning consideration in the assessment of new planning applications in the area it applies to.
- 7.2 The SPD itself is a document defined in regulation 5 of the Town and Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 ('the Regulations') to encompass any document prepared by a local planning authority which contains statements (insofar as they relate to this SPD) regarding:
- the development and use of land which the local planning authority wish to encourage during any specified period; and
  - any environmental, social, design and economic objectives which are relevant to the attainment of the development and use of land.
- 7.3 The SPD comprises a category of planning documents, which only supplement the policies in a local plan. Unlike local plans, SPDs are not required to be submitted to independent examination.
- 7.4 The SPD has been prepared in accordance with the procedures set out in the Regulations.
- 7.5 Pursuant to s149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council is under a duty to have due regard to think about the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination;
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't;
  - Foster or encourage good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.
- 7.5 The completed Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening Report at Appendix 3 of this report has been prepared pursuant to regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

7.6 The completed Equalities checklist at Appendix 4 of this report demonstrates the Councils compliance with its public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010.

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## **Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents**

### **Linked Report**

- None.

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – South Poplar Masterplan SPD
- Appendix 2 – Consultation and Engagement Report
- Appendix 3 – Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening Report
- Appendix 4: Equality Impact Analysis Screening Tool

### **Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012**

- None.

### **Officer contact details for documents:**

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