

Introduction to Aecom design consultancy for Little Woodhouse Neighbourhood Planning Forum

Summary

Three design documents were produced by Aecom consultants (Nick Beedie (NB) and Lucy Sykes (LS) as a Neighbourhood Planning Technical Support package funded and provided by Locality to the Little Woodhouse Neighbourhood Planning Forum (LWNPF). The collaboration began in November 2020 with the bulk of the work completed by July 2021 and final drafts agreed in December 2021.

- C1 General and Character Area Design Guidance and Design Codes – November 2021
- C2 Character Analysis – July 2021
- C3 Analysis Drawing Package – July 2021

(The documents can be downloaded from the **Neighbourhood Plan Documents** page of the website www.littlewoodhouseplan.org)

Contents

- 1 Aims of the Technical Support package
- 2 Process - Who what when how
- 3 Conclusions/lessons

Appendix 1 – Extract from Locality DR11105 Diagnostic November 2020

Appendix 2 - DR11105 Little Woodhouse Doc 010 Detailed proposal Note on Project Scope – Aecom

Appendix 3 - Ideas for NP Policies arising from Aecom guidance – September 2021

1 Aims of the Technical Support package

- To support existing work on two design codes – PBSA and Park Lane Campus, when guidance on design codes was scarce. As the national model design code was newly emerging – to explore how it would apply in an inner city neighbourhood area engaged in preparing a neighbourhood plan?
- To make the best use of time when other activities were suspended because of covid restrictions and to benefit from the availability of a fully funded technical support package from Locality.

2 Process - Who what when how

2.1 Little Woodhouse Neighbourhood Planning Forum took advice from Ian MacKay, Leeds City Council Neighbourhood Planning manager in the summer of 2020, during Covid restrictions which had limited all community activities. IM suggested an approach to Locality for a Technical Support package to review progress so far and how it could best be supported, with a focus on design work.

2.2 The LWNPF Forum was represented by an executive group of 3: Deryck Piper (chair) Barbara Mitchell (secretary) and Peter Baker, planning consultant now retired and acting pro bono, who had previously been engaged as consultant and produced several drafts for Little Woodhouse Neighbourhood Plan based on Forum workshops and discussions, including an early draft of the

Neighbourhood Plan, Heritage Area Analysis, Park Lane Design Code and PBSA design code. He had also previously produced the Little Woodhouse Neighbourhood Design Statement SPD in 2011.

2.3 Application to Locality was made in October 2020 for a funded Technical Support package, discussed with Locality November 2020 (see *App 1 Diagnostic*) and allocated to the Aecom consultancy. Initial contacts with Aecom consultants NB and LS took place December 2020 and at the beginning of 2021 (see *App 2 Note on Project Scope*). It was agreed to make use of the emerging national design code framework of 10 aspects: Context, Movement, Nature, Built form, Identity, Public Space, Use, Homes and buildings, Resources and Lifespan.

2.4 All discussions took place online using Zoom/Teams – with a Flyover of the Neighbourhood Area using streetview technology. The Aecom Consultants later undertook site visits unaccompanied because of Covid restrictions. Draft documents were sent by email, reviewed by the executive members for accuracy and fit and then discussed with the consultants (see *App 3 Ideas for NP policies arising from Aecom guidance*). This process took place from January to December 2021, discussed in Forum July 2021 and a final version in November 2021 was agreed by the Forum in March 2022.

3 Conclusions/lessons

3.1 The process was demanding for the local group, both in time and use of communication technology. It was testing to explain knowledge of local structures and policy aims to an external body, but this was a valuable part of the experience and improved our understanding of planning processes and policies.

3.2 The resultant documents underpin the feedback on design from local residents, added useful external perspectives and added detail and structure to the design aspects of the draft Neighbourhood Plan. In addition, external validation for the draft policies is valuable evidence.

3.3 Findings from the three design documents feed into the emerging draft plan policies and specifically highlighted a systematic approach to focus on the ten aspects of design for new developments. This is illustrated in Appendix 3 below (see NPv4 11.3.3 and policy HC3 Design of Development. Specific examples include Nature – 11.3.4 and Resources – 11.3.5).

Appendix 1 – Extract from Locality DR11105 Diagnostic November 2020

Classification of Client Level Chosen Complex

The NDP group would like: (1) A design code and design guidance for a complicated urban brownfield site that is coming forward. (2) Design guidance for the whole NDP area. Whilst the NDP group have produced design statements, these are not supported with any design evidence or work and the evidence-base would need to be established. The NDP area further includes 3 conservation areas with varied character and is on the edge of Leeds City Centre with a diverse urban landscape consisting of tall buildings, commercial areas and lower-density housing. A design guide would need to consider the varied character across the NDP area in detail. A design guide presents opportunities to improve the image and quality of development coming forward (especially on the proposed site allocation) which would support sustainable growth. This is considered to be a Complex package due to the proposed scale of work including design guides and codes to cover the conservation areas and distinct character areas across the wider NA. There is a departure from Annex A. However, the design guide and design codes would provide detailed design for a complex city centre fringe site. This site is considered to be complex as it is a large site and falls on the edge of the city centre nearby the University and Hospital, suitable to accommodate a diverse range of uses and densities. Therefore, additional consultant time would be required to develop and test design concepts that support the site in achieving its development potential. The design guide would also provide design guidance aimed to influence development across the whole NA which has significant variations in built character as mentioned above. Additional consultant time would also be required to appraise and provide focused guidance to reflect the varied local character which includes important heritage designations including listed buildings and 3 distinct conservation areas. The historic significance of these designations would need to be fully understood and considered in the design guidance. Furthermore, the land-use and density across the NDP area varies considerably and the area includes pockets of lower-density residential development of varied character including Victorian, Edwardian, development from 1940/50s and modern development post-2000. This would need to be characterised in the absence of any previous appraisal work. A design guide would also encourage high quality growth in the NDP area through delivering sustainable ... development. Design is a key element of the NDP and the area has important heritage designations that would need to be considered in detail to unlock the growth potential of the NDP area. ...

The NDP group was designated around 4 years ago and forms an inner-city area with 2 college campuses (Leeds City College Park Lane Campus and Leeds University Centre) and part of the University of Leeds campus. The group have produced 2 design statements for parts of the NDP area. This includes a recent design statement for the Leeds City College Park Lane Campus site. The College is due to vacate and dispose this site soon. The NDP group have produced design codes for the site in partnership with the college. The NDP group feel that the document 'does not feel right' and does not provide comprehensive design guidance. Having reviewed the document it does not include a character assessment or any design work to support the design policies/codes. The NDP have also prepared a student accommodation development design guidance some time ago which they feel can also be improved. This also does not include design work. The NDP group would like DDC technical support to produce a Design Guide with a number of Design Codes for the redevelopment of the Leeds City College Park Lane Campus Site and for new development across the NDP area. The NDP group would like the work to built upon the work already undertaken and with some engagement with the College.

Appendix 2 - DR11105 Little Woodhouse Doc 010 Detailed proposal Note on Project Scope – Aecom

DR-11105- Little Woodhouse

Note on Project Scope

Circulation

Lucy Sykes- AECOM
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Deryck Piper- QB (Chair)
Barbara Mitchell- QB
Peter Baker - PBA

Work so far

Various conversations that have taken place between the NPGroup and AECOM, bringing in key stakeholders, initiating the consultation element of the brief at an early stage and similarly the first stage of work to identify gaps clarify the scope is now complete, ready to be reviewed with the group.

Work undertaken so far:

- Review of the brief (the ‘diagnostic’ remains the crucial document)
- Received existing baseline studies from the group
- Outlined broad structure of 6 stages (below)

A good working relationship with regular communication via Microsoft teams has been established, bringing in stakeholders for input on particular topics or sites as needed.

Work Stages

It was agreed that a 4th (initial) stage should be added to the work stages (Baseline assessment to assess the gaps in evidence base and requirements for design work / codes / guidance / briefs). This has been incorporated as stages 1 and 2 -

Stages	Schedule of work for Little Woodhouse Design including Design Codes Technical Package
Stage 1	<p>Identifying the Gaps & Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review draft NDP policy content• Review draft list of existing plans & appraisals• Review draft list of documents and identify gaps in evidence <p>Key outputs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Review of baseline documents table2) Draft Neighbourhood plan policies table

Stage 2	<p>Preparation of Baseline Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare of additional analysis plans (e.g. Topography / Neighbourhood structure / Green infrastructure / Street hierarchy / Character Areas) • Preparation of additional character assessment material • Preparation of design opportunities and potential plan • SWOT analysis tables for wider area and Park Lane Site <p>Key outputs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Baseline report/section (including pack of new plans/ diagrams with supporting text and character areas analysis)
Stage 3	<p>Stakeholder Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial engagement with key stakeholders: Joanna Gabrilatsou (JLL university consultant); Mark Pullen (active developer) • Follow up engagement with the university (Mike Dias) on the Park Lane Campus Design Codes <p>Key outputs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Notes of meetings and discussion (to be included in report/section as appropriate)
Stage 4	<p>Preparation of NP Area Design Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic based Design Guidelines for the wider Neighbourhood plan area • Topic based Design Guidelines for the Heritage Area • Topic based Design Guidelines for the PBSA Area <p>Key outputs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Little Woodhouse Design Guidelines report/section
Stage 5	<p>Preparation of Site Design Codes – Park Lane Campus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of Site, Context plan • Site Analysis plan • Key Design Principles • Design Code Diagrams <p>Key outputs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2) Park Lane Campus Design Codes report/section
	<p>Note on Outputs & sign off:</p> <p>We propose that the 'Little Woodhouse Design Code' is delivered for review in sections which each have a specific design/area focus based on the above stages 2-5 for sign off. They can be finalised as a single document or separate studies.</p>

Appendix 3 - Ideas for NP Policies arising from Aecom guidance – September 2021

Guidance (only quoted if there is a comment)	Comment on policy possibility
	General comment: add paragraph to any relevant policy justification to refer to Character Analysis, Design Guidance and Heritage Area Appraisal and the fact they will be used to help assess applications on whether they meet the Policies.
1.4 Movement	
1.4.2 Parking	
Development located adjacent to the Radial Routes should be supported with appropriate visual screening and noise mitigation measures, given the speed and volume of vehicles moving along these routes.	Env Health have requirements on noise. Visual screening – is HC3 sufficient?
The provision of car parking needs to be carefully balanced to ensure that sufficient provision is made to meet needs, whilst not dominating the appearance of the street [PB addn: The paving of front gardens reduces valuable green infrastructure and should be avoided]	New T3 to cover parking and gardens?
1.4.3 Cycle Parking	
	Guidance covered by LCC Cycle parking standards
1.5 Nature	
1.5.1 Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure	
Any development should enhance biodiversity wherever possible. This will involve restoring and increasing green-infrastructure assets, and provision of a clear landscaping scheme to demonstrate how new development will create positive green linkages and contribute to these assets.	G3 covers this, but only in relation to green corridors. Extend to all development and include the word “biodiversity”?
New developments should strengthen biodiversity and the natural environment. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) should be adopted as a requirement for all relevant development.	Include in rewritten G3?
New development proposals should aim for the creation of new habitats and wildlife corridors; e.g. by aligning back and front gardens, and making space for new habitats within layout designs.	New G4 to cover habitats and wildlife (+“biodiversity” rather than include that in G3?)

Street planting is encouraged where possible, especially where streets are largely hardstanding. Existing trees should be retained where possible.	G3 covers this for green corridors, which is where street trees should be focussed.
Native species should be specified to promote biodiversity in proposed planting designs.	New G4?
Gardens and boundary treatments should be designed to allow the movement of wildlife and provide habitat for local species.	New G4?
1.5.2 Water and Drainage	
	Aecom Design guidance amplifies WATER 7 Policy in the Natural Resources and Waste Local Plan. No need for additional LWNP policy
1.6 Built form	
1.6.1 Boundary Treatments	
	Covered by HC3
1.6.2 Topography	
	HC3 needs topography adding as a factor to be taken into account in design
1.6.3 Building Heights and Orientation	
	Add “height” to first bullet point in HC3
1.7 Identity	
1.7.1 Heritage	
	The guidance covers the whole area, whereas the NP policies HC1 and HC2 refer to the HA and NDHAs only. Amend HC1 to read “Development within or affecting the setting of the Little Woodhouse Heritage Area.....”
	Amend HC2 to read “Proposals for development affecting any non-designated heritage...”
	Amend HC3 to read “recognising and enhancing the local distinctiveness, heritage and character of Little Woodhouse, including.....”
1.8 Public Space	
Streets and public spaces should be designed for all users and should support social interaction. The quality of these places should be maintained.	Add a G5 policy on the design/improvement of Local Green Spaces and SLOAP?

1.9 Use	
Consideration should be given to how areas of amenity green space and public space can be enhanced within Little Woodhouse to be more useable, attractive or contribute to the local biodiversity. This will help to make more efficient use of the land within the Neighbourhood Area	Add a G5 policy on the design/improvement of Local Green Spaces and SLOAP?
1.11 Resources	
(comments here relate to all bullet points)	Include a Climate Emergency Policy where it can be shown to be specific to LW and does not duplicate what is in the NRWLP or the Sustainable Design SPD?
	Include encouragement of Photo-electric cells on industrial developments to feed into grid (Employment policy or Carbon policy)
	H4 – Adaptability. Remove reference to PBSA so it applies to all development? Include as part of a Carbon Emergency policy? Also include “Retrofit First” approach.
	However, HC3 includes “Any new building, alteration or extension should aim to achieve excellence in design, by reducing reliance on non-renewable resources and recognising and enhancing the local distinctiveness and character of Little Woodhouse....” Is that sufficient considering the backup guidance?
2.6 Post War Estates	
2.6.2 Nature	Add a G5 policy on the design/improvement of Local Green Spaces and SLOAP?
2.6.4 Public Spaces	---ditto---
2.7 PBSA	
2.7.2 Built Form	Pick up any of these points in PBSA Design Code, if not already included
2.7.3 Identity	---ditto---
2.7.4 Public Space	---ditto---
2.7.5 Use	---ditto---
2.7.6 Homes and Buildings	These points are included in the PBSA Design Code.

2.8 Neighbourhood Retail, facilities and mixed-uses	
2.8.1 Movement and Connections	

<p>Widening the pavement to be a consistent width along Woodsley Road is supported (ideally through the reallocation of road space rather than alteration to the building line). The pavement is quite wide in part, however the abundance of street furniture and highways infrastructure clutters the area and inhibits pedestrian movement. This should be removed and/ or improved.</p>	<p>Include as part of G5 on improving Local Green Spaces, SLOAP and public realm? Or a new E3 policy on the mixed use areas specifically aiming to achieve for Woodsley Road what we aimed to do in the Design Statement? Or tie it in to an expanded HC3 policy on design (together with shop fronts)?</p>
<p>2.8.2 Nature</p> <p>The adoption of street-trees along Woodsley Road could help to soften the appearance of this environment. Planters could also help create a sense of place which is currently lacking.</p>	<p>---ditto---</p>
<p>2.8.3 Built Form</p> <p>(my suggested addition): Shop front designs should take account of the quality of the architecture on those buildings which are defined as non-designated heritage assets, to ensure that they relate well to the upper levels.</p>	<p>Include in a policy on shop fronts (HC3 or E3)</p>
<p>2.8.5 Public Realm</p> <p>The public realm is of a low quality and has been subject to various treatments. Re-paving the public realm would help to improve its quality. Decluttering the public realm of street furniture, consolidating signage, and providing bins, benches and green infrastructure in suitable locations is supported.</p>	<p>See comment for 2.8.1 above</p> <p>Include as part of G5 on improving Local Green Spaces, SLOAP and public realm? Or a new E3 policy on the mixed use areas specifically aiming to achieve for Woodsley Road what we aimed to do in the Design Statement? Or tie it in to an expanded HC3 policy on design (together with shop fronts)?</p>

2.10 Commercial and Light Industrial Area	
	<p>There is nothing on design in the NP for this area except the general HC3 policy. Should we include a policy on the lines of one that was in the Holbeck NP;</p> <p><i>“Developments for commercial use should include measures which:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>• apply ‘Secured by Design’ principles to boundary treatments whilst ensuring boundaries present an attractive appearance;</i><i>• include internal grille-type security shutters (where shutters are required);</i><i>• provide a suitable landscape treatment, including trees where there is sufficient space.”</i> <p>There was a specific issue on shutters in Holbeck, which maybe only applies to shopfronts in LW which can be dealt with by a shopfront design policy, wherever it ends up (HC3 or E3). Also, the last bullet point is a bit weak.</p>

End