Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Local Plan: Policy MTC7- Site M8:
Land at Moorbridge Road, Maidenhead - Design Brief

Planning Policy Unit

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Land at Moorbridge Road, Maidenhead: Design Brief

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Introduction

Development briefs are a useful tool for improving the quality and consistency of advice to developers, the efficiency of the planning process and the quality of the built environment. The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions highlighted this in a recent study¹. The purpose of this brief therefore is to assist those who are interested in developing a scheme for the site in Moorbridge Road.

The brief;

• Provides information on the site and known constraints
• Establishes the planning and design parameters that will be considered during the planning application procedure
• Discusses the land use aspects of the development opportunity.
• Identifies the most appropriate form of development that will enhance this important town centre site and provide a high quality scheme.

The site lies to the east of Maidenhead town centre. It is situated adjacent to the A4, the main road through Maidenhead, and has good links to the transport network. The plan shows the site location and the area of the site covered by this brief.
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Policy Context

The site is subject to the policies set out in the Borough Local Plan and relevant supplementary planning guidance, PPG’s etc. Specifically the site is identified in the Local Plan as a major development opportunity. Policy MTC7 states

THE MAJOR DEVELOPMENT SITES IDENTIFIED ON THE TOWN CENTRE INSET MAP SHOULD BE DEVELOPED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GUIDELINES CONTAINED IN THE SCHEDULE AND WITH THE DEVELOPMENT BRIEFS TO BE PREPARED.

The site is identified as Site M8, the guidelines for which include:

i. Small business units
ii. Access to be taken from Waldeck Road
iii. Improved turning lane required into Waldeck Road from Bridge Road
iv. Height guidelines of 2/3 storeys
v. Design to reflect prominent location and to incorporate environmental improvements and improved pedestrian access into the town centre and through the Moorbridge Road subway.
vi. The listed public house to be retained

Development Plan Policy

The Berkshire Structure Plan (Adopted December 1995)

The following Structure Plan policies are relevant to the development of the site

- Policy OS1- The overall strategy
- Policies LD1, LD3, LD5, LD6 and LD8 limiting the impact of new development and steering developments to sites in sustainable locations
- Policies EN1, EN3, EN4 and EN10 protect and enhance the environment of the area
- Policies H4, H5, H7, H9, H10 seek to locate housing in sustainable locations and seek to encourage both small units and affordable units.
- Policies BU1, BU2, BU3 allow for limited business and industrial development particularly if they provide a variety of premises
- Policies T6, T3, T4, T5 deal with the provision for pedestrian, cyclist, public transport, private car use, traffic management and car parking.

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Plan (Adopted July 1999)

The Following Local Plan polices are relevant to the development of the site

- Policy DG1, design guidelines
- Policy LB1, LB2 and LB3 the protection of Listed Buildings
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• Policy F1 refers to flooding
• Policies R3, R4, R5 and R6 and the provision of open space
• Policies E1, E3, E6, and E10 for the provision of business development
• Policies H3, H6, H8 and H10 for housing developments
• Policy P4 for parking provision
• Policy MTC9 for the development of the site M8

Planning History

427529 72-74 Moorbridge Road. Six flats two retail units. Approved 28.3.94. Now lapsed.
423301 72-74 Moorbridge Road. Re-furbishment and alterations to existing building. Erection of extensions and construction of car park to the rear. Approved 17.5.90. Now lapsed.
428307 72-74 Moorbridge Road, Renewal of 423301. Approved 12.12.94. Now lapsed.
00/36436 50-74 Moorbridge Road. : Demolition of existing building and erection of new office with parking. Approved on Appeal 6.8.01: this included a car parking area on no 74.

Description

The site is approximately 0.97 Ha. It lies adjacent to the main A4 route through Maidenhead town centre (with a site frontage also onto the Maidenhead Moor Channel) and the Waldeck Road industrial area. On the opposite side of the A4 lies The Moor, which is connected to the site via a subway. The site contains the listed Custom House pub and a number of other older Victorian buildings, which are in a neglected state. The site has supported a mix of uses throughout its history including commercial and residential. Moorbridge Road was once the main route into Maidenhead from Slough and London. The Custom House, previously called the Green Dragon, originated as a coaching inn for passing travellers and remains a good example of 18th century architecture and is a grade II listed building.

The site has views towards The Maidenhead Moor and the listed Almshouses, but the presence of the main road with its traffic direction signage and central reservation barriers, impacts on these views and on the setting of the listed building.
Present Positive Features

- High visibility from main A4 into the site
- High pedestrian flow along Moorbridge Road to the town centre. Bridge Street, which feeds into Moorbridge Road, records a high pedestrian count comparable to the flow of pedestrians in the major retail core, such as the High Street / King Street junction.
- Close proximity to the town centre
- Magnet shopping store on the corner of Moorbridge Road (Waitrose)
- Within easy access of the A4 - a major through route
- Custom House, a handsome 18th century public house
- Green spaces including the Maidenhead Moor Channel and views over The Moor
- Large street space with the potential for public enjoyment
- Good access to public transport routes
- Ideal site for a mixed use scheme, which would contribute positively to the urban renaissance of this part of Maidenhead
- A gateway project to Maidenhead town centre.

Constraints and Enhancement Opportunities.

- Position of the roads and poor quality roadside
- Maidenhead Moor Channel providing a green corridor with potential for an attractive informal open space
- Neglected brown-field site with poor quality space and buildings.
- Community needs for housing
- Cycle and pedestrian routes need improvements
- Retention of listed building.
Site Appraisal: Land at Moorbridge Road, Maidenhead

Significant trees
Active edges
Poor frontages
Important buildings
Main routes
Pedestrian Routes
Views

Enhancement opportunity
River Frontage

Main Vehicular flow
Vehicular entrance to industrial estate

Not to scale
Policy Review

In the light of government legislation and guidance it is necessary to review land use guidelines within the context of the Local Plan’s basic Policy framework.

The clear message from central government is the need to increase the quality of our urban environment through good urban design. The government’s policy is clearly stated in PPG 1 and explored further in other PPG’s. The challenge in PPG1 is clear, “good design should be the aim of all those involved in the development process and should be encouraged everywhere”. The Urban Task force led by Lord Rogers published their report "Towards an Urban Renaissance" in 1999, under the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions. It set out a new vision for urban regeneration founded on principles of design excellence, social well being and environmental responsibility within a legislative and viable economic framework. It states; "Urban neighbourhoods should be attractive places to live in. This can be achieved by improving the quality of design and movement, creating compact developments, with a mix of uses, better public transport and a density which supports local services and fosters a strong sense of community and public safety". From this a series of recommendations were made and these formed part of the framework for the recent White Paper: Towns and Cities Today. The paper highlighted the need for better planning and design to create places that provide attractive homes, have good quality public spaces in which people feel safe, allow easy access to local facilities on foot or bike and are well served by public transport. It also highlighted the need to bring brownfield land and empty buildings back into constructive use.

The need to review the use of urban sites is given added backing by guidance in other recent PPGs which seeks to encourage mixed uses and in particular the inclusion of residential uses in areas previously used for employment purposes (PPG 3 - Housing). Of paramount importance is the need to make full and best use of previously developed land particularly where this can support more sustainable patterns of land use.

From this review it is clear that there is a need to seek a comprehensive approach for Moorbridge Road. The brief will provide the framework for a staged implementation of a project, which achieves high levels of urban design to help create an attractive development and enhanced approach to Maidenhead, making efficient use of the available space and environmental resources.

Overall objective

To provide a quality development that will add a positive high density, mixed use urban contribution to this part of the town centre, meeting the variety of demands for commercial and office units as well as community needs, such as housing and leisure.
Development Concept

An indicative diagram below illustrates the general approach, which could be taken to develop this site to meet the design rationale.

Design Rationale

- Mixed use development- incorporating housing, business and leisure uses.
- Enhance Moorbridge Road primarily for pedestrian use and introduce roadside seating and new surface treatment for the street.
- Strengthen the tree screen between Moorbridge Road and A4.
- Enhance banks of flood channel for public enjoyment with pedestrian and cycle access.
- The main vehicular accesses will be from Waldeck Road.
- High-density layout to reflect the edge of town centre location and provide a landmark entrance to Maidenhead town centre.
- Variety of uses to integrate site as part of the town centre.
- Layout designed for maximum surveillance and safety.
- Private, semi-private and public space clearly defined.
- Entrances and the main public façades fronting onto the street.
- Enhance the main approach to town centre.
- Retention of listed building.
Design Principles

Access

The local plan states that the main vehicular access should be taken from Waldeck Road. Moorbridge Road can provide access to the buildings that front this stretch.

Pedestrian and cycle access into and around the site could be improved. This includes the crossing across facilities for pedestrians across the Waldeck Road and footways and cycleways along Bridge Road. Access to the Waldeck Estate could be improved, by providing a "riverside" route. This would provide a better connection to the town centre. This route should be clearly designed to show the demarcation between public and private areas. This helps people to feel safe about using the public spaces without challenges and gives the owners greater control and deters anti social behaviour or casual misuse. Care must be taken in siting of the facilities such as bin stores to ensure they are sensitively located in the semi-private space away from the public domain. The route, being over looked by the residential property, will provide 24-hour surveillance creating a safer route throughout the day.

A well designed development on this site would enhance and encourage the movement of people between the town centre and the River Thames.

Open space

Moorbridge Road is presently mainly a pedestrian route, as it no longer allows through traffic. Pedestrians from the surrounding residential areas use it as a route to the town centre and Waitrose, which is located on the corner of Moorbridge Road. The industrial units off Waldeck Road increase the flow of pedestrians in the area. The present frontage onto Moorbridge Road is a large expanse of road, which is under-used. This could provide a pleasant open space as a setting for the new development with seating in conjunction with the pub, and provide an attractive resting-place for passers-by. It would encourage local workers to visit the street for lunch etc. and will also provide a new gateway feature to the town centre.

The Maidenhead Moor Channel is a green strip, which is neglected. This has potential in providing a natural area for leisure associated activities to be enjoyed by residents and other users as well as potential wildlife habitat. It is also a pleasant pedestrian route through to Waldeck Road. This route should be well lit to create a safe place after dark. The parking and entrances over-looking in this area will create activity and casual surveillance, which will aid the feeling of safety in this area

The Environment Agency seeks an 8 metre buffer between the Maidenhead Moor Channel and any works. Any proposals to improve the riverine environment must seek written consent from the Environment Agency first. (Contact the Environment Agency on 01276 454331)

Policy R3 requires the provision of 4.3ha of formal and informal open space per '000 population. In July 2001, the local planning authority adopted draft
supplementary planning guidance (Draft SPG) for the interpretation of the Local Plan's open space policies. This Draft SPG is now a material consideration under Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act. The Draft SPG seeks financial contributions towards off-site provision for parks and playing pitches serving the Maidenhead urban area. An appropriate contribution will therefore be sought towards any element of this provision that is not to be provided on site. Further advice on the contributions should be sought from the Council's Planning Policy Unit.

Road Frontage Development

Development should front onto the roads. This is to allow high visibility and surveillance and therefore increased security. Primary access to the buildings should be from the street. This not only allows ease of understanding to the user but also increases the activity on the streets. Buildings must not present their backs to the street as this creates unattractive, blank facades and reduces overlooking of the street. This is also a more appropriate form of development for this area, linking with the built form further down Moorbridge Road towards the town centre.

Listed Building

PPG 15 states that "the Secretary of State would not expect consent to be given for the total or substantial demolition of any listed building without clear and convincing evidence that all reasonable efforts have been made to sustain existing uses or find viable new uses and these efforts have failed; that preservation in some charitable or community ownership is not possible or suitable; or that redevelopment would produce substantial benefits for the community which would decisively outweigh the loss resulting from the demolition". The Custom House public house is a grade II listed building, which has been in use as a public house until recently. The redevelopment of the site, and the associated environmental improvements, would assist the reuse of this building. It is a good example of 18th century architecture, and provides historic context and a standard of design for any scheme. Its retention is therefore an intrinsic part of the brief.

Archaeological Procedures

Any consent for new development should be accompanied by an Archaeological Desk Based Assessment. This is to accord with Local Plan policies ARCH13 and ARCH14 and guidance set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (November 1990).

Land use

The site provides the opportunity for a mixed-use landmark development at high density. This is an issue, which is supported by PPG 1 and promoted by central government

"Promoting mixed use development is essential to our planning approach: it brings new life back into our towns and cities, enhances our quality of life and character of place, and creates patterns of development that we can sustain in the long run."

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JOHN PRESCOTT MP, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Mixed-use development is a model, which works in many town centres and
can be seen working successfully in Sheet Street, Windsor, for example. It reduces the need for travel and creates places that are flexible and therefore can meet the change in demands for space.

People are attracted to living close to the town centre as it offers a convenience and vibrancy unlike the suburban areas. It presents an alternative to commuting into town. This site provides an ideal opportunity for small one bed or studio apartments where single people and couples can enjoy the convenience of nearby facilities. Residential use works well alongside office use with little conflict. This is achievable by careful consideration of the detailed design, such as the placing of lighting and air conditioning units. (To allow the uses to benefit from living alongside each other.) Providing 24-hour usage of the site increases the number of hours in which casual surveillance occurs and increases the viability and vitality of the site.

The listed building should preferably retain its original use. PPG 15 states "The best use will very often be the use for which the building was originally designed, and the continuation or reinstatement of that use should certainly be the first option when the future of the building is considered." Provision of a public house / restaurant aimed at the workers and nearby residential area should increase the viability of the site. The high visibility and environmental improvements of this area will act as a magnet for passers by.

Local businesses, especially new businesses, demand a variety of unit sizes. The concept of a mix of serviced accommodation or individual small units within an 'office village' type environment, could go some way towards meeting the needs for this type of premises. Smaller units from 100m² to 300m² would also be compatible with residential use, as their demands in terms of deliveries and infrastructure is less and they add a mix of interest in the variety of businesses.

The site has prominence and high visibility from the A4. Any development must be of high design quality and provide a landmark for this area. The corner of this site should therefore be developed as a landmark building. Office/ business use would provide this landmark and meet the needs of growing businesses.

Parking

Due to the close vicinity of the site to the town centre there could be relaxation in the normal parking standards. The proximity to local amenities means a reduction in car usage can be encouraged and workers can access the site through public transport. Limited parking could be provided within the centre of the site at the ratios listed in the following table.

A Transport Impact Assessment will be required, which will show how the additional traffic generated by the development will be accommodated on the highway network. It should also show details of enhancements proposed to the cycling, pedestrian and public transport network for the local area and the wider area of Maidenhead. There is increasing concern about the pedestrian crossing facilities on Waldeck Road at its junction with Bridge Road where improvements are required.

The subway that leads from the north of the site under the A4 is in need of
environmental improvements and contributions will be sought for sustainable transport improvements in Maidenhead as a whole.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office Use</th>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>A3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parking Provision</td>
<td>1 space per 35m²</td>
<td>1.5 space per 1 bed unit, 1 space per studio</td>
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Materials and design

The existing materials within the site, are predominantly red bricks, some yellow, with slate and tile roofs. The variety of design details and height of the buildings are part of the street scene and should be encouraged to provide a setting which is appropriate for the listed building and give a richness to the area. Building height should be three storeys with some variety at two storeys.

The corner of the site with Waldeck Road and Bath Road is a prime opportunity for a landmark building, which gives a gateway feature to the approach to Maidenhead town centre.

Landscape

The landscaping between the A4 and Moorbridge Road is in need of strengthening. Planting trees along this edge would not only act as a partial visual barrier but would allow glimpses through the trees to the passers by. Trees are an ideal way of absorbing some of the fumes produced by the passing traffic. Features that are neglected within the area such as the bridge and the Maidenhead Moor Channel are areas of opportunity for enhancement, and can feature in any landscape scheme. Improvement to the hard landscaping and opening up the area will create a pedestrian friendly area, which can be shielded from the A4 by landscaping, but it is important to retain the historical setting of the Listed Building and the views from the A4 down Moorbridge Road. This will also encourage links along Moorbridge Road. The subway is in need of refurbishment and repairs, requiring new lighting, redecoration, new surfacing and improved access. In terms of the surveillance and the feeling of security to users, the landscaping should be kept low and simple to aid good views and the spaces well lit with sensitive lighting.

The development should adhere to the "principle of secured by design" and be in consultation with the Thames Valley Police.
Flooding and Drainage:

Due to the recent Maidenhead and Windsor Flood Alleviation scheme the site no longer falls within the 1 in 100 year event of flooding, however it may still be at risk from extreme flood events.

The site is within Zone II of the College Avenue pumping station. Groundwater is sensitive and vulnerable to pollution. As the site supported a mix of uses an investigation should be carried out prior to commencement of development, and the Environment Agency consulted on any proposed drainage system.

Water drainage and supply

Sewage from the developments will be treated at Thames Water's Maidenhead Sewage Treatment Works. As a brownfield site there may be existing operational sewers crossing the site. A diversion could be required. In addition an impact study of the sewerage system will be required to determine the magnitude of spare capacity in the system. The developer will be required to fund this and any necessary upgrading.

In the disposal of surface water, Thames Water requires the separation of foul and surface water sewerage on new developments. It is the responsibility of a developer to make proper provision for surface water drainage to ground, water courses or surface water sewer. It must not be allowed to drain to the foul sewer, as this is the major contributor to sewer flooding.

For information on both sewerage and sewage treatment please contact Thames Water Utilities, Kew Business Centre.

Much can be done within a development to save water. Further guidance on water conservation can be obtained from "Water Conservation in Business" or from the Environment Agency National Water demand Management Centre or Thames Water.

Staging the development

It is recognised that the development of the site could be achieved in stages. In this way parts of the site can be developed in accordance with the principles of this brief, without compromising the rest of the site.

Contacts

Planning Policy Unit, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead 01628 796115
Conservation and Urban Design, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead: 01628 796363
Highways, Engineering Services, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead 01628 796160
Environment Agency: 01276 454331
Thames Valley Police, Crime Prevention Design Advisor; 01635 295156
Thames Water Utilities, Kew Business Centre: 0207 713 3877
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3 Department of the Environment and Department of Transport (1997), "PPG1: General Policy and Principles", HMSO

4 Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (2000), White paper: "Towns and Cities Today"

5 "Water Conservation in Business- A Briefing Guide for Construction Clients (CIC) and Building Owners", Construction Industry Council, Construction Clients Forum and DETR (Price £5.00 ISBN 1898671 20 6, contact CIC on 0207 637 8692)