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PURPOSE OF THE ESTATE DESIGN BRIEF

The necessity to redevelop the Perry Common housing estate presents an opportunity to properly plan a residential environment that will function effectively, well into the next century. The need to redevelop is accepted, but the mechanism employed to create the new estate must be viewed as an evolving process. Given that the lengthy redevelopment period may dramatically affect building programmes, the integrity of the project must be protected whilst retaining the scope for flexibility.

Continuity of development is desirable but not essential, provided a systematic approach is adopted, managing the process and providing adequate guidance for the physical planning of the new estate.

Creating a quality residential environment is the objective of this regeneration project. The development will be expected to adopt a design approach integrating highway issues with those of planning, so that the resultant character of the new estate will stem from the space between dwellings as well as the dwellings themselves. This brief will provide an estate overview which will set the context for the redevelopment. More site specific information relating to individual sites will be issued when each phase becomes ready for development.

STATUS OF BRIEF

Recognising that good estate design and architectural flair are trade marks of many developers, this brief in the main, seeks to guide rather than instruct. However, this framework has received Planning Committee approval and as such will provide Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Unitary Development Plan when determining all planning applications.

This brief has been prepared as part of the partnership between the City Council and the residents of the Perry Common Estate. This partnership has developed and has been supported by the City Council following the public launch of the redevelopment proposals in 1991. The proposals contained within this brief, and the Zoning Layout have been widely participated on the estate and represent a vision for the future which the “consumers” support.

BACKGROUND AND SITE DESCRIPTION

The Perry Common Estate is located within the Kingstanding ward of the Perry Barr Constituency, approximately four miles to the north of Birmingham City Centre. The estate was developed in the late 1920’s and early 1930’s to house residents principally from Hockley and Aston who were affected by Clearance activity. The estate is of traditional layout, broadly following “garden suburb” principles and mainly consisting of 2/3 bedroomed houses with front and back gardens.

The estate is bounded by the New Oscott housing estate to the north - Perry Common Recreation Ground to the east - Perry Common Road and the Wyrley Birch housing estate to the south - and by College Road to the west. Wiltton Lodge Road runs through the centre of the estate which is focused on an area of open space, the “Ring”, and which is surrounded by brick built houses, St Martins Church, Perry Common J and I School and a small parade of shops.

There are a total of 1780 houses on the estate; 252 which are brick built, and 908 which are “Bock” properties or non-traditional construction (composed of interlocking concrete pillars and panels reinforced with steel). The brick built properties are primarily located along Wiltton Lodge Road or at road junctions. These houses are in good condition and are to be retained.
Although popular with residents the 'Boot' properties on the estate have been designated as defective under the Housing Act 1985. The structural condition of these properties is so severe that they have a limited life span of 5-10 years and the only course of action is their demolition.

In January 1991 a series of public meetings were held on the estate to launch the redevelopment process and ensure that the local residents were involved at the very beginning. From the outset the City Council has stressed its commitment to work in partnership with the local residents at every stage of the redevelopment. To this end residents representatives sit on all Working Groups including the Estate Development Group which co-ordinates the project and at which any issue relating to the development can be considered.

**DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS**

As land owner and Local Planning Authority the City Council will ultimately decide the appearance of the estate, but this Brief along with the Zoning Layout have been prepared to encourage creativity in layout design.

The real "constraints" imposed upon the redevelopment on Perry Common Estate are those houses and buildings which are of traditional construction and are unaffected by the clearance action.

Although the City Council has stated publicly that compulsory clearance of traditionally constructed properties will not be instigated, removal of such buildings by agreement with the occupiers involved will be considered if benefit to the redevelopment can be clearly demonstrated.

**New buildings must have regard to, exploit, and positively employ topographical features on the estate.**

There is a natural gradient decline south-north/south-east from the area around the junction of College Road and Perry Common Road. In parts this change in levels is quite dramatic and will require imaginative design and layout. For example, some of the existing houses on College Road (towards the junction with Dovedale Road) are built below the carriageway height. The visual impact of the roadway upon occupiers gives a feeling of being overlooked by pedestrians and has been criticised by residents. Attention to detail will therefore be necessary in order to minimise future impact, if replacement accommodation occupies this section.

Minimising disruption to residents (especially those living in brick built houses) whilst the phased redevelopment progresses, is essential. Traffic management must feature as an aspect of the project and proposals to reduce the impact of building on adjoining occupiers will be welcomed. The demolition plan indicates individual phases and highlights potential areas of conflict. Although neither this plan nor the Zoning Layout necessarily represent the actual rebuilding programme, the interface between building contracts is a constraint that needs careful consideration. Whilst individual designs may differ between developers, regard must be paid to adjoining layouts and style etc.
There are no buildings of any architectural or historical interest on the estate, nor is it a Conservation Area. There are no current Tree Preservation Orders. However, every effort must be taken to integrate existing mature and healthy trees into layouts. This will help enhance the character of the new development, and along carriageways will reduce the apparent width of the road to help restrain driving speeds. Extensive new planting will be required.

PLANNING POLICIES

The Birmingham Unitary Development Plan provides the sole statutory land use plan for the City of Birmingham directing and controlling development up to the year 2001.

The UDP acknowledges the increasing disrepair in the inter and post war Council owned housing stock, and outlines a number of Housing Regeneration Areas which will be the focus of the City Council’s efforts to improve housing conditions in these areas. Perry Common is identified as Housing Regeneration Area HRL. More generally the plan seeks to encourage a comprehensive approach to housing redevelopment; the provision of a range of housing types throughout the City (and in particular housing affordable to those residents most in need), and emphasises the importance of improving the environment of residential areas.

The Perry Barr Constituency statement within the UDP states that “defective non-traditional housing at Perry Common will be redeveloped” (10.23).

Additional Policies and Guidance

All development on the estate should meet the standards and guidelines in the City Council’s ‘New Residential Development Design Guidelines’. The Guidelines set out recommended standards for design, density, layout, car parking, amenity space etc which must be adhered to as well as seeking to encourage high quality and innovative urban design.

The Planning Committee is also committed to reducing the level of crime and fear of crime and has adopted guidelines to “design out” crime; ‘Crime Reduction Measures for New Residential Schemes’. All house types and layouts must be submitted for approval to West Midlands Police under the “Secured by Design” Initiative.

The geometric and construction standards of any proposed new roads or layout/access amendments must conform to ‘The Design of Streets in Residential Areas’ and the principles of DOE Design Bulletin 32 (2nd Edition) Residential Road and Footpaths Layout Considerations’.

Estate Profile

At the start of the Perry Common redevelopment initiative it was necessary to build up a data base for the estate. An Estate Profile was produced in August 1991 which provides basic information about the estate. The Profile outlines what facilities existed on the estate, those facilities which were either lacking or deficient, and identified opportunities for improving the situation. The Estate Profile was no more than a ‘snapshot in time’ of the situation on the Estate. However it did identify issues for further investigation and provided the basis for the work which was to lead to the Zoning Layout and this Brief.

Perry Common Zoning Layout

The City Council in partnership with the local residents has produced a Zoning Layout which will direct and guide future development on the estate. It provides the framework for the redevelopment of the estate and the creation of an attractive residential environment which will meet the needs of, and be of benefit to the residents both now and in the future. Two of the main aspects of the new layout relate to the road layout and the disposition of open space. The existing road hierarchy is largely retained, but it is proposed that it be modified to reduce both the volume and speed of traffic on the estate. New areas of usable open space are introduced which link into the Sutton Park - City Centre Linear Open Space which is adjacent to the estate.
The Zoning Layout has been approved by the Planning Committee as Supplementary Planning Guidance. The planning and design principles which have guided the production of the Zoning Layout and are to be promoted on the new estate are outlined in more detail in the following sections.

**PRINCIPLES OF DEVELOPMENT**

**Design and Layout**

The purpose of this design brief is to ensure that the phased redevelopment of the estate is carried out in a co-ordinated manner, to provide a series of linked residential environments which provide homes that function well, both internally and externally, within settings which provide feelings of identity, safety and community for the residents.

The design of the individual phases or areas must therefore conform to the overall requirements of the brief, but it is considered that there is enough flexibility within the requirements to enable a variety of layout solutions to be achieved.

At the more detailed level, care should be taken to effectively integrate existing building and landscape features into the new environment. The use of consistent design themes and materials can create a townscape of variety and richness which still maintains a clear identity for individual phases of the estate. Quality and imaginative design are the overall aims rather than a slavish adherence to minimum standards.

Sympathetic house types which enhance, or at least compliment the existing built environment will be essential. Merely recreating the current streetscape will not be acceptable.

A quality townscape must be created which avoids monotony. Gateway and landmark features should be used to create an environment in which residents can take pride and an ongoing interest.

New buildings must be of traditional construction, meet modern standards and function effectively. Materials should be used which keep maintenance to a minimum, and measures to increase energy conservation be promoted. In emphasising the presence and function of spaces and buildings, the design solution should include the use of distinctive materials without recourse to expensive maintenance. For example, car hardstanding and roadside parking areas should be of a surface material which minimises the aesthetic impact of vehicle cilia.

The generally preferred housing type for the redevelopment is the suburban semi-detached house in a range of dwelling sizes. Long runs of terraced dwellings will in general be discouraged. Flatted development should be two-storey generally although in certain locations three-storey flats may be acceptable.

The layout of the residential areas needs to provide identity, security and community. Loop roads and culs-de-sacs serving groups of dwellings are generally considered appropriate for this residential environment. Where perimeter block development is included as part of the overall layout, the design of the individual housing units must reflect the predominant suburban design ethos. Long runs of frontage dwellings should be avoided wherever possible by the use of varied building lines, and buildings turned at right angles to the highway.

Flatted developments and specialised forms of housing, such as sheltered housing, should follow the same general principles, and layouts should seek to create and define spaces which give containment and enclosure, with car parking in close relationship to entrance doors and principal windows. The location of such specialist housing must have regard to the accessibility of community facilities, shops and bus stops etc. (Further information regarding appropriate sites will be contained within individual phase briefs).
Public access into open campus style layouts should be limited to one entrance where possible, and communal areas should be given definition and containment to indicate their private function. Institutional developments should also reflect the need for informality and grouping, with large structures broken down into constituent parts to provide a domestic character. They should reflect the design idiom of nearby housing development.

Within housing areas every attempt must be made to provide a sense of ownership. This can be achieved by entrance gateway features and by the use of traditional townscape planning techniques such as enclosure, termination of vistas and the creation of linked spaces. Retention of mature trees within new layouts will also provide a visual link with the past. Continuity can be secured by a consistent use of buildings and ground surface materials, with variations to give definition to common areas and groups of dwellings. Private frontages should be defined by walls, fences etc., which give clear definition to the private and public areas. Privacy for side garden and corner sites should be provided by screen walling, rather than fencing. Relatively continuous runs of walling can provide an added sense of continuity and permanence. Care must be given to the appearance of blocks of properties fronting onto the estate roads in order to avoid inward looking development with extensive boundary fencing to the highway. This is important to avoid stretches of roadway without interest and to improve pedestrian safety through visual overlooking.

Where housing sites adjoin public spaces, dwellings should be turned to face on to open space frontages, to take advantage of the setting and view and to provide surveillance of that area. Although the need to provide vehicular access to dwelling curtilages will involve the introduction of access roads along these frontages, the safety and useability of the open space areas must not be compromised.

Layouts should indicate a clear distinction between private and public spaces, and enable easy identification of function and responsibility for upkeep and maintenance.

The Planning Committee density norm for new residential development is 150 habitable rooms per hectare (60 habitable rooms per acre), and this figure should form the broad target for most housing areas.

Within the larger residential areas, it will be permissible to introduce variety in density to reflect visual or townscape requirements, such as denser developments at gateways or feature sites, or to take advantage of close relationships with areas of open space. However, the overall density of such larger areas should equal the Planning Committee's norm, and lower densities in compensation may need to be introduced where appropriate.

The residential areas fronting to College Road present an opportunity to provide higher density development, in order to provide a barrier development along this busy road and give a scale of development appropriate to a major highway.
Car Parking standards are clearly set out in the Planning Committee's guidelines.

The level of off-street parking provision will relate to the size and type of occupation of dwellings. All dwellings should have at least one private parking space within or adjoining the curtilage located as close as possible to dwelling entrances. Three bedroom houses and larger house types should have two spaces within the curtilage. Visitor spaces should be in a location to conveniently serve small groups of dwellings.

Car parking spaces should be sited at the side of the dwellings and in tandem, rather than occupying entire frontage areas. This will permit the formation of front gardens, will enable the extent of private curtilages to be clearly defined by walling, and will reduce the impact of vehicles on the street scene. Side parking spaces would also allow for the erection of garages at the side of dwellings if required in the future. Roads will need to penetrate sufficiently to allow direct vehicular access into the curtilage of all dwellings.

In participating fully in the planning and preparation of the Zoning Layout and Design Brief, the residents of Perry Common have demanded significant multi-disciplinary input from officers of the City Council. It is naturally appropriate that a high level of technical supervision is exercised throughout the period of implementation. It is therefore expected that building control work will be undertaken by Building Consultancy.

Movement

The network of movement across the estate must be simple to understand, safe to use, and functional.

The relationship between movement and accessibility is taken as read, for without adequate pedestrian and vehicular links both inside and outside the estate, the level of access to local facilities will be limited.

The road networks main function, that of serving the residential population has in the past been eroded by growing demands of car owning residents, and the desire of through traffic to use the estate as a shortcut. This desire should be thwarted.

Safety of movement throughout all parts of the estate will be paramount. The links between individual areas must be interesting and stimulate the user, and accessibility for all estate users must be considered.

Pathways must cater for all sectors of the community, this can be achieved by attention to pavement detailing, dropped kerbs, ramps, change of surface treatment etc.

Existing points of access into the estate will be retained but the new road layout will not permit non-resident traffic to compromise the residential nature of the new estate.

![Principal Road Network Within Estate](image-url)

The proposed layout is designed to limit traffic speeds to 20 miles per hour which is considered desirable for residential access roads (outside the distributor road network) to reduce the danger of motorised traffic, thereby creating a safer environment for pedestrians, particularly children. Redevelopment of the bulk of the estate allows modification of the existing road pattern thereby eliminating the general need for remedial traffic calming techniques. However speed reduction measures will need to be employed on Witton Lodge Road.

Witton Lodge Road will continue to function as a local distributor road and provide access for local bus services throughout the estate. The "Ring" will cease to function as a roundabout, with two way traffic using the carriageway in front of the shops.
The redundant carriageway in front of St Martins Church will become an access road serving the church and retained brick houses. A reduction in vehicular speed on Witton Lodge Road will be achieved by creating roundabouts etc at the junctions of Witton Lodge Road and Abingdon/Broomhill Road (details of roadworks necessary for individual phases will be contained within specific phased briefs), and an adjustment of the road cross section.

A drop-down area will be provided in Hastings Road to provide a safe parking facility for use when transporting children to and from Perry Common J and I School. Redevelopment proposals will also allow for customer and staff parking and the servicing needs of retail units on Witton Lodge Road.

With a modified road layout designed as a low speed environment, and the provision of off-street parking facilities within individual carriages, the safety of pedestrians and cyclists throughout the estate will be greatly improved.

Pedestrian access (particularly the young, elderly, and people with disabilities) will be further enhanced by creating convenient, safe, and pleasant links to the local points of the estate - the "Ring" and to other facilities such as shops, school, bus stops, and other community services.

The wide pavements and carriageways on Witton Lodge Road also offer opportunities for imaginative house design, as well as reducing road width as a traffic calming measure. The current building line can therefore be ignored. Costs incurred in removing services etc will need to be included within scheme costs, but if such costs are incurred as a result of achieving attractive design as well as contributing to traffic calming objectives, a contribution by the City Council may be appropriate.

Footpaths providing links solely for pedestrians will be minimised to those which are safe to use by ensuring they are short, direct, well lit and properly overlooked to ensure passive policing. All roads and pathways must be lit with "white light".

The open space network will encourage greater use of the informal recreational space around the
estate, whilst at the same time providing local play space close to homes. Where the open space network is adjacent to the road network, the priority must favour the pedestrian with clearly defined boundaries, and measures incorporated that prevent invasion by vehicles on to the pedestrian environment (grass verges also need to be protected to prevent irresponsible car parking).

All paths, pavements and play areas must be lit to ensure the safety of users and must be of sufficient width to meet the needs of disabled users, people with prams (ie wide enough for two persons to pass without having to leave the paved area), and mechanical cleaners. Where pathways adjoin roads there must be dropped kerbs, preferably of a different surface texture to assist users who are visually impaired to be aware that they are approaching a road. Where drains etc are part of the pathway, they should be set at the edge or be of such a design as to ensure that wheels, walking sticks etc do not become trapped or lead to pedestrian instability. All walkways on sloping surfaces should be non-slip.

Environment

The regeneration of the Estate has afforded the opportunity to review the distribution of open space with the primary objective of providing more accessible open space within 400 metres of all dwellings, to accord with policies set down in the UDP. To facilitate this a redistribution is proposed of part of the existing playing fields to the east of the Estate. Part of the open space at the Ring could also be released for community development.

The proposed release of land will provide for a complimentary network of new open space which will be designed to complement the new housing rather than being added as an afterthought, a mistake too often made in the past. The primary focus on the Estate is shops and schools will be linked via the ‘Ring’ to the Sutton Park to City Centre linear open space to the east. Smaller local open spaces will also provide opportunities for recreation and in particular safe play for young children in close proximity to their homes.

Paramount in the layout and design of open space is the need to achieve areas which are seen by local residents as belonging to them and to which they will have affinity. Open space in urban areas must be meaningful; it is only by realising the sense of ‘ownership’ by local people, that vandalism and anti-social practices can be curbed and reduced.

Individual areas will be sensitively designed in conjunction with relevant user groups to provide for local recreational needs including in particular those of children and the elderly. Pathways facilitating access through these areas will be well lit thus ensuring the safety of users and providing security for adjoining residential properties. All areas of open space will be overlooked by dwellings to ensure natural surveillance and there will be visual links between spaces to provide a safe, green, user friendly environment.

In accordance with the City Council’s “Policy for the Provision of Children’s Play Areas”, the provision of a ‘secondary’ play area within the larger open space and a ‘tertiary’ play area within one of the smaller open spaces is required.
Play equipment should have a high play value, be attractive, vandal resistant and have a low maintenance requirement. Adequate lighting, fencing to exclude dogs, seating and the provision of impact absorbing surface materials beneath equipment will be required. The play areas will be carefully sited to avoid causing a nuisance to adjoining residents and will be constructed with an open aspect adjacent to footpath routes to ensure that children can play in safety. It is intended that open space areas and green links within the estate will be designed to discourage organised ball games by appropriate landscaping.

Safe pedestrian access to and from open space areas is essential. Protective barriers on highway frontages and fencing to define and secure sites where considered necessary will be required.

Provision for access by users with disabilities and people with prams should be made to all facilities within open space areas with drop kerbs where appropriate. Whilst measures will be required which will prevent unauthorised vehicular access thus assisting local policing, access for maintenance purposes will be necessary.

The careful selection of hard landscape materials and furniture including seating, litter bins, fencing, signing and lighting is vital to ensure the integration of the open space network into the built environment.

The creation of a high quality landscape framework will be achieved through the careful use of trees, shrubs and grass of high specification and where appropriate lower mounding. Low growing shrubs and low mounding will be utilised to define areas having differing recreational uses; however planting must be carefully sited to facilitate informal surveillance thus ensuring the safe use of the open space areas by all members of the community. The importance of establishing minimal maintenance regimes will be paramount. This will be achieved by the careful design of open space and play areas to enable horticultural operations to be carried out efficiently and by the selection of good quality maintenance free materials for construction purposes. Although it is proposed to modify the existing alignment of the internal road network, the existence of mature and attractive street trees give the current layout a strong landscape structure. Retention of significant numbers of these trees (even when their original function as street trees has ceased because of redefinition) will give the new development an immediate quality which would not otherwise be achieved.

In order to ensure that the existing trees on the estate are healthy and will contribute to the overall regeneration of the estate, the trees will be surveyed. The aim of the survey will be to identify the species, size, vigour of the trees; both in the gardens and on the highway with a view to either removing unhealthy trees or carrying out remedial work where appropriate to retained trees. The trees will be protected in accordance with BS5837:1987: Trees in Relation to Construction.

Where trees are removed, the requirement for replacement trees will be built into the design brief for each phase of the development. Where it is not possible to plant trees in original locations due to the presence of services, parking bays or other site constraints, alternative locations will be identified to ensure that the maximum number of trees are successfully replanted. Extensive new planting will be required and additional locations will be identified accordingly.

It is anticipated that the development and subsequent maintenance of the proposed areas of open space, planting and associated recreational facilities will be financed where appropriate through planning obligations* imposed on the relevant phase of the development. This will ensure that open space areas are developed and completed and trees planted at the same time as the adjoining residential development.

CONCLUSION

This brief sets out the City Council’s Planning Framework for the rebuilding of the Perry Common Housing Estate. Throughout the period of redevelopment, circumstances will inevitably change and it is important therefore to establish the principles clearly at the outset of the project. More detailed briefs issued for each phase will compliment this overview, but the theme of quality will flow consistently throughout.

Prospective developers are encouraged to contact the Department of Planning and Architecture at an early stage to discuss layout and design proposals in order to avoid any abortive work.

LIMITATION OF LIABILITY

The information contained in this brief is, to the best of the Council’s knowledge, correct at the time of writing. However, the City Council would advise developers that it is their responsibility to
advise developers that it is their responsibility to check site conditions, availability of services etc. prior to entering into any negotiations. Any views expressed by the Local Planning Authority are those which represent current policy at the time and may be varied by the Local Planning Authority as a result of any reassessment of the appropriate planning policies for the area at any time.

Selective ground condition tests have been undertaken which have provided a soil profile for the estate. To date there are no known ground problems which are likely to prejudice residential redevelopment. A copy of the ground profile is available for perusal, although any works undertaken based on this document will be entirely at risk and a more detailed site appraisal is therefore recommended.

CONTACTS

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APPENDIX
Fig. 2 LOCATION OF RETAINED PROPERTIES.

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- PROPERTIES NOT INCLUDED IN THE REDEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS
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Fig. 8b PUBLIC OPEN SPACE INCORPORATED WITHIN HOUSING LAYOUT
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CORE AREA BOUNDARY

PROPERTIES NOT INCLUDED IN THE REDEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS
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