

**REPORT TO: STRATEGY AND RESOURCES**

Date: 5<sup>TH</sup> August 2019

**TOPIC: LAND RELEASE FUND PROJECT UPDATE: SEVEN BRETHREN REGENERATION**

**REPORT BY: HEAD OF PLACE**

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In November 2017 North Devon Council were awarded £2.2 million of Land Release Fund to bring forward 245 residential units at Seven Brethren, Barnstaple. £1 million was secured towards junction improvements and £1.2 million towards delivering flood defences/raising of site levels. We have received £1,200,000 and the remaining monies would be paid in a further tranche over the next 12 months providing the project is progressing as set out in the original bid (or amended as agreed).
- 1.2 The Land Release Fund is a government initiative to assist in unlocking sites and accelerating the delivery of housing. The Fund expects this land to be released for housing no later than March 2020. It has since been acknowledged by the Local Government Association (LGA) that this could be extended until December 2020.
- 1.3 The draft proposals for this site were introduced to the public at a consultation day on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2019 following a North Devon Council member and Town Council member briefing earlier that same day. It seemed appropriate to provide an update of this whole project to this Committee following this event.

## 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Members note the content of this report.

## 3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure Members are aware of progress of this project.

## 4 REPORT

### 4.1 The Scheme

The Land Release Fund was provided on the basis of the release of 3.6 hectares of land for housing; namely the site of the existing leisure centre, the short stay

car park, long stay car park, any events area not within the required land for the new leisure centre and the current toleration site, to provide 245 homes.

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required for this project and RMA Environmental have been commissioned to carry out this work. They, together with Lacey Hickey Caley (LHC) are preparing the planning application for this scheme. There are a number of constraints which are being worked through including ecology, flooding, contamination, highway impacts, landscape and heritage, all of which effect the density of development considered acceptable on this site. Our latest return to the Local Government Association (LGA) reduced the likely output of housing numbers to 223 units. The technical reports are, however, considering the impact of up to 245 units to allow the design of this scheme flexibility to evolve.

The planning application will now be a hybrid planning application where the scheme will be in outline save the provision of the new long stay car park, which will be a detailed part of the scheme. This would enable early delivery of this facility if the proposals are successful in gaining an outline planning permission. LHC have now drawn up an indicative scheme for this site, which is appended to this report. The proposals have been led by a landscape approach and provide a parkland setting inspired by the countryside to the south and Rock Park to the east of the estuary. The scheme seeks to allow the residential development to sit within generous areas of community green public open spaces.

## 4.2 Constraints Update

### 4.2.1 The Fair

We have held two meetings with both Barnstaple Town Council and The Showman's Guild and they have taken options away to discuss with their membership. One of the options is to relocate the fair to the potential new long stay car park. The surface would be designed to ensure it could take the loading of the fairground rides. The area that could be offered to the fair is currently being reviewed.

### 4.2.2 Gypsy and Traveller site

Some members will recall a report taken to Executive in April 2019, where members resolved the following:

- (a) *That subject to any necessary consultation relocate the Gypsy and Travellers 'toleration' site within the project masterplan for Seven Brethren, in the short term (to December 2020), and that design solutions are developed to mitigate the impact of the relocation of the toleration site within the site;*
- (b) *That within an agreed timetable, proceed to purchase or otherwise secure an alternative transit site for the long term provision of Gypsy and Travellers to meet the Council's obligations and obtain the relevant planning permission to allow use of the site. The aim will be to have an alternative site available for use by December 2020;*
- (c) *That a further report be brought to the Executive with progression on both options and details of how the Gypsy and Travellers site will be managed and the*

*reporting reflect the milestones set out in paragraph 4.9 of the report;*  
(d) *That the Head of Place take the lead on this project.*

Members will note that the public consultation panels show a temporary toleration site to the rear of the proposed new long stay car park. Meanwhile, Head of Place has set up a project team to start looking at a long term solution for travellers and they have had their first meeting. Actions arising from that meeting are being progressed.

#### 4.2.3 Long Stay Car Park

A new long stay car park is proposed to the west of the new Artificial Grass Pitches (AGP). The car park is currently being designed but will replace spaces on a like for like basis. It is currently anticipated that the surface will be permeable. This new location is 250m from the existing long stay car park (approximately 5 minutes walk). There will be access to the town centre via a new, improved, riverside walk.

#### 4.2.4 Site access

Hydrock consultants are preparing a Transport assessment for this project. We are working with them, DCC, Highways and LHC urban designers to understand what highway improvements are necessary for this project and what place making opportunities there are, particularly at the junction of the Long Bridge which will link the new riverside walk/cycleway with that within the Anchorwood Bank site.

#### 4.2.5 Other technical matters

We are working with consultants and internal officers to understand the effects of this scheme on flooding, ecology, trees, drainage, heritage and contamination and any required mitigation.

#### 4.3 **Delivery partner**

Some members will recall an Executive report in August 2018 where it was agreed that North Devon Council could use Homes England's 'delivery partner panel' to select a delivery partner for this project subject to review and acceptance of the framework agreement.

Following this, this site together with two Homes England sites in the town; the Lace works and Raleigh Park (land to the south of hospital) were uploaded to the Panel and expressions of interest invited. On receipt of these, we then requested formal tenders. This process started on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May and is ongoing.

#### 4.4 **Land release Fund**

We have to submit quarterly returns to the LGA to update them on the scheme's progress, and we meet regularly with the Programme Manager to update on progress.

The programme anticipated the submission of a planning application in July, but this is going to slip until September to enable the long stay car park to be a detailed application at this stage.

Land has to be released for development by December 2020, although the LGA are aware that the site of the current leisure centre and associated short stay car park cannot be released until the new leisure centre is open, and have indicated that a phased approach is acceptable. The current timetable anticipates the opening of the replacement long stay car park in May 2020. The timetable is tight and the LGA have been made aware of this but are working with us to assist progress. They are encouraged by the public consultation event and the delivery partner work that is ongoing.

#### 4.5 Consultation

A member briefing and public consultation event was held on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2019. The information has been made available online and the public have until Friday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2019 to comment. If available, members will be presented with initial feedback at the Committee meeting. If it is not available, this information will be reported at a future meeting.

### 5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 In order to progress this project, there may be the need for revenue spend. To date, the consultant reports have been largely funded by the Land Release Fund monies, as the LGA recognise that they are necessary to progress the project.

5.2 The cost and delivery of the Long Stay car park is not in the capital programme. The LGA have indicated to us that there is flexibility in how we use the Land Release Fund monies to bring forward this site. We are exploring the use of some of the monies to deliver the long stay car park to enable earlier release of the land. If the money is reorganised, the amount that would otherwise have been used to deliver flood or highway infrastructure would come off the value of the remaining site.

### 6 EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

6.1 The development of Seven Brethren will provide a policy compliant scheme offering 30% affordable housing for the local community. Public open space will be created, along with highway improvements which will be accessible to all. The long stay car park will be further from the town centre but will be served by an accessible path.

### 7 CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Article or Appendix and paragraph	Referred or delegated power?
Part 3	Delegated

## 8 STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

8.1 This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.

## 9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Homes England – Delivery Partner Panel
- One Public estate Phase 6 – Devon and Torbay OPE Partnership – OPE and LRF Project templates
- Public Consultation panels
- Draft technical reports for the project

The background papers are available for inspection and kept by the author of the report.

## 10 STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

10.1 The author (below) confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers.

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Author: SJ Mackenzie-Shapland

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> July 2019