

## **REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **INVESTING IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE: TOP WIGHAY MASTERPLAN**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To approve the proposed Masterplan for the Top Wighay Farm project to allow a community engagement exercise to be undertaken prior to submission of the planning application.

#### **Information**

2. This report sets out the key requirements and the planning process and next steps including the key land uses set out in the Masterplan as provided in the Appendix to this report.
3. The new Council Plan “Your Nottinghamshire, Your Future” sets out an ambitious vision for the future of Nottinghamshire in which the county is at the forefront of modern Britain. We want Nottinghamshire to stand out as: a great place to bring up a family; to fulfil your ambition; to enjoy your later life, and, to start and grow your business.
4. We want Nottinghamshire to be a place where young people and young families have the opportunity to put down their roots and live healthy and fulfilling lives. In order to achieve this, we know that quality housing in good locations is vital. We will therefore work with developers and the Government to bring forward new housing that meets the needs of our growing population and everyone who wants to build their future here. The Investing in Nottinghamshire programme is fulfilling these aspirations by working closely with the Government’s agency Homes England to unlock major housing growth opportunities.
5. The Council has further defined its ambitions in its Place Strategy 2019-21 by investing in opportunity areas the Council aims to unlock new jobs and deliver better housing. Key activities identified for Investing in Nottinghamshire in 2019/20 in particular will be to begin the development of Top Wighay Farm near Hucknall, including new County Council offices as anchor tenant of the employment space alongside new housing and infrastructure.
6. By embracing the ethos of working with Government in order to bring forward new housing, the Council has been very successful in securing substantial Homes England grant funding to kick start development at Top Wighay Farm. Making the best possible use of the surplus land at Top Wighay Farm will make a critical contribution towards fulfilling the Council’s ambitions for the County and for the housing needs of its communities.

7. Policy Committee (19 June 2019) delegated authority for the finalising of the funding agreement for Top Wighay and also approved a variation to the capital programme in order to enable detailed design and construction of highway infrastructure and associated works including the preparation of relevant planning applications. The timescales for completing the infrastructure are fixed by Homes England as the end of March 2021.
8. At its meeting on 17 October 2018 Members of Policy Committee were informed of the context of the Local Authority Accelerated Construction Fund and its conditions in general. The report outlined the route to engage with housebuilders and the fastest route for selecting a development partner to deliver the residential elements of the scheme. The report outlined that Homes England has set up a Delivery Partner Panel 3 (DPP3). By using DPP3 this allows the Council the fastest route to engage housebuilders and developers on the panel who have already been procured.
9. In order to make the development opportunity attractive to the house builders on the DPP3 the Top Wighay project needs to be de-risked as far as possible and sufficiently advanced to move to the developer procurement stage. A key element to provide certainty is the securing of Outline Planning Permission. The basis for the relevant Local Planning Authority legislated to grant this permission is set out below.

**Relevant Legislation: The Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 (as amended)**

10. Where the County Council owns the land in question but does not intend to develop that land itself (either on its own or jointly with another party), Regulation 4 of the Regulations applies. In such cases, the planning application would fall to be determined by the local planning authority i.e. the relevant District or Borough Council. A Regulation 4 application will run with the land. This enables the County Council to dispose of land for private development (such as for housing) with the benefit of planning permission.
11. For the proposed mixed-use, residential-led development at Top Wighay Farm, Nottinghamshire County Council, is to seek planning permission for the development of the land in its capacity as landowner. The County Council does not intend to develop the land itself. Therefore, in accordance with Regulation 4, the application would fall to be determined by Gedling Borough Council (GBC) in its capacity as local planning authority.

**Evolving the Masterplan and the route to secure Outline Planning Permission**

12. Gedling Borough Council has identified land at Top Wighay Farm as a strategic location for growth, and as such the land is allocated for residential and employment development in the Greater Nottingham Aligned Core Strategy (Part 1 Local Plan) September 2014. The Gedling Local Planning Document (Part 2 Local Plan) July 2018 also refers to Top Wighay Farm as a strategic site.
13. Further to the planning policy, Gedling Borough Council produced a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) February 2017, which provides a development brief for the Top Wighay Farm site. The document proposes a total number of 805 houses on the County Council owned land plus areas of employment land, a local centre, and a primary school.

14. Following the guiding principles of the SPD, Arc Partnership working with the Pegasus Group have developed an Illustrative Masterplan for Top Wighay Farm. The Masterplan builds upon the work included within the SPD and the continued site investigations that have taken place, refining the key site constraints and opportunities.
15. The vision for the site is to create a distinctive, new development to meet the needs of the local area, and presents the opportunity to create an attractive, sustainable mixed-use community that provides additional housing, new employment opportunities and a new primary school. The guiding principles of the Masterplan are:
- Build upon the existing landscape character of the site, to create an extensive and diverse framework of green infrastructure throughout the development. This encourages biodiversity and quality landscape creation, alongside a range of play areas.
  - Provide a linear, north-south, green spine along the route of the TWF Drive, connecting a series of green spaces and infrastructure from Wighay Road through to Top Wighay Farm.
  - Create a permeable movement network, with the provision for walking routes within the streets and leisure routes throughout the green infrastructure. This encourages walking and cycling, enhancing connectivity throughout the development
  - Create a multi-purpose green space, including playing fields, equipped play and allotments, that is easily accessible from the surrounding residential parcels
  - Create a vibrant, mixed-use community by positioning the Local Centre with a Primary School at its focal point.
  - Provide appropriate employment development parcels, adjacent to Annesley Road, with the potential for a gateway office building at the site entrance
  - Create desirable frontages onto green spaces, and the open space surrounding the site
  - Provide a mix of housing densities, that responds to the site's setting and immediate context, whilst achieving the required number of dwellings. Higher densities will be positioned along the spine road and adjacent to the other uses, whilst lower densities will be posited overlooking the existing, rural countryside/
  - Create residential parcels that are deliverable and show a commitment to integrated, high-quality landscape and design

The illustrative Masterplan presents a vision of the proposed development and will continue to development following the public engagement period and further input from the design team. The National Planning Policy Framework published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (NPPF) encourages pre-application discussions to secure early engagement of all stakeholders in the planning process. It is normal practice for landowners to undertake a community engagement exercise on their proposals prior to the submission of a planning application. Indeed, this is actively encouraged by Gedling Borough Council as set out in the Council's Statement of Community Involvement dated September 2019. The aim of the pre-application discussion is to identify and resolve key issues before a formal application is submitted. For significant development schemes, applicants are encouraged to engage with the community by holding public exhibitions to publicise their proposals. The Masterplan and associated details will eventually be represented to this committee again before the submission of the planning application in January 2020.

The preparation of the planning application will follow the proposed timeline:

- Preparation of planning application to GBC commenced.
- Pre-application discussion with Officers from GBC commenced.
- Public exhibition on 19 November 2019
- Submission of Planning Application: January 2020
- GBC Planning Committee: target September 2020

16. By keeping to this timeline the Council will be delivering the key milestones as set out as conditions of the Homes England Funding Agreement.

### **Other Options Considered**

17. As Top Wighay Farm has a planning designation for various forms of development, predominately residential, no other options for the site are being considered at the present time. Top Wighay Farm is identified in the Council's strategic land disposal programme with the opportunity for significant capital receipts over forthcoming years. If the scheme is not undertaken, then the housing numbers for the local plan will be jeopardised by 805 units. The Council's asset will not realise any benefit. The new proposed office will not be delivered. The Council's Policy objectives will not be realised.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

18. To enable the sale of a surplus assets and to secure capital receipts to the County Council and to provide much needed housing for this location.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

19. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) To approve the proposed Masterplan for the Top Wighay Farm project to allow a community engagement exercise to be undertaken prior to submission of the planning application.

**Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts MBE**  
**Leader of the County Council**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:** Derek Highton, Service Director  
Place & Communities, Tel: 0115 9773498

### **Constitutional Comments (AK 29/10/2019)**

20. The recommendation falls within the remit of the Policy Committee under its terms of reference.

## **Financial Comments (GB 31/10/2019)**

21. A variation to the capital programme of £10.3m was approved at Policy Committee in June 2019 to undertake detailed design and construction of highways infrastructure and related work associated with the Top Wighay Farm project. Any further capital expenditure required to be undertaken as a result of the Masterplan set out in this report will be subject to the usual capital approval processes.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- Greater Nottingham Aligned Core Strategy (Part 1 Local Plan) September 2014.
- Top Wighay Farm Development Brief Supplementary Planning Document, Gedling Borough Council, February 2017.
- Gedling Local Planning Document (Part 2 Local Plan) July 2018
- Gedling Borough Statement of Community Involvement, Gedling Borough Council, September 2019.
- Policy Committee (20 March 2019) report: Investing in Nottinghamshire: Delivering the Council Plan through a second phase of the Smarter Working Programme.
- Policy Committee (19 June 2019) report: Investing in Nottinghamshire: Delivering the Top Wighay Sustainable Urban Extension.

## **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- Electoral Division(s): Newstead
- Member(s): Councillor Chris Barnfather