

Report to:	EXECUTIVE CABINET
Date:	22 November 2023
Executive Member:	Councillor Jack Naylor, Executive Member (Inclusive Growth, Business & Employment)
Reporting Officer:	Julian Jackson, Director of Place Nicola Elsworth, Assistant Director, Investment, Development & Housing
Subject:	ASHTON MOSS DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK
Report Summary:	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.
Recommendations:	That Executive Cabinet APPROVE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The Ashton Moss Development Framework (Appendix 1) for adoption, which will facilitate the future development of Ashton Moss Innovation Park and act as a material consideration when consulting on any planning applications for the site to help ensure that proposals for development comply with the vision and objectives for Ashton Moss. (ii) The next steps as set out in Section 5 and enable the Director of Place to manage the programme of works associated with their delivery, in consultation with the Executive Member for Inclusive Growth, Business & Employment, which will be subject to the usual governance and transparency requirements. (iii) That £0.184m of non-recurrent Council earmarked reserves previously allocated by Executive Cabinet in January 2023 to the Place Directorate to support the further development of Ashton Moss, be utilised for this purpose in 2023/24 and 2024/25 to progress the next steps in accordance with Section 5.
Corporate Plan:	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.
Policy Implications:	The proposed interventions to create the Ashton Moss Innovation Park will support the policy aims of the Council's Corporate Plan, the Tameside Inclusive Growth Strategy 2021, Tameside Climate Change & Environment Strategy, the Council's growth priorities agreed at Council February 2020 and Places for Everyone joint development plan document.

**Financial Implications:
(Authorised by the
statutory Section 151
Officer & Chief Finance
Officer)**

There is total Revenue budget available for the Development Framework of £0.850m, which is summarised along with expenditure to date in the table below. This budget includes use of £0.184m of Council Reserves as approved in the [Executive Cabinet Report](#) of 25 January 2023 (recommendation iii)

<u>Available Budget</u>	£m
Evergreen Grant Funding	0.275
Non-recurrent Council Match Funding	0.275
Other Non-recurrent Council Funding (including use of Council Reserves)	0.300
Total	0.850
<u>Expenditure to date</u>	
Project Management	0.128
Engineering Feasibility Works	0.250
Quantity Surveyor	0.050
Site Surveys (Topographical, Traffic flow, Ecology, Wildlife)	0.073
Site Masterplanning	0.076
Legal / Collateral Warranties	0.023
Commercial and Inward Investment advice	0.066
Total	0.666
Remaining Balance of Funding	0.184

This report proposes use of the £0.184m remaining balance of funding to progress the next phase of development in 2023/24 and 2024/25 as outlined in Section 5.

The use of reserves to support expenditure is only ever a one-off resource. Once expended, reserves are gone. As such, the Place Directorate must contain the costs arising from the decisions in this report within the existing resources allocated of £0.184m. The funding and macro-economic environments for Local Government are such that the Council does not have further financial resources to support cost overruns.

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)**

There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report. Legal services continue to provide support to this project on issues including subsidy control, planning and procurement.

Risk Management:

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

Access to Information:

Not confidential

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 18 of the M60 Manchester orbital motorway. Ashton Moss is split in to two definable areas, Ashton Moss East (AME) (also known as Plot 3000) and Ashton Moss West (AMW), extending to approximately 70 hectares in total.
- 1.2 All of the land at Ashton Moss is in private ownership and suffers from problematic ground conditions (underlying peat deposits) and significant level differences particularly on AMW. AME is allocated for employment uses with the Council's Unitary Development Plan as part of allocation E1(1), whereas AMW is currently within the designated Green Belt but proposed to be removed from this and allocated for development within Places for Everyone (Pfe). Places for Everyone is currently at a very advanced stage, being examined by the Planning Inspectorate.
- 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 and bus 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 desk top site investigations and complete support studies. This work has been part funded via £0.275m of external grant funding secured via the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) from Evergreen II, matched by the Council.
- 1.5 The site forms part of the identified the Ashton Growth 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 formally established with the GMCA. The AMDZ is comprised of the core three project areas, Ashton Moss, St Petersfield and Ashton Town Centre. These three project areas are interlinked and create a critical mass of growth that will build on the existing business base (which has strengths in manufacturing and advanced manufacturing) as well as creating and enhancing business links between existing and future digital and creative businesses in St Petersfield and future businesses at Ashton Moss. It will also better link the development opportunities of Ashton Moss and St. Petersfield to Ashton Town Centre with this wider regeneration creating a significant scale of new employment growth in Tameside. The close proximity to Manchester City Centre and the sector links with Higher Education Institutions for research, innovation and skills development will reinforce and strengthen the opportunities for the growth sites in the AMDZ.

2. THE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 The Ashton Moss Development Framework (the Framework) (**Appendix 1**) has been prepared by a multi-disciplinary team, led by LDA Design, to consider collectively the AME and AMW areas; this combined site is referred to as 'Ashton Moss Innovation Park'. To inform preparation of the Framework the multi-disciplinary team has engaged with service across the Council (including planning, highways, strategic property, greenspace, and digital), Tameside College, TfGM, other key stakeholders and land owners, Members, and the Tameside Inclusive Growth Board. The Framework has been prepared collectively with

the principal landowners at Ashton Moss (Muse Developments, Staley Developments and Arqiva) who are supportive of its content.

- 2.2 The Ashton Moss Development Framework is an investment, planning and economic tool that will assist in driving forward development of the site. 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. The Framework considers the background, context, planning status and ownership of the site. An analysis of current commercial property market trends and potential for employment generation has informed the analysis of site constraints and identified opportunities.
- 2.3 The baseline engagement with specialist commercial property market 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 The Framework sets out the potential for Ashton Moss Innovation Park to provide growth space for Tameside's manufacturing and engineering sectors and to attract inward investment, particularly in advanced materials / manufacturing and potentially health innovation and clean energy. This responds positively to the existing employment sector strengths of Tameside, which has almost double the national average of engineering and manufacturing employment, with a strength in advanced manufacturing sector employment.
- 2.5 Whilst Tameside has a strong advanced materials / manufacturing cluster the borough does not have an adequate supply of employment land. These sectors are identified in the Greater Manchester Industrial Strategy as key growth sectors and therefore there is the potential to strengthen the cluster, increase employment within Tameside, grow the local economy and generate additional business rates income.
- 2.6 Development of a well-connected site of the scale of Ashton Moss has the potential to create training and job opportunities for local residents both during the construction phase and upon completion. The proximity of the site to areas in Ashton-under-Lyne and Droylsden (which are in the top 10% of most deprived wards nationally) will create opportunities to positively address the barriers to employment experienced by residents in these areas.

Vision and Objectives

- 2.7 The baseline research and analysis has informed the strategic vision and objectives for Ashton Moss Innovation Park which will guide its growth over the coming years.
- 2.8 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 existing facilities makes it ideally positioned to generate inward investment, jobs and deliver positive green infrastructure and enhance active travel networks.
- 2.9 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.

2.10 A potential future requirement has been identified for a maintenance and stabling depot on the Ashton Metrolink line. Ashton Moss has been identified as a possible location for this and therefore the Framework has been prepared in this context with part of the site identified to accommodate either a depot or alternative employment uses.

The Structural Framework

2.11 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

2.12 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.

2.13 The Framework has identified four different technical solutions to delivering various quanta 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 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 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.

2.14 The Framework options provide flexibility both in terms of accommodating either the Metrolink depot or employment on one of the plots in the short to long term, and further technical work to inform the Biodiversity Net Gain requirements and potential costs associated with creating development platforms across the whole site.

3. DELIVERY STRATEGY AND BUSINESS CASE

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. Commercial property market analysis has demonstrated that the preference for logistics and/or advanced manufacturing occupiers is likely to range from 9,000sqft to 500,000sqft. A mix of unit types is likely to be appropriate, which will broaden the appeal of the site to potential occupiers.

3.2 The delivery strategy work to date has considered the challenges faced to create 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 the major infrastructure enabling works. This will require further detailed assessments and investigations relating to ground conditions, traffic and transport, ecology, and utilities being delivered via the multi-disciplinary team.

3.3 Further work is now required to establish in more detail the ground conditions, infrastructure design, site levels, drainage and the remediation requirements to determine the technical delivery of the site. This in turn will help to refine the understanding of viability constraints and the level of public sector infrastructure intervention that may be required to unlock areas of the site and create viable development platforms.

3.4 This work will inform the preparation of business cases/submissions to future external funding opportunities, as they become available, to assist in delivering the enabling infrastructure needed to unlock the full potential of the site and deliver Tameside and Greater Manchester's wider growth and development aspirations. This will be progressed within the context of the AMDZ. As specific proposals and opportunities at Ashton Moss Innovation Park start to emerge these will be subject to a formal consultation process alongside further Member engagement.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

4.1 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
Delivery	Lack of interest in the market to demonstrate deliverability of the scheme in the masterplan.		Early market appraisal work has been undertaken by CBRE which has demonstrated sufficient interest from the property market to deliver development at Ashton Moss.	
Delivery	Site is in a number of private ownerships.		The Council is working proactively with the private landowners to agree shared objectives and opportunities for future development	
Delivery	Private land owners progress development opportunities that are inconsistent with the Council's objectives.		The Council will continue to engage proactively and seek to influence outcomes on the site within the confines of planning (as Local Planning Authority) where necessary.	
Delivery	AMW is not removed from the Green Belt and allocated for development through Places for Everyone		Any application prepared would be contrary to the adopted development plan and would therefore need to demonstrate that Very Special Circumstances exist.	
Financial	Lack of external funding available for enabling infrastructure.		Opportunities for funding will be actively monitored. The work completed to date will inform future submissions seeking external funding.	
Financial	Development of the site is not viable.		The main viability challenges are identified in the Framework alongside the approach to seek to address these.	
Programme	Part of the site may be required to a Metrolink depot.		Flexibility has been built in the Framework to ensure the potential Metrolink depot can be accommodated if required.	
Programme	Lack of resource capacity to undertake workstreams in line with expectations.		Internal resource has been identified to meet expectations.	

5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 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 AMDZ will further support delivery of the Council's growth ambitions at Ashton Moss and help to maximise the full potential of this area.
- 5.2 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 therefore recommended that over the next 18 months the Council progresses the following activity:
- Continue to support the progression of Places of Everyone through to adoption in order to secure removal from the Green Belt the AMW site allocation, and to make any non-material amendments to the Framework as required.
 - Further viability analysis, based on the updated development cost plans, commercial property market review and site investigation works.
 - Proactively promote the development opportunity at Ashton Moss Innovation Park as part of a Prospectus of the AMDZ which showcases all development opportunities in the Ashton area and better promotes its existing offer.
 - Continue to work collaboratively with the private sector site owners to support their site promotion.
 - Continue engagement to assess the demand from local business in Tameside for future site requirements related to expansion and/or relocation.
 - Continue engagement with the Manchester Inward Investment agency, MIDAS, to understand the most up to date requirements for inward investors and large scale occupiers, such as digital centres
 - Continue engagement with local educational providers about large scale land requirements and universities and research institutions to determine if there are requirements for employment linked to research.
 - Preparation of business cases/submissions to future external funding opportunities as they become available.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 As set out at the front of the report.