

<p>Cabinet</p> <p>28 July 2021</p>	 <p>TOWER HAMLETS</p>
<p>Report of: Ann Sutcliffe, Corporate Director Place</p>	<p>Classification: Unrestricted</p>
<p>Adoption of Queen Mary University London (“QMUL”) Mile End Campus Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)</p>	

Lead Member	Councillor Eve McQuillan, Cabinet Member for Planning and Social Inclusion
Originating Officer(s)	Patrick Harmsworth
Wards affected	Bethnal Green, Bow West
Key Decision?	Yes
Forward Plan Notice Published	1 June 2021
Reason for Key Decision	Impact on Wards
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 3. A dynamic, outcomes-based council using digital innovation and partnership working to respond to the changing needs of our borough

Executive Summary

The QMUL Mile End Campus Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is a masterplan document which provides guidance to inform the future growth and development of the Queen Mary University London (QMUL) Mile End Campus.

The overarching aim of this SPD is to ensure that future development proposals on the campus are considered in the context of a site-wide masterplan. This will enhance the quality of the estate while strengthening the public realm; providing appropriate building mass and height; improving pedestrian and cycle connectivity; enhancing the setting of heritage assets; integrating the campus more successfully with its surroundings; and creating a more welcoming campus environment. The SPD also considers how the growth of the campus can maximise community benefits, biodiversity opportunities and environmental sustainability.

The SPD includes site-specific development principles for five development areas. Each development area is supported by illustrative massing sketches, or 'case studies' to give an indication of how development might look when the development principles are applied.

The SPD supports the vision, objective and policies of the Tower Hamlets Local Plan 2031. This includes the vision for the Local Plan's 'Central Area', and the objective to *'support the expansion of Queen Mary University of London and associated uses, while ensuring good integration with surrounding areas'*.

The document will provide material weight in planning decisions; and will therefore help the council to evaluate individual planning applications on the campus to assess whether they are in line with the SPD. The document will therefore provide more certainty within the development management process as individual sites come forward.

The SPD has been through an extensive preparation and consultation process. This includes:

- Evidence-base gathering and initial consultation carried out during July-October 2020;
- Masterplanning and preparation of a draft document between September 2020 and February 2021; and
- Formal public consultation on the draft document during February-March 2021.

A wide range of community groups, residents, landowners, university staff and other stakeholders engaged with the SPD and made formal responses as part of the consultation process.

It is now necessary to adopt the QMUL Mile End Campus SPD to further enable clear and robust guidance to inform development proposals on the campus, which will ensure that existing character is respected and enhanced; and that new development of the highest quality in accordance with corporate and Council objectives and the Development Plan (Local Plan and London Plan).

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. approve the QMUL Mile End Campus 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 for planning decisions in the SPD study area.
2. authorise the Corporate Director of Place to make any necessary factual or minor editing changes prior to publishing the final 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 Screening as set out in Appendix 3.
5. note the Equalities Impact Assessment as set out in appendix 4.

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

1.1 The decisions made in the QMUL Mile End Campus SPD respond to an identified set of overarching issues at the site and surrounds as set out below:

- Until now, the Mile End Campus has developed in a largely ad-hoc way, and as demonstrated through recent applications and pre-application proposals, it is clear that this approach is set to continue.
- The scale of development proposed, coupled with the absence of a holistic plan for the campus, culminated in the refusal of a new university building (Hatton House) at Strategic Development Committee on heritage grounds in 2019. This was against officer recommendation.

- As such, there is a need for holistic understanding of how and where new growth on the campus should take place; and how Local Plan policies can be applied to this specific site. A council-led Masterplan SPD would provide this level of guidance, while also providing material planning weight in the decision-making process.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The new Local Plan provides a vision and strategic development principles for development within the borough (among other policy themes and spatial guidance). An alternative option would be to rely on the Local Plan to support and guide the development and assessment of new buildings and public realm improvements in the study area, without further detailed design guidelines.
- 2.2 This option was considered inadequate as it would not provide a sufficiently detailed understanding of the Mile End Campus and its unique set of site-specific circumstances and opportunities, being located proximate, for example, to the Regents Canal, Mile End Park, Mile End Hospital and several key heritage assets. Without the additional design guidelines provided by the SPD, the Local Plan does not provide in itself the necessary level of detail to respond to these site-specific opportunities and constraints.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

Background

- 3.1 QMUL have outlined to the Council their ambitions for future growth, focusing this growth primarily on the Mile End Campus, both in terms of university floorspace and student accommodation. Until now the campus has been developed in a largely ad-hoc way, and this approach looks set to continue in the absence of any holistic plan for the campus.
- 3.2 As such, the Strategic Planning and Development Management services have prepared a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) that provides a planning framework to inform the future redevelopment of the QMUL Mile End Campus. The SPD seeks to enhance the quality of the estate while strengthening the public realm; providing appropriate building mass and height; improving pedestrian and cycle connectivity; enhancing the setting of heritage assets; integrating the campus more successfully with its surroundings; and creating a more welcoming campus environment. The SPD

also considers how the growth of the campus can secure biodiversity opportunities and environmental sustainability.

3.3 Development of the campus, and this SPD, is also an opportunity for the university to reintegrate with its neighbours by expanding community programmes; create a more welcoming campus environment; and provide tangible public benefits such as new community spaces or canal-side amenity spaces.

3.4 The SPD provides guidance on the implementation of policies in the Tower Hamlets Local Plan 2031 in relation to future growth on the campus, including the following:

- Policy S.SG2: Delivering sustainable growth in Tower Hamlets
- Policy S.DH1: Delivering high quality design
- Policy D.DH2: Attractive streets, spaces and public realm
- Policy S.DH3: Heritage and the historic environment
- Policy D.DH6: Tall buildings
- Policy S.OWS1: Creating a network of open spaces
- Policy S.OWS2: Enhancing the network of water spaces
- Policy D.OWS3: Open space and green grid networks
- Policy D.OWS4: Water spaces
- Policy D.MW3: Waste collection facilities in new development
- Policy S.TR1: Sustainable travel
- Policy D.TR2: Impacts on the transport network
- Policy D.TR3: Parking and permit-free
- Policy D.TR4: Sustainable delivery and servicing

3.5 In addition, the SPD supports the vision for the 'Central Area', as set out in the Local Plan. Specifically, in relation to QMUL, the Central Area Vision states:

Queen Mary University of London's role as a knowledge hub will be strengthened, with stronger connections to Mile End Neighbourhood Centre and its public transport interchange. The area will be home to a more diverse range of residential and student communities, with a particular focus on family housing which will benefit from access to varied open spaces.

3.6 Furthermore, an objective to achieve this vision includes: *Support the expansion of Queen Mary University of London and associated uses, while ensuring good integration with surrounding areas.*

3.7 The SPD 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.

3.8 The 'masterplan objectives', as set out in Section B of the document, are summarised below:

- **Strengthening community** – weave the campus within the local community, making the campus generally a more welcoming place.
- **Protect and enhance heritage assets** – celebrate built heritage; improve the public realm setting of such heritage assets; deliver a legible interpretation of such assets through a heritage trail.
- **Improving public realm and ecology**, particularly along the canal-side
- **Improving wellbeing & linking to existing green spaces** - improve recreational use and opportunities for health & leisure activities.
- **Active frontages & improved permeability** - offering an improved street-level experience, passive security and a more welcoming environment.
- **East-West and North-South axis** - strong and legible pedestrian links through the campus to surrounding areas and facilities.
- **Strategic & coherent growth** - deliver a strategic plan for development whilst protecting heritage and delivering public benefits.
- **Sustainable transport infrastructure** - promote sustainable means of travel, encourage use of TfL services, walking and cycling.

3.9 The SPD is split into four sections. Section A explores the local context and analyses the current setting of the campus. Section B considers area-wide priorities in relation to the Mile End campus and surrounding neighbourhood, setting out masterplan objectives and key issues. Section C considers in more detail into each potential development zone through case studies and explores design principles that should be adopted in new developments. Section D focuses on planning obligations and mitigation.

3.10 In Section C of the document (Site Design Guide), there a series of site-specific development principles for five development areas on the campus. The development principles embody site specific opportunities and Local Plan

objectives relating to, for example, urban design, heritage, movement and connectivity, open space and biodiversity.

- 3.11 Illustrative sketches and perspective images are also set out within Section C to give an indication of how development might look when the development principles are applied.
- 3.12 The SPD's project team is comprised of LBTH Officers, Haworth Tompkins (urban design and masterplanning), LDA Design (Landscape and public realm) and Systs (transport).

SPD process

Project scoping, evidence gathering and initial consultation

- 3.13 Project scoping and evidence gathering took place between July 2020 and September 2020. As part of this work, and in order to inform and provide a robust basis for drafting the supplementary policy, extensive research has been carried out into the character, heritage, design, public realm and functionality of the site and surrounds, as well as the transport baseline for the site.
- 3.14 The following steps formed part of this stage:
1. Desk-based research in relation to site context, existing policy and relevant evidence.
 2. Several site visits by the project team to develop an understanding of key opportunities and constraints.
 3. Several meetings with internal and external stakeholders which developed the baseline understanding and key issues. Full details are contained within Appendix 2: Consultation and Engagement Report.

- 3.15 The aim of the above approach was to 'front-load' the evidence gathering and initial consultation in order to ensure that all stakeholders were fully aware of the project; and that key issues were understood as early as possible.

Masterplanning and producing a draft SPD document

- 3.16 Between September 2020 and February 2021, the core masterplanning was undertaken and a draft document was produced. Inputs were provided by the landscape and transport specialists for the respective Section B chapters: 'Campus Places and Spaces'; and 'Transport and Access'.

Formal consultation

3.17 The QMUL Mile End Campus SPD ran a six-week public consultation between 3 February to 17 March 2021. This extended beyond the required four-week consultation period. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, no in-person events could be held during the consultation period, but a series of online meetings with internal and statutory consultees were held, as well as an online community meeting. A copy of the SPD was made available on the council's Let's Talk Tower Hamlets website.

3.18 Full details of the consultation activities can be found in Appendix 2: Consultation and Engagement Report, however, some of the methods are highlighted below:

- Consultation webpage including a dedicated SPD email address and an online 'comment board'.
- Letter drop to local residents and posters placed in nearby parks providing information on the SPD and the consultation;
- Emails to all stakeholders and dedicated consultation website;
- Two internal stakeholder meetings and several focused meetings with a range of council officers;
- Local Community Event held in February 2021;
- Meetings with external stakeholders such as QMUL, Mile End Hospital, TfL, Canal and Rivers Trust and Historic England;
- Presentations to the Lead Member, Mayor and Regeneration Board.

3.19 Consultation was undertaken in accordance with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), the Corporate Handbook and in collaboration with the Communications Team. The public consultation on the draft was designed to test the content and recommendations of the QMUL SPD.

3.20 All the measures above were widely publicised through social media (including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn) and emails were circulated to the Strategic Planning contact list.

3.21 Set out below is a summary of the consultation and engagement carried out for the SPD, and the responses received.

- 47 written responses, from local residents, local groups, landowners and statutory consultees, received via email, the Let's Talk Tower Hamlets website and letters.
- 12 external meetings and 7 internal meetings held.
- 25 attendees to the 'open-invite' community event.

3.22 The Council has collated the individual comments made on the draft SPD and formulated responses to themes (see next section) that have been used to inform the finalisation of the 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

3.23 The overarching objectives for the QMUL Mile End Campus SPD were generally supported by the community and key stakeholders. There was particular support in relation to the following:

- Improving local connections accessible to the public through the campus to increase the permeability of the local area, and in general, making the campus feel more welcoming. Particular support given to a new bridge link opportunity to Mile End Park; and a connection under the railway to Meath Gardens to the north of the campus;
- Opening up the canalside area to provide a new north-south route and amenity space;
- Opportunities for further community cohesion and integration between the university and the local community;
- Enhanced biodiversity opportunities, particularly along the canal;
- Support for new heritage trail and appreciation that there is a significant opportunity to celebrate the rich heritage in and around the university campus, particularly the Regents Canal and the Novo Cemetery.

3.24 Representations expressed concerns in relation to the following:

- Security issues resulting from the 'opening up' the campus, given prevalence of anti-social behaviour in the area;
- The new bridge link over the canal, and its potential to result in adverse impacts to the canalside area and Mile End Park, as well as adding to pedestrian congestion issues at key pinch points along the towpath.
- Greater heritage protection required particularly in regard to the canal-side area, such as identification of specific canal-side historic features.
- Quantum and mass of development set out in the SPD, particularly along the canal-side, which could result in overly-dominant buildings and overshadowing of the canal.
- The planning obligations section being generally too onerous;

- Greater heights requested in certain locations, such as the student accommodation in the Residential Quarter where building heights are too low to meet the projected need of student accommodation.
- An enhanced connection between the campus and Mile End Hospital is not feasible given the sensitivities of hospital patients.

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

- Clarity that the case study massing diagrams are indicative only; and removal of references to development quantum or building height in order to ensure the SPD contains the appropriate level of prescriptiveness.
- A second development option for the canalside area has been developed in response to comments. This seeks to step back massing away from the canal, create more set back from the canalside, and create a new publically-accessible park/amenity space.
- Clarity that the bridge connection over the canal is only a 'potential future opportunity' based on the local connections masterplanning work, and any such bridge would be subject to further testing and consultation.
- Further detail and clarity provided in the document in relation to heritage, particularly in regards to archaeological potential of the campus; the Novo Cemetery; and the Regents Canal.
- A new section focusing on site security and how this could be well-designed and integrated sensitively into the public realm.
- Removal of a new pedestrian/cycle connection between the campus and Mile End Hospital, although the principle of potential connective between the two estates remains.
- Further clarity and detail in relation to biodiversity opportunities.

Next Steps

3.26 To complete outstanding items relating to:

- Updated Transport Evidence Base and minor update of SPD's 'Transport and Access' section.
- Review of Planning Obligations text to ensure it meets regulations;

- Minor refinement of the massing sketches and visual perspectives, taking into account comments received, the canalside case study in particular.
 - Finalise the summary of consultation feedback.
- 3.27 To make any necessary factual or minor editing changes prior to publishing the final QMUL SPD.
- 3.28 To prepare an Adoption Statement to accompany the QMUL Mile End Campus 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 QMUL SPD 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 QMUL Mile End Campus 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 SPD will become a material consideration in the assessment of any planning decisions in the study 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 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. See 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 There are 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 to developers when designing high density development proposals.

6.2 The cost of producing the high density living supplementary plan was met from existing budgetary provision and GLA funding.

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. 2
- 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.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- None

Appendices

- Appendix 1: QMUL Mile End Campus 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

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