

Cornhill Regeneration

May 2022

Cornhill is a strategic regeneration area, situated to the south of Leek, adopted in the Churnet Valley Masterplan (2014) and Adopted Local Plan (2020) and is divided into 2 sub-sites—dissected by the north/south former rail track, each with a number of interlinking elements. It has been a long-standing aim to see development at Cornhill which would deliver homes, provide land for employment use and deliver a key phase of strategic road link between A53 and A625.

Overall the site will deliver the following outcomes:

- approx. 200 homes
- 3847 sqm work units
- Site for Railway station (associated platform, car parking, retail unit)
- Site for Public house Link road from the A520 to the A53
- Provide opportunities for the future redevelopment of the canal basin.

The regeneration of the Cornhill site has been a corporate priority since 2010 and officers have worked closely with land owners and Casey Group to bring forward development. In May 2017, the landowner – Barnfield Hughes (BH) – entered into a Development Agreement with P Casey Developments Ltd (PCD) and In 2018/19 a joint vision document was commissioned by Casey Group (Cornhill East developers) with 25% co-funding from SMDC to understand potential for delivery of SMDC land at Cornhill East for residential uses, if unlocked via Cornhill West. However, viability issues arising from the scale and nature of the remediation and infrastructure requirements mean development of the site has stalled.

Approval of SMD/2021/0536 will provide the initial phase of delivery, unlocking further development and private sector investment across a significant area of brownfield land, and address the identified shortage of new homes within the District. Securing the initial phase of development will also allow options for the leisure and transport hub to be further progressed.

The direct outcomes associated with this application are:

- 157 homes
- Up to 1847sqm of employment space
- Around 100 temporary construction jobs (including at least 15 apprenticeships and training places) during the next 6 years
- Reuse of brownfield land (circa 5.3ha on the housing area)
- Proposals for the development of the canal basin (up to 13 berths) to secure future tourism/leisure use

Indirect outcomes include:

- 715 m² of business (B1/B2/B8) units that would create 15 permanent FTE jobs

- A new hub for a Heritage Railway project including a station, associated platform, car parking, retail unit & cafe to support efforts to boost the local visitor economy
- Re-use of a further 1.4ha of brownfield land
- Provide opportunities for the development of the scrap yard and canal basin
- Qualitative outcomes in terms of enhanced environment to support the visitor offer
- Ensure development of public and private sector land;
- Help SMDC to achieve a plan led supply of housing by releasing one of the few large-scale housing opportunities in Leek;
- Promote sustainable development in line with government policy by promoting development on brownfield land close to existing facilities and public transport assets in the absence of no alternative sites within Leek that can be easily developed;
- Create the conditions to unlock £49m of private sector investment;
- Achieve SMDC targets for the type of homes that will meet local identified housing need, including opportunities for those starting out on the housing ladder; and
- Deliver willing public and private sector partner objectives

Strategic case

Stoke & Staffordshire Strategic Links SEP

Stoke & Staffordshire Local Economic Partnership (LEP) through the Strategic Employment Plan (SEP) has identified key priorities for the LEP area which link closely with this project including

- Housing investment and delivery “is vital to the economic prosperity of Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire”
- Place led growth “provide the housing mix needed for growth... and provide the quality of life that can help to attract and retain highly skilled workers” (
- Property – SOT and Staffordshire “needs to offer a good spread of housing which caters for the range of types, locations and affordability of current and potential residents”
- Stoke on Trent [housing area] which includes SMDC as travel to work areas has a *“shortage of the sort of aspirational family and executive housing needed to attract highly skilled people and there are a number of barriers and market failures that help explain the relatively poor performance and why we have not successfully replaced lost jobs with higher value employment”* – the number one identified reason for this is **Land remediation** – and the challenge of remediating contaminated land.
- Connected county :
 - Housing – “development of appropriately skilled workforce to meet current and future business needs whilst also creating attractive and sustainable places where people want to live, work and visit”
 - Site is listed as Strategic Site (Cornhill) within priority Strategic Employment sites

Stoke & Staffordshire’s LEP Economic Growth Strategic Priorities 2018

- Aim 1: Develop the infrastructure needed so that the growth planned for Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire (S&S) can be accommodated;
- Aim 4: Delivery of Local Plan housing, delivery of affordable housing in areas that people want to live to attract and retain a younger population, delivery of first time buyer homes, smaller sites. Support Local Government finance.

- Aim 7: deliver and enable the delivery of employment sites across S&S, giving consideration to the portfolio of sites to maximise suitability for a range of businesses types and sectors that are we are aiming to develop, grow and attract.
- Aim 8: To create a greater number of higher paid jobs in all parts of S&S, a sufficient supply and range of suitable commercial accommodation and serviced employment land needs to be available
- Aim 9: Ensure that we have premises ready and available, across all use classes, so that we can take advantage of future inward investment opportunities
- Aim 10: Alongside wider overall aims such as generating more high-value jobs, carefully consider the types of business premises that we are encouraging and directly developing in S&S in order to ensure that developments are having a positive impact on local government finances and providing a revenue stream to fund other priorities (e.g. unlocking difficult sites).

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Corporate Priorities 2019- 2023:

- Aim 3 - To help create a strong economy by supporting further regeneration of towns and villages (the development of Cornhill is specifically identified as key project within this aim)
- Aim 2 - To use resources effectively and provide value for money

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Growth Strategy 2018 highlights the low rate of house-building due to small sites not being attractive to regional developers and investors, viability issues due to low values, poor connectivity adding to high construction costs and the low level of profit margins not providing enough incentives for developers. The Growth Strategy commits to consider all options to support housing delivery.

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council adopted Local Plan (2020).

Specifically: Policy SS5a (Leek Area Strategy) which states “The Council and its partners will seek to consolidate the role of Leek as the principal service centre and a market town and support its regeneration. This will be achieved through the following actions:

Continue to meet the housing and community needs of Leek and its rural hinterland by

- Increasing the range of available and affordable housing types including for first time buyers and older people
- Allocate a range of suitable, deliverable housing sites sufficient to meet the requirements of the area
- Support the development of new housing on sustainable sites within the development boundary
- Create employment growth and increase the diversity of employment opportunities to meet existing and future needs by:
 - providing opportunities for new enterprises and businesses by allocating employment sites with good access to the A520 and A53.
 - Promoting measures to improve walking and cycling
- The plan also supports the creation of major mixed use development opportunities and related infrastructure improvements for the following strategic sites: Cornhill East – uses which may be suitable include employment and housing. Development should enable provision for a link between the A520 and A53 to the south of the town and links to the canal and Churnet Valley railway and should have regard to the Churnet Valley Masterplan. Further policy for this site is set out in Policy DSL4

Churnet Valley Masterplan 2014

The Churnet Valley Masterplan identifies the opportunity to promote Leek as a gateway to the area, both in a physical sense including potential hotel developments and by acting as a

source of visitor information. Cornhill is identified as offering a positive potential redevelopment opportunities for the visitor economy.