

Urban Village



Fig 41: Urban Village

8.1 Key Development Projects

8.1.1 Urban Village

1. Summary

The UDF identifies the triangle of land between Stars Lane, Park Street / South Street and Dodham Brook for redevelopment. This is a major opportunity to bring investment into the town and transform what is at present an underused 'back' to the town centre into a new frontage which overlooks Summerhouse and Constitution hills.

Several development sites are currently available including the Box Factory, the Foundry and Stars Lane surface car park. There are, in addition, land uses such as car lots and showrooms which could be relocated to release land for town centre related activities.

The predominant land use for this quarter would be urban residential, with opportunities for mixed uses and commercial leisure on the principal frontages.

2. Key design principles

Design quality

There is an opportunity to create high quality, higher density urban housing within five minutes or less walk from the centre of town. The density of development should be similar to that of the historic town centre. The prominent nature of the site and the quality of the adjoining landscape require design quality be considered as of paramount importance.

Streets

The UDF proposes that Park Street connects directly to South Street. This would have the effect of removing the severance currently created by Park Street / Taunusstein Way and Summerhouse Terrace. A finer grain of pedestrian-friendly streets would then serve the area, integrating Summerhouse Terrace and Mill Lane into a plan which is closer to the earlier

street pattern of the area. It is proposed that the area be planned to prioritise walking and cycling, with vehicular movement calmed to 20mph maximum by design.

Several of the new streets leading to the park would be 'greened' including Stars Lane, Mill Lane and a new street connecting Park Street with Ninesprings.

Public transport

A long term green transport corridor is identified along the route of the former railway. This route could accommodate buses or a park and ride scheme, as well as the existing cycle route and footpath. Given that new buildings need to face south to create a proper frontage, some car access could be considered, perhaps during the evening, in a similar way to car access being granted to town centres at night for reasons of convenience and natural surveillance.

Landscape structure and public realm

In addition to the new streets and 'greening' described above, the development would present a new 'promenade' overlooking the Dodham Brook and existing landscape. The concrete channel to the brook would be taken out and the brook allowed to meander in a less formal way. There would be an opportunity to consider water quality, waterside planting and habitat value.

Locations are identified for pedestrian bridges to cross the Dodham Brook to amenities to the south.

A new public square is proposed at the junction of the extended Mill Street and this promenade, opposite the ski slope. This nodal point would offer opportunities for ground floor commercial and leisure uses.

The Urban Village might be developed in a phased process as follows:



Fig 42: Urban Village Phase I - short to medium term



Fig 43: Urban Village Phase II - long term

3. Capacity

Accommodation

The concept design for the area would provide around 400 dwellings and mixed uses at the ground floor level of key locations. A mix of dwelling types and tenures is envisaged including town houses and apartments.

Density

The average storey height proposed is around three floors. Not all dwellings would have private gardens, but extensive use could be made of roof gardens, balconies and communal gardens to housing schemes. As a guide, a density in the order of 4,500 m² per hectare could be achieved and the photographs indicate the massing and quality that could be achieved.

Parking

While cars are not needed to travel into town, most households are likely to own a car. The density calculations envisage one parking space being provided per dwelling, plus 180 spaces of public parking. The public parking is a replacement of the lost Stars Lane parking. It would be accommodated partly in decked solutions and partly along purpose designed tree-lined streets.

4. Next steps

Viability

A residential led, mixed-use scheme of this kind would be designed to create a distinctive, high quality environment, and consequently a market in its own right. Whilst further detailed feasibility work would be required to fully assess the viability of the scheme, at this stage it can be said that a development of this size and type is likely to generate substantial interest from regional and national developers.

Masterplan and design codes

It is recommended that a detailed masterplan be produced for the area that facilitates incremental development, should land assembly not be possible from the outset.

Design codes would set out the key design requirements for the area. They would include street design, building lines, heights, massing, colour and materials palettes, privacy and private open space standards and car parking.

Land assembly / marketing

Whilst a large portion of the land involved in the scheme – particularly Stars Lane, the Box Factory and Foundry House - is in the ownership of SSDC, the issue of land assembly across the entire scheme is a complex one. Much of the land to the south-west is controlled by a number of private owners. A pragmatic way forward therefore would be to phase the development to take the land in public ownership forward in the short to medium term, which would establish the enabling values to continue with the remainder of the Urban Village at a latter stage. The first phase would be taken forward with a planning and marketing brief, which could include consultation with stakeholders and interested parties.