

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL

INVESTING IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE: TOP WIGHAY FARM - UPDATE

Purpose of the Report

1. That the Committee considers the update in terms of the delivery of the Top Wighay Farm development including: highway infrastructure delivery; outline planning application; developer selection progress; and, additional grant funding secured; and, decides if any further information is required.
2. To authorise the Corporate Director, Place, in consultation with the Group Manager, Legal, Democratic and Complaints, the Service Director Finance, Infrastructure & Improvement, and the Chair of the Policy Committee to approve terms for the grant of an easement and relevant contracts over third-party land for the recommended option as set out in the Exempt Appendix to this report.

Information

3. Some information relating to this report is not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. Having regard to the circumstances, on balance the public interest in disclosing the information does not outweigh the reason for exemption because divulging the information would significantly damage the Council's commercial position. The exempt information is set out in the Exempt Appendix.

Background

4. The Council's Place Strategy 2019-21 sets key objectives to unlock land for 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.
5. 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 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.

Update

6. Despite recent development and construction industry setbacks because of the Covid 19 the Top Wighay Farm development has moved forward and considerable progress has been made in keeping to the delivery programme. Following the completion of the grant funding

agreement with Homes England for £5.8m, Arc Partnership has procured Balfour Beatty to construct two highway access points into the site from the A611.

7. Work started on site on 26 May 2020 and the schedule for completion of the work is still in line with the original timeframe set out by Homes England as part of its funding agreement with the works to be delivered by March 2021. Currently there have been no delays caused because of Covid 19.
8. As approved by Policy Committee (15 January 2020), an outline planning application for the development of the whole site for a mixed-use scheme predominantly 805 houses was submitted to Gedling Borough Council. The expected date for approval of the application is September 2020. Although the impact of Covid 19 is providing some uncertainties regarding the Borough Council's planning committee meetings. In order to deliver the residential element, for which planning permission is being sought, the Council is seeking a development partner from the Homes England's Delivery Partner Panel 3. The process to select the partner through this approach was set out in the reports to Policy Committee (17 October 2018 and 16 October 2019).
9. Following a positive response to the Expression of Interest stage of ten experienced developers, a sifting brief was sent to the ten in order to reduce the number of potential developers down to five. The next stage will be to continue with an Invitation to Tender. The final proposal for selecting the preferred development partner will be reported to Policy Committee at a later stage in the process. This stage of the development process is also on schedule and not adversely affected by Covid 19.

Grant funding secured: D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Local Growth Fund (LGF)

10. On 19 June 2019, Policy Committee approved that the proposed funding offer of £5.8m from the Homes England Local Authority Accelerated construction fund (LAAC) for Top Wighay be accepted and delegated authority to finalise the completion of the funding agreement. The total cost of this project stands at £10.3m. With the addition of the £3m LGF grant funding, total external funding contributions to the project stands at £8.8m.
11. On 2 March 2020, the Corporate Director Place, the Leader and Councillors Jackson, Adair and Cottey were briefed on the Local Growth Fund (LGF) opportunity to submit a bid to D2N2 Investment Board for further funding for the Top Wighay site development.
12. On 19 May 2020, the Council was informed that its bid for LGF funding for Top Wighay had been successful and an award of £3 million would be made. Approval to accept this funding and enter the grant agreement was sought from the Corporate Director Place in consultation with the Service Director Finance, Infrastructure & Improvement, the Group Manager, Legal, Democratic and Complaints and the Chair of Policy Committee (under the delegation granted them by Committee in October 2018). It was agreed that Policy Committee be updated on this additional funding availability.

Granting of an Easement

13. A detailed sustainable Drainage Strategy has been developed for the site within which there are a number of options. The most cost-effective solution for drainage of the site would require a route through land not in the ownership or control of the Council. Discussions have been taking place with adjacent land owners and these discussions are outlined in the Exempt Appendix to this report. This matter falls within the remit of this Committee due to

an easement being a proposed acquisition of an interest in land which requires Committee consideration.

Financial Implications

14. The Top Wighay Farm capital project is approved within the Policy Committee capital programme with a total budget of £10.3m. The funding is broken down as follows:

Funding Stream	£m
Homes England Grant	5.8
D2N2 Funding	3.0
NCC Allocation	1.5
Total	10.3

Other Options Considered

15. The alternative to terms of the easement are outlined in the Exempt Appendix.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

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

Statutory and Policy Implications

17. 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) That the Committee considers the update in terms of the delivery of the Top Wighay Farm development including: highway infrastructure delivery; outline planning application; developer selection progress; and, additional grant funding secured; and, decides if any further information is required.
- 2) To authorise the Corporate Director, Place, in consultation with the Group Manager, Legal, Democratic and Complaints, the Service Director Finance, Infrastructure & Improvement, and, the Chair of the Policy Committee to approve terms for the grant of an easement and relevant contracts over third-party land for the recommended option as set out in the Exempt Appendix to this report.

Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts MBE
Leader of the County Council

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

Constitutional Comments (AK 22/06/2020)

18. The report falls within the remit of Policy Committee under its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (GB 23/06/2020)

19. The costs of the Top Wighay Farm capital project total £10.3m and is funded from Homes England Grant (£5.8m), D2N2 funding (£3.0m) and NCC allocation (£1.5m). This budget is already approved within the Policy Committee capital programme.

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.

- Policy Committee (17 October 2018) Report – Local Authority Accelerated Construction Fund for Council Owned Development Sites.
- Policy Committee (16 October 2019) Report – Investing in Nottinghamshire: Local Authority Accelerated Construction Fund Update.
- Policy Committee (15 January 2020) Report – Investing in Nottinghamshire: Top Wighay Farm Masterplan.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

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