

# Warwick Bar Development

## The vision for Warwick Bar

We want a masterplan to enable the creation of a place that has unique qualities in Birmingham; a lively and diverse place that engages positively with street, canal and river, and which contains well-designed spaces which will attract people to it. We want this unique local distinctiveness to be achieved by incorporating, and not obliterating, the gritty industrial character of Digbeth, and by revealing and interpreting the layers of history that have shaped the form of the site and its context. We want a masterplan that can resolve what could be perceived as contradictions within the brief: the need for a development that is both commercially profitable and also long-term sustainable, and for a development that is both heavily populated and also richly bio diverse.

The practice undertaking the masterplan will have demonstrated that it has the ability to handle and resolve the complexities inherent in the masterplanning task, but also possesses the capacity to think imaginatively, creatively, and innovatively outside the conventional parameters of the task. A masterplan is a document that charts the masterplanning process and explains how a site or a series of sites will be developed. It will describe how the proposal will be implemented, and set out the costs, phasing and timing of development.

The purpose of a masterplan is to set out principles on matters of importance, not to prescribe in detail how development should be designed. But a masterplan should show in some detail how the principles are to be implemented. If the masterplan shows an area designated for mixed-use development, for example, it should show a layout that will support such uses (for example by ensuring that footprints of the buildings are appropriate to the envisaged uses). Warwick Bar lies within the eponymous conservation area, which is within the historic district of Digbeth, which in turn is part of the 170 hectares regeneration area of Eastside. Digbeth is historically and presently a predominantly industrial area, but one which has begun the process of metamorphosing into a more complex type of place. There is already a significant introduction of cultural production into the area, including The Bond on Fazeley Street, the Custard Factory, Vivid, the UB40 studios, Screen West Midlands, and Maverick Television. The Ikon Gallery is considering a new location on Fazeley Street. With appropriate policies of retaining compatible industry and introducing new housing and social facilities, Digbeth has the capacity to become a characterful and sustainable urban village within the city centre.

## Introduction

The task for which the selected designer will be appointed is the preparation of a masterplan for the development of the site under the control of ISIS on Fazeley Street, Birmingham, known as Warwick Bar. This is a site of 1.9 hectares, made up of the historic canal wharf plus an adjacent industrial estate. We use the term masterplan in the sense defined in the Urban Design Group's publication Urban Design Guidance. The wharf site is presently occupied by two businesses, a cement batching plant and a steel

stockholders, which will be relocated elsewhere. The businesses in the industrial estate will also be relocated. The fire-damaged no.106-110 Fazeley Street will be repaired and vacant; and no.122 Fazeley Street will be occupied by MADE. You should assume that, apart from no.122, the whole of the 1.9ha site will be vacant and in the ownership of ISIS.

## The existing site

The wharf was built by the Grand Junction Canal Company in the mid 19th century. It comprised two canal basins from the Digbeth Canal, warehouses, company offices, goods weighing machine, and the weighing machine keeper's house. The two canal basins are filled in, but their locations can be seen on old maps. Between them on the canal is the so-called Banana Warehouse of c.1850, listed Grade II. On Fazeley Street are two other Grade II listed buildings: nos.106-110, of 1850, with a warehouse behind, and no.122, the canal company offices and weighing machine keeper's house. Descriptions of the listed buildings can be found in the 'Gallery' section of the website ([www.warwickbar.net](http://www.warwickbar.net)). Also on Fazeley Street is the 1935 warehouse of the canal carriers Fellows Morton Clayton, which is locally listed.

## Urban design criteria

The intention is that the Warwick Bar site should become an exemplary model of sustainable urban development within the wider Digbeth urban village. There is no specific brief for land uses, but you should give consideration to achieving in the masterplan an appropriate diversity of economic activity, to produce both vitality and economic stability.

The masterplan will achieve useful, accessible and memorable spaces, particularly in the public realm. These will enable the waterside and the historic buildings to be enjoyed by both users and visitors. The masterplan will also enable these spaces to be part of a joined-up network of pedestrian routes which extends beyond the boundaries of the site, connecting it to other parts of Digbeth across the canal and river, so helping to increase accessibility in Digbeth and the spread of new development. Specific guidance on the first two of these is given in the Waterspace Strategy of British Waterways Board. The potential for the frontage on the River Rea is considerable, as this is likely to be the first new development on the banks of the Rea in the city centre. Guidance as to the aspirations for riverside development here is contained in the Eastside Sustainability Vision of the Eastside Sustainability Advisory Group. In general, we expect a high standard of urban design to be achieved through the masterplan, fulfilling the seven key objectives of urban design contained in CABE's document *By Design* ([www.cabe.org.uk/publications](http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications)).

1. **Character** – A place with its own identity
2. **Continuity and enclosure** – A place where public and private spaces are clearly distinguished
3. **Quality of the public realm** – A place with attractive and successful outdoor areas

4. **Ease of movement** – A place that is easy to get to and move through
5. **Legibility** – A place that has a clear image and is easy to understand
6. **Adaptability** – A place that can change easily
7. **Diversity** – A place with variety and choice

Neither is there a specific requirement for phasing of development, but you may wish to consider this in the context of the speed of delivery of different parts of the masterplan, the achievement of permeability of public access, and the anticipated growth of new uses in Digbeth.

## Commercial development criteria

ISIS requires that the development of the site will be commercially viable, and that it will return a profit to the company on its investment. Although we are not specifying either land uses or plot ratios in this brief, this requirement necessitates a certain density of development to be achieved on the site, and for this density to be made compatible with architectural and environmental quality, and with the requirements for biodiversity.

The linear corridors of canal, river, and railway embankments and viaducts in Digbeth make an important contribution to the biodiversity of the area, both in terms of flora and as habitats for fauna. The River Rea and the Digbeth Canal at Warwick Bar are important components of this system. Although the biodiversity in these corridors and on adjacent unused or underused land has come about by default or by neglect, it is our intention that the system should be maintained and even enhanced through positive intention and action in the development process. One example of this is the emphasis placed by the Eastside sustainability officer on green and brown roofs.

## Sustainability criteria

ISIS wishes the development to become a model of sustainable development. This will cover not only the familiar physical and quantifiable categories (defined by BRE as energy, water, pollution, materials, transport, ecology and land use, and health and wellbeing), but also the social and economic spheres. Within these, we expect buildings and spaces to be robust, enabling a variety of uses to succeed each other throughout their lifetime, and also to contribute what they can to the promotion of social equity. With specific reference to the physical categories of sustainability, ISIS expects the development of Warwick Bar as a whole to be carbon-neutral in its impact upon the environment.

Creation of masterplanning team Nov-December 2005  
Masterplanning work commences January 2006  
Outline planning permission 2006/2007  
Scheme commences 2008