

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE CABINET</b>
<b>Date:</b>	25 January 2023
<b>Executive Member:</b>	Councillor David Sweeton, Executive Member (Inclusive Growth, Business & Employment)
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Julian Jackson, Director of Place Gregg Stott, Assistant Director, Investment, Development & Housing
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>ASHTON MOSS DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: UPDATE</b>
<b>Report Summary:</b>	The report provides an update on the preparation of the Development Framework for the Ashton Moss strategic employment site and the ongoing work to facilitate its future development as Ashton Moss Innovation Park.
<b>Recommendations:</b>	That Executive Cabinet be recommended to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Approve the draft Ashton Moss Development Framework that will form the basis for the progression of the delivery strategy and ongoing engagement with land owners.</li> <li>(ii) Note the ongoing work to support new development and investment at Ashton Moss Innovation Park, including examination hearings regarding Places for Everyone (PfE).</li> <li>(iii) Approve that the estimated remaining non-recurrent Council reserve balance of £184,000 (<b>Appendix 2</b> refers), previously allocated to the Place Directorate to support the further development of Ashton Moss, be utilised for this purpose in 2023/24 to progress the delivery strategy subject to further governance setting out exactly what will be delivered within this budget envelope.</li> </ul>
<b>Corporate Plan:</b>	Key aims of the Corporate Plan are to provide opportunities for people to fulfil their potential through work, skills and enterprise and to ensure modern infrastructure and a sustainable environment that works for all generations and future generations. Future development at Ashton Moss Innovation Park will deliver against these aims in the areas of job creation, modern infrastructure and a sustainable environment.
<b>Policy Implications:</b>	The proposed interventions to create the Ashton Moss Innovation Park will support the policy aims of the Council's Corporate Plan, proposals within Places for Everyone agreed at Council 20 July 2021, the Tameside Inclusive Growth Strategy 2021, Tameside Climate Change & Environment Strategy, the Council's growth priorities agreed at Council February 2020 and the Council's Unitary Development Plan.
<b>Financial Implications: (Authorised by the statutory Section 151 Officer)</b>	The report provides an update on the work that is progressing on the Ashton Moss strategic employment site.  The related costs of the work carried out to date and forecast to 31 March 2023 is financed via a total budget of £850,000. This is

resourced via £575,000 non-recurrent Council revenue funding and £275,000 Evergreen 2 grant funding.

**Appendix 2** provides a summary of the cumulative actual and forecast expenditure to 31 March 2023 together with the resourcing of this expenditure. It should be noted that the Evergreen 2 grant funding has to be expended by 31 March 2023.

There is an estimated balance of £ 184,000 remaining at the end of the current financial year that is currently within Council reserves. The report requests use of this balance in 2023/24 to support the further development of the site, the details of which are provided in section 3 of the report.

It is essential that all expenditure relating to this site continues to be procured in accordance with the Council's contract procedure rules with advice and guidance provided via STaR as appropriate.

In addition the attainment of value for money should also be clearly evidenced on any further expenditure incurred together with supporting details of the benefits that the development of the site will realise for the Council.

**Legal Implications:  
(Authorised by the  
Borough Solicitor)**

This report provides Members with a helpful update in relation to the Innovation Park.


Advice from legal and the other enabling services is ongoing particularly in relation to any procurement exercises together with the ongoing consideration of any subsidy control implications.

**Risk Management:**

A risk register for the project is in place and regularly reviewed. The main risks are summarised in Section Five below.

**Background Information:**

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Mike Reed - Head of Major Programmes

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Ashton Moss is a strategic employment site located on the edge of Ashton-under-Lyne Town Centre in close proximity to Junction 23 of the M60 Manchester orbital motorway. Ashton Moss is split in to two definable areas, Ashton Moss East (AME) (also known as Plot 3000) identified with the Council's Unitary Development Plan as part of allocation E1(1) and Ashton Moss West (AMW) identified as a proposed allocation within Places for Everyone, extending collectively to approximately 70 hectares.
- 1.2 All of the land, critical to delivery, is in private ownership, has challenging ground conditions to varying degrees and level differences, particularly on AMW. AME is allocated for employment uses, whereas AMW is currently designated as Green Belt but is a proposed employment allocation of the Council within Places for Everyone (PFE), currently at Examination.
- 1.3 Ashton Moss is the largest employment opportunity site within Tameside and provides the opportunity for higher paid and skilled jobs for residents in the Borough in line with the Tameside Inclusive Growth Strategy. The site is well located on the road, tram, bus and active travel networks and is adjacent to the Ashton Moss retail, leisure, commercial and industrial area.
- 1.4 In 2022 the Council agreed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with each of the principal landowners at Ashton Moss (Muse Developments, Staley Developments and Arqiva) to help facilitate the delivery of new development and secure much needed inward investment and jobs to Tameside. The Council has worked closely with the private sector landowners via a multi-disciplinary team of specialists procured via STaR over the last 12 months to progress a Development Framework for the location, undertake site investigations and complete support studies. This work has been funded via £275,000 of external grant funding secured via the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) from Evergreen II, matched by the Council. A report to Executive Cabinet dated 26 August 2020 established the background to the work to be funded from Evergreen II. For completeness a copy of the report can be reviewed using the following link – [ITEM 5f - Evergreen FINAL.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#).
- 1.5 The site forms part of the identified the Ashton Innovation Corridor, comprising Ashton Moss, St Petersfield, and Ashton Town Centre, as a priority area to deliver high innovation growth and implement the objectives of the Tameside Inclusive Growth Strategy 2021-26. Proposed interventions across this area are being progressed in the context of the Ashton Mayoral Development Zone (AMDZ) currently being considered with the GMCA and other relevant organisations and agencies to work in partnership to deliver a joined up approach to realising the full potential of this area.

## 2. THE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 The Ashton Moss Development Framework (the Framework) (**Appendix 1**) has been prepared to consider collectively the AME and AMW areas; this combined site is referred to as 'Ashton Moss Innovation Park'. The Framework considers the site's background, context, planning status and ownership. An analysis of current market forces and potential for employment generation has informed the site's constraints and identified opportunities.
- 2.2 The Framework will be used as an economic and planning tool to guide and enable the future development and masterplanning of the site, in accordance with existing and proposed planning policies. It clearly outlines the infrastructure required to enable and unlock the full potential of the site, as well as the key delivery considerations and development options. Further work will be needed to establish the ground conditions in detail, infrastructure design, site levels, drainage and any remediation of the site to inform technical delivery.

- 2.3 The baseline engagement with specialist agents has identified unprecedented demand for spaces to support a wide range of industrial, manufacturing and other industries. This informs the view that the Ashton Moss Innovation Park is optimally positioned to both provide jobs for local people and attract specialist talent from around the region.
- 2.4 To inform preparation of the Framework the multi-disciplinary team has engaged with a number of Council officers (highways, planning, estates, open space, digital), Tameside College, TfGM, other key stakeholders and land owners, Members, and the Tameside Inclusive Growth Board. As specific proposals and opportunities at Ashton Moss Innovation Park emerge these will be subject to a formal consultation process alongside further Member engagement and any application for planning permission where this becomes necessary.
- 2.5 The Framework envisions the provision of employment uses focusing on advanced manufacturing at Ashton Moss Innovation Park. Tameside has a strong Advanced Manufacturing cluster and the immediate and wider area has demonstrated a need for business and innovation opportunities to support “move-on space” for business incubators and draw on those links to higher education and research. This supports the strategic ambitions of both the Council and GM.
- 2.6 The site has several strategic advantages; offering significant levels of sustainable travel access options, proximity to the town centre and surrounding amenities, easy access to the M60 and potential for high quality green infrastructure.
- 2.7 According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019), Tameside is ranked 23/317 for average summary measure. This represents an increase in deprivation from 2015 where Tameside ranked 34. The LSOAs around Ashton Moss are a mixture of 10 to 40% most deprived areas, although the sub 10% is a more accurate reflection of the wider area. In total, around 13.4% of Tameside residents live in income deprived households. In 2020, jobs density across Great Britain was recorded to be 0.84, this was significantly lower in Tameside at around 0.56. The delivery of employment at Ashton Moss Innovation Park will help to address the high levels of economic deprivation experienced in the borough and improve quality of life for residents.

### ***Vision and Objectives***

- 2.8 The baseline research and analysis has informed the strategic vision and objectives for Ashton Moss Innovation Park which will define its growth over the coming years.
- 2.9 The vision for the site is to create a dynamic, attractive and thriving innovation park, embedded in and contributing to a greener, cleaner society for Tameside. Its highly accessible location and position adjacent to a large number of facilities makes it ideally positioned to generate inward investment, jobs and deliver positive green infrastructure and active travel networks.
- 2.10 The strategic objectives for the Ashton Moss Innovation Park are as follows:
- A Connected Employment Hub that maximises its strategic location and accommodates a multitude of potential future uses.
  - An Outward Facing Offer that responds positively to the landscape setting of the site
  - An Active Environment that connects into the local pedestrian and cycle movement networks promoting movement within and around the site.
  - A Good Neighbour with development that appreciates sensitive green edges, residential amenity, and the industrial and commercial settings.
  - A Natural Place that understands its existing environmental assets and minimise its impacts and its footprint overall.
  - Forward Looking maximising the potential to offer employment for existing and future populations and creating opportunities for businesses of various scales to build in flexibility.

2.11 The High Speed Rail 2 (HS2) Phase 2b Bill as currently drafted includes provision for the full closure of the Metrolink Ashton Line for a circa two year period. The Council submitted a petition against the Bill in August 2022 in accordance with the motion approved at Full Council on 21 March 2022 and Executive Decision Notice (EDN) of 3 August 2022. This petition seeks an additional provision in the Bill to enable the construction of a new Metrolink depot to enable a tram shuttle service to operate between Ashton and New Islington instead of the full closure of the Ashton Line. This would enable the Ashton Metrolink line to remain open throughout the construction of HS2 to avoid the economic impact that such closure will cause. Ashton Moss has been identified by TfGM as the preferred location for a stabling and maintenance depot constructed on the Ashton Line. The Framework has therefore been prepared in the context of this potential requirement with a specific area of the site, which could be used to accommodate the proposed depot or for employment uses should the depot not come forward.

### ***The Structural Framework***

2.12 The Structural Framework for the site sets the underlying strategic components from which development at Ashton Moss Innovation Park should respond. It consists of the following elements:

- Landscape Framework
- Pedestrian and Cycle Movement Framework
- Infrastructure Framework

2.13 These components set the structure for the development and defines a development envelope in the form of three development areas as set out in the Framework (EMP.01, EMP.02, EMP.03). These development areas could be delivered individually or as part of a site-wide development proposal.

2.14 The Framework has identified four different technical solutions to delivering various quantum of development.

- Framework Option 1 - Country Park and Development
  - EMP\_01 - Development parcel divided into two plots and accessed via Rayner Lane. Existing drainage ditch accommodated within plot landscape. Frontage to Rayner Lane/Garden Centre.
  - EMP\_02 - Development provided adjacent to M60. Employment plots accessed existing signalised junction. Central Country Park.
  - EMP\_03 - Development plot served by existing junction arrangements.
- Framework Option 2 - Full Development
  - EMP\_01 - Development parcel divided into two plots and accessed via Rayner Lane. Existing drainage ditch accommodated within plot landscape. Frontage to Rayner Lane/Garden Centre.
  - EMP\_02 - A large development platform created to accommodate a number of development plots. Autonomous bus loop connecting to a potential new station at Littlemoss.
  - EMP\_03 - Development plot served by existing junction arrangements.
- Framework Option 3 - Development and Metrolink Depot
  - EMP\_01 - Development parcel divided into two plots and accessed via Rayner Lane. Existing drainage ditch accommodated within plot landscape. Frontage to Rayner Lane/Garden Centre.
  - EMP\_02 - Metrolink Depot provided adjacent to M60. Park and Ride relocated. Employment plots accessed from existing signalised junction. Development plot platforms to be confirmed, but will sit at a higher level to the depot site. Existing Right of Way diverted and re-provided.
  - EMP\_03 - Development plot served by existing junction arrangements.

- Framework Option 4 - Country Park and Metrolink Depot
  - EMP\_01 - Development parcel divided into two plots and accessed via Rayner Lane. Existing drainage ditch accommodated within plot landscape. Frontage to Rayner Lane/Garden Centre.
  - EMP\_02 - Metrolink Depot provided adjacent to M60. Park and Ride relocated. Central Country Park.
  - EMP\_03 - Development plot served by existing junction arrangements.

2.15 The Framework options provide flexibility both in terms of accommodating either the Metrolink depot and/or employment on one of the plots in the short to long term, and further technical work informing mitigation requirements while creating development platforms across the whole site.

### 3. DELIVERY STRATEGY

3.1 The Framework is intended to be flexible, to allow the evolution of the design process to respond to market changes in delivering the Ashton Moss Innovation Park and allow the development to support a variety of potential occupiers who may require different scale and types of units. Market analysis work completed demonstrates that the preference for logistics and/or advanced manufacturing occupiers is likely to range from 850 sq.m to 45,000 sq.m. A mix of unit types is therefore likely appropriate, which will broaden the appeal of the site to potential occupiers.

3.2 The delivery strategy has considered the challenges faced to create a site which is able to attract investment and occupiers. Critical to achieving this will be the need for the Council to continue to engage with the landowners across the site and formulate an approach to delivery of infrastructure and enabling works. This will require further detailed assessments and investigations relating to ground conditions, traffic and transport, ecology, and utilities via the appointed multi-disciplinary team.

3.3 This work will inform the preparation of business cases/submissions to future external funding opportunities, as they become available, to assist in delivering the full potential of the site and Tameside and Greater Manchester's wider growth and development aspirations.

### 4. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

4.1 Additional non-recurrent revenue budget of £575,000 was allocated to the Place Directorate in 2020/21 and 2021/22 to support the further development of Ashton Moss. In addition the Council has been successfully awarded Evergreen 2 grant funding via GMCA of £275,000 that must be expended by 31 March 2023. This provides a total budget of £850,000. A summary of the budget expended to date and commitments to 31 March 2023 is set out in **Appendix 2**. All services have been procured via STaR procurement to ensure value for money.

4.2 There is an estimated remaining budget available at 1 April 2023 after budget expended to date and commitments of £184,000. It is recommended that this remaining budget is utilised in 2023/24 to progress the delivery strategy work as set out in Section 3.

4.3 The delivery strategy work will incorporate further detailed assessments and investigations relating to ground conditions, traffic and transport, ecology, and utilities. In addition to the work completed to date this will support the business cases/submissions to future external funding and provide the initial investment required to unlock the full potential of the Ashton Moss site. Value for money will be secured through the procurement of all external services via STaR procurement.

## 5. RISK MANAGEMENT

5.1 The main risks associated with the Framework and Ashton Moss Innovation Park are identified in the table below.

Risk Area	Detail	RAG Rating	Mitigation	RAG Rating
<b>Delivery</b>	Lack of interest in the market to demonstrate deliverability of the scheme in the masterplan.	Yellow	Early market appraisal work has been undertaken by CBRE which has demonstrated sufficient interest from the property market to deliver development at Ashton Moss.	Green
<b>Delivery</b>	Site is in a number of private ownerships.	Yellow	The Council continues to work proactively with the private landowners to agree shared objectives and opportunities for future development. The two primary landowners associated with Ashton Moss West positively support the principal of the proposed allocation within Places for Everyone, as set out within associated representations and hearing statements.	Green
<b>Financial</b>	External funding available for enabling infrastructure to accelerate delivery.	Yellow	Opportunities for funding will be actively monitored. The work completed to date will inform future submissions seeking external funding.	Yellow
<b>Planning</b>	The AMW part of the site is currently within the Green Belt land	Red	The AMW site is included in the PfE Joint Development Plan, currently at Examination, to be removed from the Green Belt and re-designated as employment land.	Yellow
<b>Programme</b>	Part of the site may be required to a Metrolink depot.	Yellow	Flexibility has been built into the Framework to ensure the potential Metrolink depot can be accommodated if required.	Green
<b>Programme</b>	Lack of resource capacity to undertake workstreams in line with expectations.	Yellow	Internal resource has been identified to meet expectations.	Green

## 6. NEXT STEPS

6.1 The Council remains committed to working with the various land owners to bring forward Ashton Moss as an exemplar Advanced Manufacturing location in the North of England to create the Ashton Moss Innovation Park. The establishment of the AMDZ will further support delivery of the Council's growth ambitions at Ashton Moss and help to maximise the full potential of this area.

6.2 The Council's ongoing work in relation to this strategic employment site provides a proactive and positive response for the delivery of inclusive growth within Tameside. It is

recommended that in the 2023/24 financial year the Council progresses further detailed assessments and investigations to inform the preparation of any business cases/submissions to future external funding opportunities as they become available, support the identification of any strategic delivery partners and support PfE.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 As set out at the front of the report.