



**Assessing 'Soundness'
of the
Council's Local Plan Proposals -
Does the Evidence Show Plans are Viable?**

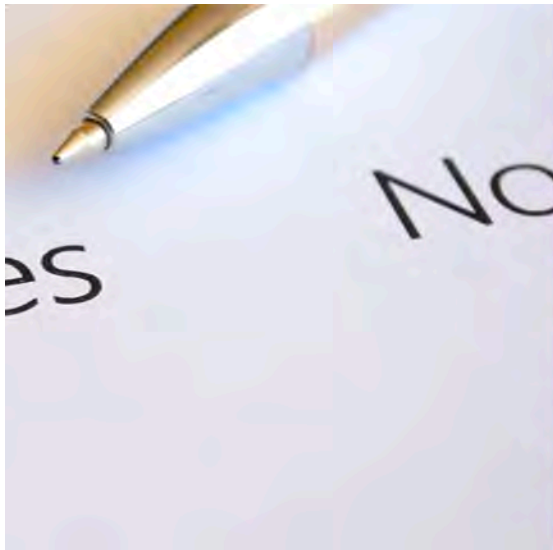


Once the Local Plan is adopted, the two proposed KDBH development sites will no longer be 'Green Belt'.

Developers will prepare and submit detailed planning applications for each site.

This is when the status and weight given to the 'Concept Masterplans' is vital in determining what happens next.





We should not expect Masterplans to include full details. But there should be sufficient confidence that what's set out is capable of delivery.

There is ambiguity about whether Masterplans are 'illustrative' or set out key 'principles'. Their status in determining delivery needs to be made clear.



Incorporating Masterplans into the Local Plan document would help strengthen their legal weight for the next stage of development.



Why is this important?

Where may potential risks lie?

This takes us on to the viability of site proposals. We will draw from the Council's own 'Viability Assessment' and analysis from our previous videos.



The KDBH Masterplans are created by the Council. It is site developers who will put forward detailed planning applications.

So what would applying the Council's policies and proposals mean in practice for developers of the two KDBH sites?

Housing numbers for both sites have reduced significantly - by 40% and 20%

40% of new builds will be affordable housing, 65% of which social rented

Of the remainder, 80% will be 3 bedrooms or less

Policies require houses to be built to higher quality and design standards



There will be costs of relocating existing facilities

Developer contributions are required towards:

- 2 new schools and a new sports venue
- transport and green belt mitigation costs
- Community Infrastructure Levy (25% of which we as a community get a say in how to spend)

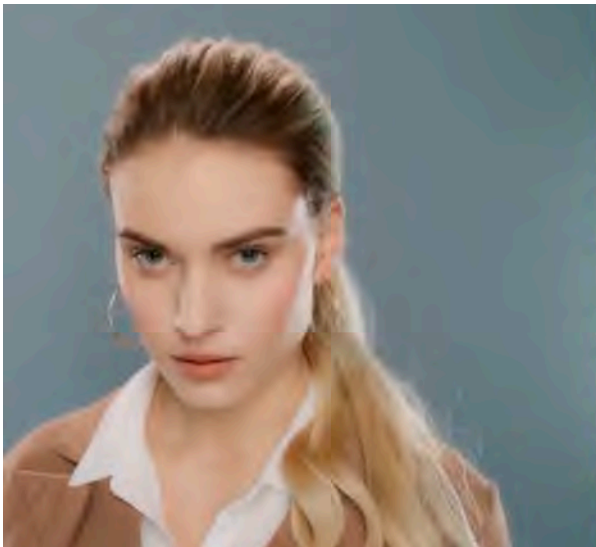
Both sites are likely to incur abnormal costs for engineering works due to the topography



The Forum has noted that:

Arden Triangle: the last Council Cabinet meeting prior to issuing the Local Plan registered grave concerns of two landowners

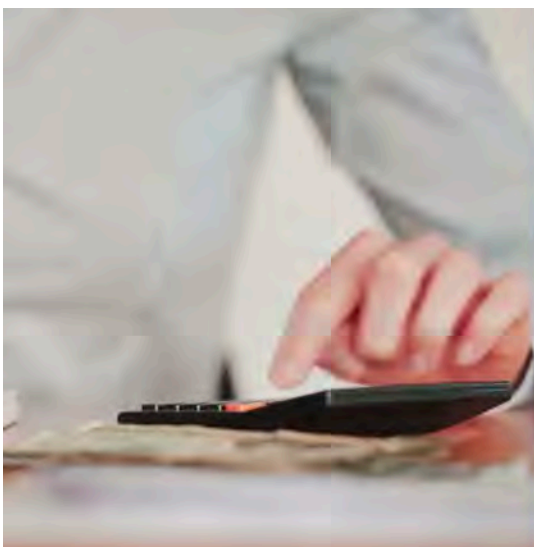
Hampton Road: Developer proposals had increased to 350 houses, before being replaced by the final, Council created Masterplan for 180 houses.



Meeting all development requirements seems like a tall order?

What does the Council's own Viability report say?

It does include a viability appraisal for the Hampton Road site.



The study serves as an example of a 'rural green field' site of >200 houses.

When commissioned, the proposals were then for 300 houses at a 'medium' density of 37.5 dph.

This has now reduced to 180 houses. Parts of the site are now 'low' density.



Even with 300 houses, the report concludes that the site would be only marginally viable if it had to meet all the Council's requirements.


The report also identifies that as a consequence

"Despite the attractive location, it is our view that interest in this site amongst premium housebuilders based on these dwelling mix scenarios will be muted, and most interest will come from volume housebuilders appealing to a mass market and which will be reflected in pricing."



So what would a similar assessment for the Arden Triangle site find?

The Council themselves are now leading proposals for this site. They have a land interest (the Arden Academy). Also, multiple landowner / developer interests means creating a whole site proposal is complex.

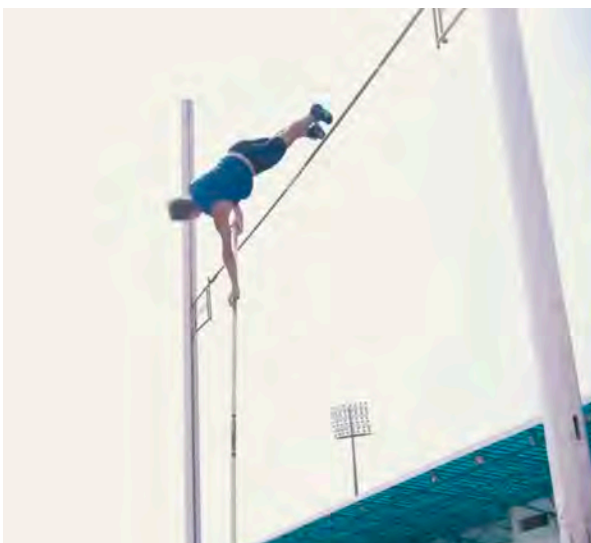


No viability assessment is provided for Arden Triangle.

The public interest, high profile and complex nature of this site make it essential that viability information be made transparent and public as part of final consultation.

Delivering the Arden Masterplan is critically dependent on achieving a site-wide development approach.

Failure to gain full buy-in, commercial agreement and close co-operation from all interested parties would likely cause the Arden Triangle scheme to fail.



In short, more information on viability is needed.

Ultimately, in an imperfect situation, it comes down to taking a view on how much of a leap of faith it takes.

And what we can do during this consultation to address or mitigate concerns.



So there you have it.

There are many positives in the Council's Local Plan proposals.

There are a few key areas where Borough-wide policies could mean the particular needs of our KDBH Area are overridden.

Masterplans could deliver significant community benefits, but also housing types and numbers not fitting local character and distinctiveness and adversely impact community services.

Where is the trade off?

The uncertain status of Masterplans and lack of appropriate viability assessments are major weaknesses if KDBH is to have confidence that proposals can be delivered in practice.