

BOARD

21 October 2020

Present	Elected Members	Councillors Warrington (In the Chair), Bray, Cooney, Fairfoull, Feeley, Gwynne, Kitchen, Ryan and Wills
	Chief Executive	Steven Pleasant
	Borough Solicitor	Sandra Stewart
	Section 151 Officer	Kathy Roe

Also In Attendance: Steph Butterworth, Jeanelle De Gruchy, John Hughes, Ian Saxon, Gregg Stott, Jayne Traverse, Tom Wilkinson and Jess Williams

132 GODLEY GREEN GARDEN VILLAGE PROJECT UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Member of Housing, Planning and Employment / Director of Growth, which provided an update following the Council's decision in December 2019 to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) with Homes England to secure £10m for the critical infrastructure required to open up the site for residential development.

It was stated that Godley Green had the potential to provide transformational change to the Tameside housing market through delivery of up to 2,350 new quality homes helping to satisfy the housing requirements of local people across all tenure and housing types, from affordable to executive homes.

Godley Green was "the" key strategic site for Tameside. If it came forward for development through greenbelt release, it had the potential to deliver 25% of the Council's housing requirements over the Greater Manchester Strategic Framework (Greater Manchester Spatial Framework) plan period. If the site was not promoted for development, the Council would be required to identify alternative sites to meet its future housing requirements.

Members were presented with the anticipated benefits to the Council, these were summarised as follows:

- Council Tax – An increase in council tax to enable the funding of borough wide services
- Section 106 – The borough would benefit from any developer or section 106 contributions from the scheme to invest in public infrastructure
- Enhanced Council Land Value – The land value uplift of the Council's 8.5 acres
- HIF Grant Investment in the borough– If the scheme performs better than initially expected, the £10m would be recoverable by the council to reinvest in housing and place making across the borough.
- Recover costs incurred pursuing the Planning Permission and development related fees
- Housing Needs – The site could deliver 25% of the Council's housing needs over the plan period
- Affordable Homes – The site would deliver 30% affordable housing.
- Social Value – Significant new public realm and new green and blue infrastructure.
- Hyde & Hattersley – Impact of the new community and wider socio-economic benefits
- Exemplar Scheme – Creation of a nationally recognized exemplar settlement
- Job Creation – The local centers will provide jobs for local people
- Education – New educational curriculum and vocational opportunities linked to Godley Green.
- Health & Wellbeing – Through the high-quality provision and improved access to open space.
- Energy Sustainability – Modern methods of construction and renewable energy solutions
- Accessibility – High quality place making with a focus on removing vehicle reliance.
- Transformational Growth – Place People

The report explained that due to the complexity, duration, and scale of this the project, a programme had been established around 6 key stages which reflected the different risks, outputs and governance that would be required to deliver the vision for Godley Green. There were multiple interdependencies between each stage which would require progress to be made concurrently and in a collaborative way:

- Stage 1 – Project Inception & Securing Funding
- Stage 2 – Planning Application Process
- Stage 3 – Securing Land Interests
- Stage 4 – Developer and/or Partnership discussions
- Stage 5 – HIF Funded Infrastructure Delivery
- Stage 6 – Wider Site Delivery

Acting as Land Promoter, the Council was preparing a hybrid planning (outline development with detailed Infrastructure works) application for the project based on a Very Special Circumstances (VSC) case. This approach had been discussed with, and endorsed by, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) through regular pre-planning meetings.

It was reported that it was unlikely that one single factor would provide sufficient weight to make the case for greenbelt release, given its size, scale and location. However, it was considered that a VSC case could be made by combining a number of benefits together, each of which would carry a different degree of weight. For a development of the scale and complexity of Godley Green the LPA had confirmed that a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) would be required.

The cost of developing a planning application of this scale was circa £2,125,000. This was being funded through the initial £720,000 HIF drawdown and £1,000,000 of Council support committed through the budget setting process. The remainder would be funded through existing budgets.

The report summarised Stage 3 and the Land Option Agreements. Under the grant funding agreement, there was a commitment by way of pre-drawdown condition to secure the land interest. The most optimal approach, endorsed by Homes England, was for the Council to enter into Land Options Agreements (LOA) with each of the landowners within the redline that constitutes the Godley Green development proposition.

In line with the HIF contract conditions, a CPO strategy would need to be developed to run alongside the landowner Option Agreement negotiations and Planning Application. Without a CPO, the Council may be unable to demonstrate deliverability of the site which would impact the planning application determination.

Whilst it could be possible to acquire land by option agreements, the Council would need to consider using compulsory purchase powers. The Council needed assurance that the site assembly exercise could be completed without undue delay and without being held to ransom by owners maximising value unreasonably and unwilling to sell. An external legal team had been appointed to provide support on the CPO process and a range of other issues relating to the Planning Application process.

AGREED:

That Executive Cabinet be recommended to:

- 1. Approve a budget of £2.5m to allow the progression to the next phase of the project as detailed within the confidential business case.**
- 2. In approving the additional £2.5m budget note the significant benefits afforded by the scheme of a positive planning decision with any financial benefits from this being used to replenish the Medium-Term Financial Strategy reserve by the £2.5m.**
- 3. Approve the bringing forward of £0.5m of reserve funding into 2020/21 that is currently earmarked to be spent in 2021/22 to allow the completion of the planning application by March 2021.**

4. Approve entering into Land Option Agreement's as the preferred route to acquiring the land interests across the Godley Green site to satisfy the existing contractual commitments with Homes England.
5. Approve the spending of the approved implementation budget as outlined in the confidential business case set out at Appendix A to the report.
6. Approves postponement of the Council led consultation for Godley Green until the new year to allow the consultation to run consecutively with the GMFS consultation following advice from the Local Planning Authority. This will not impact the overall delivery date of Godley Green.

CHAIR