

<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Decision Type:</b> Key
--------------------------------	------------------------------

<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date:</b> 12 July 2023
<b>Subject:</b>	Mill Gate Shopping Centre & Estate: Joint Venture update and development principles	
<b>Report of</b>	Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth	

## Summary

- 1.1 The Council acquired the Mill Gate Shopping Estate in April 2022 and entered into a joint venture (JV) partnership with Bruntwood to operate the asset and develop it for the future.
- 1.2 The Joint Venture is working up a high-level vision and evolving masterplan for future development of the Mill Gate Estate following initial engagement with the public and other stakeholders.
- 1.3 There is a requirement for the JV to engage with local stakeholders to communicate the emerging development vision prior to further design development activity.
- 1.4 The JV has recommended that further design development be based on a Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) approach. This is a detailed document which has a strong link to the planning process.
- 1.5 The SRF approach provides a greater level of structure and flexibility to govern the development process for Mill Gate as a whole when compared with a phased ('plot by plot') approach. It involves detailed pre-planning consultation with statutory and other consultees to ensure the future vision for the whole asset is aligned with the Council's Strategic aspirations.

## Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Provide approval for the JV to undertake engagement activity over the summer period to introduce the evolving masterplan design and key development principles.
- 2.2 Provide approval for the JV to procure and develop a Strategic Regeneration Framework for the medium/ long term re-development of the Mill Gate Estate.

## Reasons for recommendation(s)

- 3.1 It is important for the JV to engage with the Public and other stakeholders in order to validate the emerging strategic vision for the Mill Gate Estate prior to further design activity.
- 3.2 Development of a Strategic Regeneration Framework for Mill Gate enables large scale development to progress in accordance with the emerging vision of the Mill Gate Joint Venture vehicle and the strategic objectives set out during the acquisition of the asset.
- 3.3 The SRF provides the most flexible and cost-effective method of project development.

## Alternative options considered and rejected

- **Progress with the development on the basis of individual phases, obtaining outline planning permission and then undertaking detailed planning applications for each phase.**
- 4.1 Whilst it is possible to apply for amendments to an outline planning permission, even the most flexible outline planning permissions will include parameters that could constrain the overall delivery strategy.
  - 4.2 The cost of preparing outline applications is significant due to the requirement for a full suite of technical reports. Other than design and planning application fees the cost is unlikely to be significantly different to that of preparing a detailed application for the whole site under an SRF.
  - 4.3 Where changes are required that depart from the approved parameters it is possible to submit standalone drop-in planning applications, however recent case law can provide a significant risk of extinguishing the underlying planning permission and the associated loss in up front expenditure.
- **Not progress the Mill Gate redevelopment proposals towards a first phase of development and leave the Mill Gate centre undeveloped.**
- 4.4 This has been discounted as this would not be in line with the strategic goals of both the joint venture partnership or wider Council aspirations. The retail sector continues to be challenged with the continued increase in online shopping accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Keeping the status quo with the centre would effectively lead to a managed decline and the opportunity to create a vibrant and sustainable centre would be lost.
-

---

## Report Author and Contact Details:

*Name: Steven Manifold*

*Position: Major Projects Manager*

*Department: Business, Growth & Infrastructure*

*E-mail: [s.manifold@bury.gov.uk](mailto:s.manifold@bury.gov.uk)*

*Name: Robert Summerfield*

*Position: Assistant Director of Regeneration*

*Department: Business, Growth & Infrastructure*

*E-mail: [r.summerfield@bury.gov.uk](mailto:r.summerfield@bury.gov.uk)*

---

## Background

- 5.1 The Council acquired the Mill Gate Shopping Centre and wider estate alongside Joint Venture (JV) partner Bruntwood in April 2022 following approval by Cabinet in November 2021.
- 5.2 A competitive tender exercise was undertaken by the JV concluding in August 2022 to secure the services of an architectural and master planning consultant. BDP Architects were successful in this tender process and they were instructed to undertake a review of the Mill Gate estate and establish a vision and highlight opportunities to unlock the potential for the Mill Gate and secure its long term future.
- 5.3 The architect's brief was clear in its direction to take into account the pre-existing Bury Town Centre Masterplan and the principles of the Councils Vision 2030, 'Let's Do It!' strategy, in addition to statutory and best practice design guidance.
- 5.4 The work undertaken to date has involved local stakeholders and Council officers to provide a clear ambition and delivery plan for the introduction of new homes but also to deliver a sustainable town centre retail asset for the future. The reimagined Mill Gate will add to the existing town centre and create space that local people will be proud of and visitors will be keen to use.
- 5.5 The proposed regeneration of the Mill Gate Estate is highly aspirational and over the next 15 – 20 years will enable the delivery of a successful new neighbourhood for Bury. This has the potential for the joint venture to deliver one of the North West's most ambitious regeneration projects.
- 5.6 The current vision puts forward proposals to deliver 120 homes within its first development phase, with up to 700-800 over the entire masterplan period. Improvements are also proposed to public realm and retail accommodation. This will ensure the asset remains suitable for modern retail requirements whilst also catering for the leisure sector.

### Engagement Activity: Communicating the emerging vision

- 5.7 High level public engagement activity was undertaken in November 2022 to provide the JV with a clear understanding of the aspirations and requirements of the public and other key stakeholders for the future of Mill Gate. This information has formed the basis of the emerging vision and masterplan.
- 5.8 The vision has been subject to technical review by the JV itself, with extensive information gathering and development carried out by Bruntwood.
- 5.9 The emerging development vision proposes improvements to public realm and connectivity, alongside residential development at scale. It also provides an evidential case for reconfiguring retail spaces in line with more modern requirements.
- 5.10 Prior to further design development the JV will engage further with all stakeholders to gain feedback on the emerging designs and key changes. This engagement activity will form part of the next stages of design, ensuring the vision is responsive to local needs and that it remains in line with relevant strategies and statute.

### The Mill Gate Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF)

- 5.11 In order to progress the development proposals the Mill Gate JV would like to commission a Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) for the Mill Gate Estate. The SRF is the most effective way to establish a clear vision, set of objectives and guiding development principles, which will form an important material consideration in determining future detailed planning applications as they are brought forward on a multi-phase basis. A similar approach to development has already been carried out in Radcliffe Town Centre and has provided a clear evidential case and strategy for onward development in that settlement.
- 5.12 The following summarises the key considerations associated with the regeneration framework approach:
  - **Status** – The SRF document will set out the strategy upon which planning applications within the Regeneration Framework area will be brought forward. The framework will be endorsed, in line with the projected programme, by the Council Cabinet as a material consideration for future planning applications.
  - **Planning Programme** – Detailed development programmes for a phase 1 will be prepared alongside the SRF. Pre-application engagement between the Mill Gate JV, the planning authority and all key stakeholders will be carried out. No detailed planning application will be submitted until the final version of the Strategic Regeneration Framework has been endorsed by a cabinet decision.

- **Strategic Infrastructure** – The SRF will be supported by relevant studies that enable identification of strategic requirements or mitigation for the development quantum to be delivered by the whole masterplan.
- **Stakeholder Engagement** – The process will provide opportunity to engage the public and key stakeholders at an early stage prior to planning applications coming forward. The SRF approach will be more accessible and facilitate wider stakeholder engagement.
- **Flexibility** – The framework will identify overarching principles of place which encompass indicative development principles and parameters, character studies and a site wide illustrative masterplan. Due to the long term delivery timescales, the SRF principles will enable delivery to respond and flex to changes over the plan period. Any material changes and updates to the SRF over the delivery period would be brought back for further cabinet approval.

### Outline SRF Development Programme

5.13 The programme for approval of the SRF is currently being finalised, however the indicative programme timeline would see the following critical path for delivery:

Task Name	Proposed Programme Timing
<b>Cabinet #1</b> Approval to progress with development of Mill Gate SRF	12 <sup>th</sup> July 2023
Public and stakeholder Engagement re: emerging Mill Gate vision and masterplan. <i>This will involve sessions with all relevant stakeholders including elected Members. Format TBC.</i>	July 2023 – September 2023
<b>Cabinet #2</b> Request to release Draft SRF prior to public consultation	October 2023
Public / Stakeholder Consultation period (6 weeks) – statutory timescale.	November / December 2023
<b>Cabinet #3</b> Request for endorsement of final SRF- following stakeholder feedback/review and amendments including further design development.	March 2024

5.14 The critical path assumes sign off for each of the stages at the relevant Cabinet date. The critical path does not allow for unforeseen delays and the programme will require regular review.

---

## Links with the Corporate Priorities:

- 6.1 The evolving vision for the Mill Gate leans heavily on the 'Let's do it!' strategy and aspirations. It also directly refers to other projects currently in development or delivery in the town, defined and managed under the Bury Town Centre Masterplan. Significant input has been received from a variety of stakeholders and there has been particular reference to the Council's Housing Needs and Demand Assessment, community strategies and inclusive growth agenda.
- 6.2 The regeneration of Bury Town Centre supports delivery of the 'Let's Do It!' strategy and the five themes that underpin this vision. As we move towards a future in urban areas where people travel less, buy locally, work and access local services, we need vital and liveable neighbourhoods. This means the Council must think carefully about neighbourhoods and how they can be either built or re-designed to work well. The five themes are summarised below and how they link into the vision for Bury Town Centre.
- 6.3 **Healthy Communities:** The acquisition of the Millgate provides options for providing new community infrastructure including adult learning, civic facilities and other health related services will be a true connection to the community. The implementation of active travel, walking and cycling routes connecting people with local amenities and increasing the availability of public open space will enable the community in Bury Town Centre and surrounding suburban to reconnect and thrive.
- 6.4 **Carbon neutral:** We need to use every opportunity to ensure that development in Bury Town Centre on our land is carbon neutral and prioritises active travel.
- 6.5 **Inclusion:** making sure that everyone's voice is heard, this will absolutely be a focus through the consultation of the regeneration work.
- 6.6 **Digital first:** the full fibre roll out has enabled access to faster speeds and future-proofed infrastructure. This presents an excellent opportunity for the businesses and community with Bury Town Centre being the ideal location to cultivate new business growth, encourage start up SMEs, promote digital growth, and deliver tech enabled employment space.
- 6.7 **Inclusive Growth:** the regeneration scheme at the Millgate in Bury Town Centre will include investment in physical infrastructure (roads, cycle ways and public transport); creating more flexible and innovative/digital workspaces to encourage more businesses to open and remain in Bury; to ensure residents have the best chance to access good jobs.

---

## **Equality Impact and Considerations:**

- 7.1 Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows: A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
  - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
  - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
  - The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. If proposals are brought forward to Cabinet in due course for comprehensive redevelopment, a full resident and wider community engagement strategy will be included.
- 7.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) will be developed alongside the creation of the Strategic Regeneration Framework document and will be updated as the regeneration project moves forward. The EIA will be made available for the consideration of Elected Members when approval is sought from Cabinet to adopt the SRF itself (see section 5.13). The overall vision for the Mill Gate development is to deliver inclusive growth opportunities for Bury residents and the development process will adhere to specific duties required under the Equality Act 2010, alongside related statute and policies.

---

## **Environmental Impact and Considerations:**

- 8.1 The Council has a pledge to be Zero Carbon by 2038. This means that the current estate needs to be rationalised and modernised.
- 8.2 Bury Town Centre is a highly sustainable location, with a major transport interchange which links to the 100-station Manchester Metrolink system, the town centre is also a major bus hub for north Greater Manchester and contains cycling and walking infrastructure. The Millgate Estate itself is on a 15.2-acre brownfield site in the centre of the town. This presents the opportunity to introduce a significant residential capacity in the heart of a highly sustainable town-centre, one which is not car-dependent. The Centre itself is of a certain age and the opportunity for refurbishment and redevelopment will enable the estate to reduce its carbon footprint over time.

- 8.3 Sustainability is a key theme for the joint venture and this runs through the work being undertaken as part of the visioning exercise. There is the opportunity to repopulate the town centre and promote sustainable town centre living. Along with environmental consideration of new build accommodation there is the opportunity to decarbonise existing buildings within the Mill Gate estate.
- 

#### **Assessment and Mitigation of Risk:**

- 9.1 The development of the SRF will advance the design and business justification for investment in the Mill Gate asset. This will guide the delivery strategy for the development. The creations of the SRF does not pose a risk to the overall project, although the additional development/design activity will be used to identify specific risk(s) to regeneration delivery and operation of the asset in the medium to long run.
- 

#### **Legal Implications:**

- 10 The proposed SRF is a non-statutory, informal document. If it is subsequently approved by Cabinet, it will not form part of the statutory development plan, and the force of s38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 will not apply to it. It will be a material consideration to which regard may be had in consideration of planning applications, but it will carry less weight than a Supplementary Planning Document. It will not be a document with which development control decisions must accord unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 

#### **Financial Implications:**

- 11 The costs for delivering the SRF are to be borne by the joint venture. At its meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> May the joint venture board approved £250k of fees to take the masterplan through a SRF subject to approval by the Cabinet at today's meeting.
- 

#### **Appendices:**

None.

---



---

**Background papers:**

- Acquisition of the Mill Gate Estate Bury – Cabinet November 2021  
<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=126&MId=2883&Ver=4>
- Bury Town Centre Masterplan – Cabinet March 2022  
<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=126&MId=3262&Ver=4>

**Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
SRF	Strategic Regeneration Framework
JV	Joint Venture