



## Old River Lane – Masterplan Steering Group: Meeting Two

**Location:** Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre, Rye Street, Bishop's Stortford CM23 2HH

**Date/Time:** 22nd July 2025 - 4pm-6:30pm

### Meeting Attendees:

Attendee Name	Organisation / Representing
Cllr Vicky Glover-Ward	EHDC / Chair
Cllr Miriam Swainston	EHDC / Bishop's Stortford Town Council
Cllr Mione Goldspink	EHDC / Bishop's Stortford Town Council
Cllr Yvonne Estop	EHDC / Bishop's Stortford Town Council
Paul Dean	Bishop's Stortford Civic Federation
Sally Fenton	Bishop's Stortford Climate Group
Huw Jones	CEO of Bishop's Stortford Town Council
Anthea Wyatt	Chantry Communication Association
Stephen Connors	South Mill Arts
Katie Leslie	Youth Representative
Dan Carlin	Youth Representative
Deborah Munro	Friends of Water Lane Hall
Neil Button	EHDC
Maria Hennessy	EHDC
Anthony Bateman	EHDC
Scott Hackner	EHDC
Andrew Sanderson	Cityheart
Jack Pritchard	Howells
Geraint John	GJ Planning
George Steele	Caneparo
Alice Marmara	LCA
Aliscia Butler	LCA

# Meeting Notes:

## 1. Welcome

Attendees were welcomed to the Steering Group Meeting and guided to their assigned tables by LCA & EHDC. Attendees had a chance to view & discuss the 3D site model.

## 2. Introduction by Cllr Vicky Glover Ward (Chair)

Cllr Vicky Glover-Ward gave a short introduction to the Steering Group Meeting, setting out its purpose and giving a reminder of the previous session.

## 3. Consultation Outcomes by Alice Marmara (LCA)

The presentation began with feedback on the consultation that took place on the draft masterplan earlier in the summer. This included:

- 73 surveys completed and 208 comments placed on event boards.
- 173 attendees across 2 public events.
- 163 people signed up to join mailing list.
- 257,207 social media impressions leading to 519 link clicks through to project website.
- 783 visitors to project website with 85 downloads of information brochure.

Feedback from consultation was also shared and broken down into key themes:

- Most common theme was height and massing; some people felt 4-5 storeys was appropriate, others said they would prefer a 3-storey limit.
- Most popular ideas for public square were markets, an outdoor cinema, and performance space.
- Strong support for provision of healthcare facility.
- Importance of new buildings reflecting the local area's character.
- Mixed views on shops, cafés and restaurants; some feeling that there is enough of these in Bishop's Stortford, some wanting to see independent retailers.
- Some concern around impact on traffic; some feeling that proposed Waitrose access will improve flow, others questioning efficacy.

The consultation outcome report will be added to the designated Old River Lane website and shared with the steering group.

## 4. Draft Masterplan by Jack Pritchard (Howells)

Howells gave a presentation on the draft masterplan, covering the evolution of proposals in relation to District Plan policy BISH8 and Old River Lane (ORL) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) objectives, and addressing feedback from Steering Group Meeting One.

Masterplan items to be considered by the steering group were then outlined, before Howells moved on to addressing design. This included a review of strategic design principles, and an overview of site-specific design considerations & opportunities. Design response measures regarding BISH8 policy objectives were also set out.

The evolution of the strategic masterplan was summarised, looking back on significant changes from the 2017 Planning Framework to the 2022 Old River Lane SPD & 2025 Illustrative Masterplan. Most recent updates were then detailed, relating to:

- Ground floor and public realm
- Height, scale and massing and impacts to views
- Landscaping
- Movement
- Articulation, frontage, and texture of buildings.

A significant new design feature of the July 2025 masterplan proposal was an updated roofscape articulation. This included the use of setback top storeys to reduce perceived height from the street below, and create a less imposing building face. Rendered images were presented, comparing new and previous designs to depict how setback top storeys will change the view and appearance of buildings from various surrounding locations. A 3D model of the proposals were also available to view.

Subsequent slides referred to the rich and complex architectural history of Bishop's Stortford, citing varied building and roof form, elegant brick facades, articulated corners, and complimentary textures and tones as inspiration for the draft masterplan.

Howells described various features which aim to make Old River Lane a public realm with nature-based spaces and an active ground plane, including walk through buildings, green buffers, and community space. The proposal emphasises healthy streets, achieved by incorporating a 2-way bike lane along the access road, as well as footways on either side (separated from the road by strips of planting).

Attendees were then briefed on plans for the Town Square, including high quality design that supports temporary and seasonal activities, while providing electric / water utilities and safeguarding land for future Arts Centre.

Feedback from the consultation in June on the town centre was considered, resulting in the following key changes:

- A better proportioned, 'contained' and flexible open space
- Increased area for greening
- Better reflection of key routes and thoroughfares
- Smaller pavilion structure that retains functionality
- Cost effective and deliverable

## **5. Draft masterplan breakout session**

Following the presentation by Howells on the masterplan consultation and evolution of the proposals, attendees were split into three breakout groups to help facilitate discussion. Members of the project team and officers from EHDC were on each table to ask and answer questions as well as take note of the feedback received. Imagery and plans were also provided to supplement discussions.

A summary of the feedback received across the three tables on each topic has been summarised and broken down into themes:

### **Height and Massing**

- There was a general consensus that the height presented at the July 2025 meeting was preferred to that presented during the masterplan consultation in June 2025.
- In particular, there were favourable comments on the inclusion of setbacks within the design with attendees favouring lower heights at the front of buildings and taller heights at the back. One attendee suggested height should be focused towards Waitrose / North Gate Car Park.
- There was support for ground floor being differentiated from other storeys, by way of being proportionally bigger and / or being distinct in texture and material. This combined with setback top storeys would create a 'layering' effect and avoid a flat & monotonous building face.
- Several attendees supported using more pitched roofs throughout the development. In particular, the use of pitched roofs in the middle of the development.
- One attendee suggested the potential of raising the height of the pitched roof in the middle of the development, to reduce the height elsewhere in the development. This could help protect important views from Castle Gardens.
- One attendee noted the importance of several views including from Castle Mound due to the historic context, and also from Salter's Field.
- There was support for replicating coach house type routes / underpasses to provide connections.
- There was support for three-dimensional breaks or gaps in building faces to avoid monotony.

### **Materiality and appearance**

- Several attendees noted they were in favour of the colours and textures presented. There was a consensus that the colours fit in well with the town and reflect the character of North Street. The development by the bus station in Hertford was an example presented for how different colours can be incorporated into building blocks.

- There was a suggestion that lighter colours are used on taller buildings to make them appear softer.
- There were mixed feelings on green walls. Whilst one table welcomed their inclusion on the side of the development along the link road, other tables had mixed feelings. Those attendees who expressed uncertainty noted maintenance issues adding “we want excellent design – it doesn’t need to be covered up”.
- Gail’s Bakery at Cambridge Station Square in Cambridge was noted as an example of where windows have been introduced effectively on a curved building edge.
- The Lea Wharf development in Hertford was highlighted as an example of unfavourable development in relation to colour and appearance of blocks by an attendee.

### **Ground floor uses**

- Several attendees mentioned relocating the current library to the Old River Lane site. One attendee suggested the library might need to move from their current location and would potentially be interested in moving to this space.
- Attendees noted it is important for any office / workspace provision to be flexible to meet the requirements of a range of operators. Flexible units were considered essential to avoid site becoming disused or sterile. One attendee in particular noted there is demand in Bishop’s Stortford for SMEs / smaller co-working spaces e.g. 6-10 desks.
- Attendees suggested that permission for the healthcare facility space should be kept as broad as possible, and designed to potentially accommodate a GP in future.
- One attendee suggested providing a job centre if the plans for a healthcare facility do not materialise, as the nearest job centre is in Hertford which is tricky for people to get to that live in Bishop’s Stortford.
- Two attendees suggested speaking to Hertford Regional College about the education facility using the space.

### **Public Square and landscaping**

- Several attendees supported the inclusion of an outdoor cinema – with a suggestion it could be used to also broadcast big sporting events.
- Several attendees also supported the inclusion of a market with permanent stalls, similar to Eat17.
- Attendees supported proposed tree planting in a boulevard effect as it acted as a natural barrier. Several attendees asked questions about how the green spaces will be maintained / managed.

- One attendee felt that the public square was a good size for the types of events it could accommodate.
- Attendees liked the proposed routes through the public square as it linked to destinations such as Castle Gardens, Jackson Square and the bus stop on Bridge Street.
- Project team responded to a query about Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), clarifying that requirements will be achieved at the public square.
- Although the URC Hall is outside of the site boundary it was highlighted by some attendees that the area around it is a car free zone and it should be landscaped appropriately to allow flexibility for any future changes.

## **6. Transport by George Steele (Caneparo)**

Caneparo presented an overview of the transport assessment scope and work completed to date.

To start with, attendees were informed about the policy requirements for a transport assessment. This primarily cited Policy TP1 within the Neighbourhood Plan – ‘Assessing transport impacts and mitigation of development on traffic congestion and resident amenity.’ Policy TP1 requires that:

- All major proposed developments shall be supported by a Transport Assessment;
- The Transport Assessment and Travel Plan shall be carried out as part of the Masterplan process.

Policy TP1 also emphasises the requirement for rigorous Transport Modelling, and states that in the event of a Transport Assessment showing significant cumulative impacts (as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework) on the transport network, the assessment shall identify and demonstrate cost-effective mitigation to an acceptable degree.

Caneparo explained that the scope considers traffic volume and capacity, parking need / demand, pedestrian and cycle permeability, public transport accessibility, and road safety, and is often agreed with the Highways Authority (Hertfordshire County Council).

Additionally, the notion of a ‘Transport User Design Hierarchy’ which seeks to shift towards sustainable transport modes above other modes, with design emphasising improvements to connectivity for walking and cycling. Reporting on their early assessment, Caneparo presented several conclusions:

- The development proposal generates a relatively low level of vehicle trips, based on the sustainable location and lower amount of parking spaces.
- Most traffic accessing site will be associated with the Waitrose supermarket.
- Residential element is coming forward with minimal car parking, in line with Highway Authority feedback.

- Proposal includes policy compliant cycle parking and discussions at advanced stage for car club vehicle operator.
- Access is proposed via a new junction off of Link Road.
- Pedestrian crossing on Link Road will be improved with central refuge and increased width to facilitate separate single stage cycle crossing.
- New access junction proposes stopping almost all traffic on Old River Lane, facilitating new north-south active travel link through site.

Finally, details were given on a Transport Monitoring Survey undertaken by an independent company. This included an overview of the types of methods used to collect a comprehensive recording of traffic patterns in various locations across the surrounding area.

## **7. Transport breakout sessions**

Attendees were split into breakout groups to help facilitate discussion. A summary of the feedback received across the three tables on each topic has been summarised and broken down into themes:

### **Modelling and future-proofing**

- Several attendees queried future modelling and how any changes in traffic would be incorporated. Caneparo explained modelling would be undertaken following a 'design freeze' when further aspects of the masterplan are settled. The opening year of development (i.e., the first year the development is complete) and the five years after this would be modelled to ensure longer-term traffic impacts are reviewed.
- Several attendees emphasised the importance of future proofing Water Lane Hall and Coopers sites in case of access and future redevelopment which might need to benefit from Old River Lane. It was felt the masterplan should allow for the possibility of these adjacent sites to come forward in the future.
- One attendee noted any traffic increases as a result of the Good Yards development should be considered as part of the town centre modelling, including the impact to Station Road and to buses.
- One attendee suggested an additional ATC (Automatic Traffic Counter) should be placed on Windhill.
- One attendee suggested future pedestrian and cycle routes and weekend closures in the town are considered adding there is an aspiration to introduce a cycle route on North Street.
- One attendee suggested that the transport assessment should consider what events would take place on the public square and what impact that may have to traffic flows in the assessment.

## **Sustainable travel**

- One attendee encouraged the formation of a car club and expansion across the town, ideally including the Goods Yard development. Several attendees generally welcomed car clubs as a good way of reducing parking for the development but emphasised it is important to provide ability to use a car when necessary.
- Several attendees remarked bus routes are not regular and are expensive – a suggestion was made that improvements to bus routes could encourage people to travel more sustainably.
- Several attendees asked how informal routes will separate cyclists to pedestrians and how pedestrians will be safe from cyclists. Attendees were directed to the proposed access plan (included as part of the masterplan update section of the presentation) to show how visual and / or physical dividers are proposed to help create a barrier between pedestrians and cyclists.

## **Traffic lights**

- One attendee remarked adding traffic lights at the new crossing will slow traffic down, suggesting a roundabout would be better to help keep traffic moving.
- One attendee suggested traffic lights should be timed together to help traffic flow throughout the town.

## **Parking**

- Several attendees suggested Waitrose should tighten parking restrictions, so residents / visitors won't use their car park. Attendees were also interested to understand how parking provision would be controlled to ensure people don't park in parking spaces that are being provided for blue badge holders.
- One attendee noted that there are planned changes to car parking tariffs in the town for long / short stay, as well as changes at Jackson Square which could affect where and how people park in the future. It was suggested that the transport modelling takes this into account to understand what impact it may have on traffic movement.
- There was support for the incorporation of delivery drop-off parking zones.

## **8. Other comments**

- Several attendees were interested in the affordable housing offer and what the housing mix of the residential development would be. One attendee noted the importance of the residential offer providing enough space for families to grow. Several attendees expressed a preference for a variety of flat sizes to be provided.



- Several attendees expressed concerns about flooding issues in the area and how this would be managed.
- Several attendees asked how construction would be managed / mitigated to ensure minimal disruption to the community.

## **9. Ending remarks and next steps**

Cllr Vicky Glover-Ward (Chair) gave some closing remarks and thanked attendees for their time and contribution. Next steps were outlined by Howells and LCA, including:

- Minutes of the Masterplan Steering Group meeting will be circulated with attendees in August.
- Cityheart will participate in an external Design Review Panel session to review the masterplan. Following this, the masterplan would then be shared with East Hertfordshire District Council.
- A further consultation on the detailed planning application will be taking place in Autumn 2025. Attendees were encouraged to send the Council, LCA and Cityheart suggestions on how the consultation could reach a greater audience.
- Cityheart anticipate submitting a planning application in November.