

Report to:	JOINT MEETING OF OVERVIEW/EXECUTIVE CABINET
Date:	9 February 2022
Executive Member:	Councillor Oliver Ryan – Executive Member (Finance and Economic Growth)
Reporting Officer:	Ian Saxon – Director of Place Gregg Stott – Assistant Director, Investment, Development & Housing
Subject:	ASHTON DEVELOPMENT ZONE
Report Summary:	The report seeks approval to create a Greater Manchester Mayoral Development Zone (MDZ) around the Ashton Innovation Corridor to be known as the Ashton Development Zone (ADZ). The report also provides an update on the successful bid by the Council to the Levelling Up Fund for Ashton Town Centre.
Recommendations:	That Executive Cabinet be recommended to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Agree to create a Mayoral Development Zone (MDZ) around Ashton Innovation Corridor to be known as the Ashton Development Zone (ADZ). (ii) Enable the Director of Place to implement the ADZ and manage the programme of works associated with its delivery and on-going performance and reporting will be provided to Executive Cabinet. (iii) Note the work underway to deliver the £19.87m Levelling Up Fund bid for Ashton Town Centre and associated Town Centre Regeneration Programme.
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. The interventions that will be supported by the proposed Ashton Development Zone will deliver against these aims in the areas of job creation, modern infrastructure and a sustainable environment.
Policy Implications:	The proposed interventions will support the policy aims of the Council’s Inclusive Growth Strategy 2021, Tameside Climate Change & Environment Strategy, the Council’s growth priorities agreed at Council February 2020 and the draft Greater Manchester Places for Everyone joint development strategy.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the statutory Section 151 Officer & Chief Finance Officer)	The report sets out details of the proposed Ashton Development Zone (ADZ) together with the governance arrangements of the related ADZ Steering Group and ADZ Officer Working Group including details of the Council and Strategic partner members. The development zone is aligned to the Council’s Inclusive Growth Strategy 2021-26.

There are no direct financial implications arising from the report at this stage. Members should note that any related implications will be included within associated reports presented to the ADZ Steering Group and ADZ Officer Working Group for consideration.

It should be noted that all Council budget implications relating to the stated development area's within this zone will remain subject to existing Council governance approval arrangements. This also applies to the schemes that will be financed by the £19.87m Levelling Up Fund capital grant referenced in recommendation (iii).

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

It is understood that this proposal is being proposed to galvanise the progress being made at Ashton Town Centre and the Innovation zone and to raise its profile by engaging with the GM Mayor, all of which should be of great benefit.

The governance section helpfully sets out the remit of the steering group and the working group to support it.

It is important to note that neither the steering group nor the working group have the power to make any formal decisions in relation to the Innovation Corridor and the Town Centre as they have no formal governance powers, which remains the remit of the Executive Cabinet. Therefore decisions will still be required to be made through the council's usual executive decision making processes following the necessary due diligence.

Risk Management:

Risks associated with the proposal are set out at Section 4.

Background Information:

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



Telephone: 07974 111 756



e-mail: mike.reed@tameside.gov.uk

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council has identified the Ashton Innovation Corridor, comprising St Petersfield, Ashton Moss and Ashton Town Centre, as one of its priority areas to deliver high innovation growth and implement the objectives of the Tameside Inclusive Growth Strategy 2021-26.
- 1.2 This unique cluster of opportunity has been the focus of activity over a number of years and has recently secured £19.8m from the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) that will contribute to the regeneration of Ashton Town Centre. The Town Centre has undergone improvements in recent years, with the Council's ambition evident through the significant investment of c£60m under the Vision Tameside programme that has delivered the new Ashton Interchange, enhanced digital connectivity, learning facilities, the Council Head Office and public realm. Other key successes include the development of the St Petersfield site and refurbishment of Ashton Old Baths to enhance Ashton's digital sector and commercial office offer as well as improvements to Ashton Market Hall.
- 1.3 There are further opportunities for a mixed use business led growth, particularly in the digital and creative sectors, being brought forward at St Petersfield and the draft GM Places for Everyone (PfE) joint development strategy proposes to allocate a major employment site at Ashton Moss. This significant scale of employment and residential growth will accelerate the economic growth and competitiveness of the area.
- 1.4 Of critical importance will be to ensure that these opportunities improve the quality of the town centre and realise business growth and new homes in a quality environment. It will also be important to ensure that there is good connectivity between development sites and the local population is upskilled to take advantage of the opportunities whilst raising the profile of the area to deliver at pace and attract further investment.
- 1.5 On 27 October 2021 it was announced that the £19.87m LUF bid for Ashton Town Centre had been successful. The LUF bid submitted in June 2021 was based on previous public consultation undertaken by both the Council and the owners of the Ladysmith and Arcades Shopping Centres indicates there is support from local residents for significant intervention to rejuvenate the Town Centre. A survey led by the Shopping Centre owners in 2020 evidenced the need for the redevelopment of the Town Centre, in response to barriers including:
 - Lack of diverse offer: 45% of respondents said investment in better leisure facilities would encourage them to visit the town
 - Lack of employment opportunities: 40% of respondents would not live in the town centre due to a lack of employment opportunities.
 - Varying quality of public realm and disconnected town centre: 84% of respondents would not live in the town centre, identifying the town centre environment as a contributing factor
 - Poor maintenance of existing assets: 69% of respondents consider the market & square to be either average or poor
- 1.6 The specific interventions proposed in the LUF bid were prepared in accordance with the requirements of the LUF and are critical to unlocking the comprehensive redevelopment of the Town Centre; supporting a coherent vision and completing of the final phase of Vision Tameside. This in turn will help deliver a catalytic economic and social impact to the local community.
- 1.7 It is vital that all public agencies work collaboratively together to deliver a common ambition and plan for the opportunities in this area to realise its full potential. In order to focus and co-ordinate activity there is a need to develop new mechanisms, which build on the strong local and Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) governance and place leadership, to influence wider stakeholders to raise the profile of opportunity and tailor and target their funding programmes and priorities to support the local ambitions. This includes a need to

develop a clear strategic narrative and a coherent set of interventions and proposals that will enable sustainable development, connect residents to employment opportunities and give the market the confidence to invest and develop.

2. ASHTON DEVELOPMENT ZONE

- 2.1 It is therefore proposed, to support the delivery of these ambitions, by creating a GM Mayoral Development Zone (MDZ) around the Ashton Innovation Corridor to be known as the Ashton Development Zone (ADZ). The ADZ will bring together the leader of Tameside Council alongside the GM Mayor and other relevant organisations and agencies to work in partnership to deliver a joined up approach to realising the full potential of this area.
- 2.2 The ADZ will consist of St Petersfield, Ashton Moss, and Ashton Town Centre and focus on supporting the delivery of growth and innovation in this area, considering how the impacts and benefits can be felt more widely. It is proposed that the boundary of such ADZ is kept flexible and constantly under review at this stage to maximise the potential opportunities.
- 2.3 The St. Petersfield development in Ashton has delivered modern, high quality office space within an urban business quarter and established Ashton Old Baths as a hub for digital and creative businesses. The presence of health services, a new data centre and high capacity broadband provision, gives St. Petersfield significant potential for innovation in the Digital, Media, Creative and Tech (DMCT) sector. To further progress the full opportunities that exist at St Petersfield, a masterplan development prospectus has recently been prepared. This includes proposals for a mixed use office-led regeneration scheme on the remaining plots, including residential, workspace and hubs, food and beverage, a hotel and improvements to the public realm that will improve connectivity with the rest of the Town Centre and the surrounding area. Within the masterplan, there is a focus on delivering an exemplar scheme based around new patterns of working and providing spaces for hybrid working. Further work has recently been commissioned that will look to build on the development prospectus and will include the preparation of a partnership strategy that will set out the preferred method for delivery to ensure a high standard of design and sustainability, maximising the potential impact for Tameside.
- 2.4 Ashton Moss is a strategic site provisionally allocated in the draft PfE. It is the largest employment opportunity site within Tameside and provides the opportunity for higher value and quality employment 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. The Council is currently working with the private sector landowners via a multi-disciplinary team of specialists to progress a Development Framework for the location, undertake site investigations and complete support studies.
- 2.5 The Council has now commenced the Ashton Town Centre LUF programme in the context of an emerging wider strategic vision for Ashton Town Centre following the decision by Executive Cabinet on 24 November 2021. Officers met with officials from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) on 21 December 2021 to discuss monitoring and delivery arrangements. The interventions supported by the LUF are critical to unlocking the comprehensive redevelopment of the Town Centre and integrating with other as part of a coherent vision, completing of the final phase of Vision Tameside. These enabling works will act as a catalyst for significantly accelerating delivery of the comprehensive transformation of the Town Centre and unlock its full potential.
- 2.6 The items identified within the LUF programme aim to address the key priorities identified in this engagement and building on the investment delivered in the Town Centre to date focused on:

- Land remediation and enabling infrastructure works on the former interchange site, with third party land acquisition currently being finalised;
- Walking/cycling and public realm improvements, including progression of the Mayors Challenge Fund (MCF) projects at Wellington Road and Stamford Street, preparation of options for the improvement of the Market Square, and a Town Centre Public Realm Vision Strategy. The Council are currently preparing information for public consultation on this work to commence w/c 28 February 2022; and
- The restoration of Ashton Town Hall with the first phase of works scheduled to commence in 22/23.

2.7 The Council is also finalising a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and associated Terms of Reference with the owners of the Arcades and Ladysmith Shopping Centres to explore the scope for the redevelopment of the two shopping centres as part of a wider plan to regenerate the Town Centre whilst supporting the Council's priorities for growth. As previously reported to Executive Cabinet, subject to further due diligence and viability assessment the potential has been identified for delivery of c470 new homes of a range of types and tenure, 8,750 sq.m of commercial spaces, a new Health and Wellbeing hub, with 8,500 sq.m of retail space retained.

2.8 It is considered that the ADZ will significantly raise the profile of Ashton and Tameside; helping to position of the opportunities that exist for future funding, investment and Greater Manchester (GM) support. It will provide a mechanism for effective engagement with key stakeholders and organisations in both from the public and private sector.

3. PROPOSED GOVERNANCE

3.1 The ADZ will be a non-statutory entity that provides overarching strategic direction for this area and seeks to further refine the ambition and delivery challenges. The delivery and specific governance for strategic development sites, such as Ashton Moss, St Petersfield and Ashton Town Centre will remain a function of the Council with decisions being made via the usual executive decision routes. The ADZ will show co-ordinated local commitment to bringing forward developments and engage with funding partners to make the strategic case for their support.

3.2 It is proposed that the ADZ be guided by an ADZ Steering Group and ADZ Officer Working Group appointed by the Council.

3.3 The ADZ Steering Group will meet quarterly and be responsible for setting the strategic direction for the ADZ, coordinating partnership working with key stakeholders, providing oversight of the Steering Group, promotion of ADZ within the region and nationally and internationally, and oversight of key infrastructure requirements.

3.4 Membership of the ADZ Steering Group will include the Leader of the Council; the GM Mayor; the Chief Executive of the Council; senior representatives of the GMCA, Homes England, and Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM); relevant Council Executive Members; the Council Director of Place; and senior representative of relevant external public or private sector organisations to be identified.

3.5 The ADZ Officer Working Group will meet quarterly and manage the day to day workings of the ADZ with responsibility to review of the work programme for the ADZ; coordinate staff resources across the Council, GMCA; TfGM and other key stakeholder groups; and seek to align partners' investment planning and resources within the ADZ.

3.6 Membership of the ADZ Officer Working Group will include senior officers from the Council, GMCA, TfGM, Homes England, and other representatives as the programme requires.

3.7 At this stage, these are provisional governance arrangements and further details of how the ADZ will relate and add value to the existing groups currently supporting the work to deliver the Council's ambitions in this location will be set out in due course.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

4.1 The main project risks associated with the proposal have been identified in the table below.

Risk Area	Detail	RAG Rating	Mitigation	RAG Rating
Programme	Some sites for future development are not in Council ownership / control, but rest with private landowners. May impact on ability to deliver.	Yellow	Existing relationships the major private sector land owners are being formalised through MoUs.	Green
Programme	Lack of capacity within the Council and partners to undertake work streams in line with expectations.	Red	Early engagement to understand requirements and make best uses of resources via agree programme.	Yellow
Financial	Insufficient budget to complete the scope of works required.	Red	Early engagement with partners will help to clearly understand requirements and maximise opportunities for external funding.	Yellow

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The creation of a Mayoral Development Zone (MDZ) around the Ashton Innovation Corridor to be known as the Ashton Development Zone (ADZ) will support delivery of the Council's growth ambitions at St Petersfield, Ashton Moss, and Ashton Town Centre and help to maximise the full potential of this area.

5.2 The LUF monies recently secured provides a significant financial contribution to Ashton Town Centre and provides a proactive and positive response to the impact of the recent COVID-19 pandemic in terms of economic recovery and future inclusive growth.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 As set out at the front of the report.