

Crawley Borough Council 2024-2040 Local Plan Examination MIQs – Matters 7: Issue 1 – 7.4 and Issue 2: 7.7

Report date: December 2023

Prepared for:
Crawley College
Chichester College Group

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Where great relationships yield the best property outcomes

Matter 7: Crawley Town Centre

Issue 1: Whether the plan's approach to character, landscape and form of development is sound

7.4 Have all opportunities been taken to ensure that the site capacity of the Town Centre key opportunity sites (and any other town centre redevelopment) will be maximised?

1. As per our previous matter statements for Chichester College Group (CCG) under 3.3 and 3.4, we support the approach of Policy TC3's Town Centre Key Opportunity Sites and Topic Paper 4 which set a target of 499 dwellings across the Town Centre Key Opportunity Sites, one of which is Crawley College, which is earmarked for mixed use development with a priority for educational uses.
2. Chichester College Group (CCG) have undertaken a full masterplan exercise in partnership with Crawley Borough Council to maximise delivery, which approves the principle of relocating educational provision to the south of the site, building on the (Science Technology Engineering & Mathematics) STEM buildings and emerging Institute of Technology (IoT). This therefore releases the Northern part of the site for alternative development and a residential led opportunity to enhance the Town Centre neighbourhood.
3. The Council and College have worked together under the One Public Estate (OPE) group alongside WSCC to ensure that the College site and its aspirations align with the wider Eastern Gateway including the new and old Town Hall, and County Building sites owned by WSCC.
4. The approved Masterplan currently identifies 2 options for the Northern part of the site that can deliver c.358-363 dwellings.
5. Policy TC3, requires the College site to contribute towards *"the vitality and viability of Crawley Town Centre and sustainable economic growth and job creation in the borough."* CCG are working to deliver this site comprehensively whilst redeveloping and improving the southern part of the site for educational purposes.
6. The Masterplan can assist in maximising delivery of Policy TC3 and make effective use of land in order to support positive housing delivery but it is also necessary that the policy should allow for flexibility to change to market conditions to allow for delivery as appropriate.
7. The Council under TC3 promote the policy approach that all key opportunity sites should be brought forward to ensure the provision of 1500 residential units in the Town Centre, and the adopted Masterplan maximises delivery and effectively plans for the site given the nature scale and shape of the site.
8. Topic Paper 4 on Housing supply states in para 2.1.5. *"A significant proportion of the adopted Local Plan's housing supply is expected to come from the Town Centre, where Policy EC6 provides for a minimum of 499 dwellings to be delivered across four mixed-use 'Key Opportunity Sites'.* The table in Topic Paper 2 para 13.2.2. also illustrates that the Local Plan aims to allocate 7 new Town Centre sites with the ability to deliver 499 units. The site at 'Crawley College, Three Bridges' is stated as a developable site for 363 dwellings with the supporting text *"The remaining College Site (following development of Bridgefield House) is allocated as a Town Centre Key Opportunity Site for housing-led development alongside retained Further Education facilities. A Masterplan has been prepared."*

9. The topic paper explains in para 2.4.4 that *“As of April 2023, the total number of Town Centre dwellings exceeds 1,100, resulting in a population equivalent to a small neighbourhood. The target of 499 dwellings to be delivered on Town Centre Key Opportunity Sites already looks set to be exceeded, with 276 already delivered, and a further 490 benefitting from outline planning consent.”* This supports the approach on TC3 in bringing deliverable sites forward and maximizing delivery.
10. However, as per our previous Matter statements, the Heritage evidence base, which looks to allocate 2 locally listed buildings on the site, is at odds with College’s Masterplan’s ability to successfully maximise delivery in line with Policy TC3.
11. The Masterplan successfully illustrates 2 options to maximise opportunities on the site and the importance of the site in regard to interact with the Town Center function and long distance views. However, continued flexibility will be required to ensure the masterplan is illustrative and indicative and not prescriptive to allow for successful delivery that maximises opportunities on the site.

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7.7 Is it necessary for the Crawley College site to be masterplanned as a whole?

1. Policy TC3 states that *“For the Crawley College site, any development must accord with an appropriate master plan agreed with the Local Planning Authority and covering the whole campus and will be required to demonstrate that it can be achieved in a manner that prioritises the ongoing viability and function of Crawley College as a Further Education facility. Under Policy CL4 which defines appropriate high residential densities, a density of 200+ dwellings per hectare is considered appropriate for town centre sites.”*
2. Following extensive discussions with the Council, the Crawley College Masterplan proposes 199-201 dwellings per hectare, or in a situation where site 1 was to be released for commercial use should the market dictate this, the total density for sites 2 and 3 would be reduced across the whole site to 189-193 per hectare.
3. The College have supported the Masterplan requirement as a result of a s106 agreement on the STEM building, and are party to ongoing close partnership working with CBC and WSCC under the OPE, and the collective approach to development under the Eastern gateway.
4. The approved Masterplan demonstrates that the delineation of the Northern Site for redevelopment and Southern part of the site for retention and enhancement for education purposes is deliverable, suitable and appropriate given the site constraints, including long distance views under policy CL7.
5. Whilst the Masterplan as a requirement from the STEM building s106 application has been met, there continues to need to be ongoing engagement and flexibility from all parties to ensure that the Masterplan is flexible and illustrative only to ensure that development delivery can be forthcoming and not act as a barrier.
6. The development proposals at Crawley College illustrated under the masterplan act as framework to delivery on both the Northern and Southern parts of the site, both for educational purposes and residential delivery, but a flexible and responsive approach must be agreed to ensure that delivery is not constrained, frustrated or delayed as a result of any alternative or emerging options, through market conditions or developers requirements, once the site is no longer in College ownership.
7. The current approved masterplan is also based on the ability to remove all buildings and structures on the site and the heritage evidence base and potential local listing of 2 buildings on the site by CBC must therefore be flexible and adaptive to ensure that the site can be delivered at the required density and does not further restrict the market ability to deliver an effective phasing of the site, as a result of any further constraints to development and viability. This must be allowed to include the removal of both buildings in order to ensure density at c 200 units. Further information about the poor condition of the buildings, and lack of architectural or heritage value has been submitted by Crawley College as part of their previous representations.

8. The site has been effectively master planned as a whole, in order to demonstrate that the educational needs of the site can be met on the southern part of the site. The masterplan therefore should allow a more adaptive response to new buildings on the Southern part of the site as educational & students needs and provision change, which may require an alternative layout, form or scale compared to the current identified southern site layout.
9. Whilst the Northern part of the masterplan defines and agrees an area to be release, it must also be allowed to be reflective of the changing market conditions and design opportunities for any future development.
10. The principle of a master planned site as approved is therefore accepted as result of the s106 but a more adaptive response in the future is required.

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