

Otterpool Park

Review of outcomes resulting from Department for Communities and Local Government funding 2016/17

1 **Headline Achievements**

- 1.1 Set out below is an outline of the work that has been completed for Otterpool Park since the Expression of Interest (EoI) was submitted in June 2016 and formal announcement of support by Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) was made in November 2016. These achievements have been either directly funded, or facilitated by, funding for 2016/17 from DCLG:

A. Technical

- Procurement and commissioning of a masterplan team (jointly with landowner partner Cozumel Estates) – Arcadis and Farrells;
- Completion of stage 1 masterplanning, confirming there are no significant barriers to development of a garden settlement that meets the vision and guiding principles expressed in the EoI. This work has included technical studies for heritage and archaeology; green infrastructure; utilities; habitat and biodiversity; water and drainage; and transport.
- Liaison with Network Rail over improvements to Westenhanger Station and with Department for Transport and other partners and agencies, including the South East Local Enterprise Partnership and South Eastern Trains, to promote the need for High Speed rail services to be included in the forthcoming Southeastern franchise tender documentation;
- Freeing up of resources to allow the local planning authority to commission and make significant progress on key evidence based studies (SHMA, Strategic Growth Study, Landscape Character Assessment, Transport Model update and Sustainability Appraisal Framework); and
- Drafting a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) between the Promoters, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and Kent County Council. The PPA is a project management tool that will embed best practice in the masterplan work and ultimately the submission of a planning application.

B. Communications & Engagement

- Appointment of community engagement and communications advisors;
- Extensive liaison and relationship building with town and parish councils and other stakeholders, including 16 Duty to Cooperate meetings held;

- First stage of community engagement, including workshops with the local secondary school and East Kent College;
- Member and officer review workshops;
- Liaison with Homes and Communities Agency;
- Liaison with Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council and Hampshire County Council to share approaches, experiences and work plans to date;
- Two study visits for members, officers and community representatives visiting 9 new developments of varying scales across the east and south east of England; and
- Hosted self, custom and community build event.

C. Legal & Project Management

- Signed Collaboration Agreement between Shepway District Council (SDC) and Cozumel Estates, with a full Development Agreement under negotiation;
- Land options prepared, with negotiations well progressed with major landowners;
- Detailed project programme prepared for LPA and SDC promoter side and work on schedule; and
- Consideration given on long term stewardship options.

2 Value of DCLG Support Funding - Accelerating Delivery

- 2.1 The financial support has allowed SDC to act quickly in commissioning masterplanning and technical work, and funding its share of this cost (split between the council and Cozumel Estates). This commitment from SDC has helped to build confidence with its development partner. Progress on the masterplan would have been a good deal slower if funds had not been available, as the council would have had to identify alternative budget savings to free up resources for the programme.
- 2.2 The funding has allowed dedicated staff to be allocated on both promoter and local planning authority sides, and without this progress would have been challenging with officers fitting work related to Otterpool Park around other work commitments. Building a team has allowed better communication both externally and within the council, which helps to build and maintain momentum.
- 2.3 Government support has helped the council to send positive signals to the market and helped create confidence. Raising the profile of the project has enabled the council to procure specialist skills and expertise not ordinarily available to the district council. It has helped the council to improve the perception of the private sector that it is ambitious, and proactively supporting growth, job creation and business development.

2.4 SDC has also benefited from advice from the Planning Inspectorate and DCLG on streamlining planning policy preparation while working towards a sound Local Plan.

3 Impact of No Funding

3.3 Without financial support the council could not have continued at pace with its ambitious timeframe for delivering housing on site by 2020. Funding of the project solely from the council's own resources would significantly reduce the speed at which key masterplanning and associated technical work could be carried out and could place the project at risk. It would also require the council to prioritise other demands on council resources to create capacity for this programme, with potential impacts on current service delivery. Delivery on site by 2020 would not be achievable. It would result in loss of confidence by Cozumel in SDC as a partner, and by the local community in the council's ability to deliver.

4 Financial Support for 2017/18

4.1 SDC has a tight programme of delivery which is predicated on continuing work at significant pace on the masterplan and planning application, while simultaneously progressing work on the speedy and efficient partial review of the Core Strategy on the LPA side. The two distinctive and detailed LPA and promoter programmes are both currently on schedule, with milestones including:

- submission of a concept masterplan in August 2017;
- draft Local Plan consultation by end 2017;
- submission of a planning application by March 2018;
- Local Plan Examination in mid 2019; and
- start on site in 2020.

4.2 This ambitious timetable requires all workstreams on both sides to continue to maximise the impact from the considerable momentum now marshalled, while officers continue to consider how work can be accelerated or progressed in parallel rather than sequentially. Ongoing financial support will contribute to the commissioning of a range of technical studies that will underpin the Framework Masterplan that in turn will support planning policy development. The programme of work for 2017/18 that DCLG funding will contribute to includes:

A. Masterplanning & Planning Application

- Concept masterplan preparation, including detailed technical survey work;
- Transport and highway planning;
- Social infrastructure planning including education, health and community; and

- Preparation of planning application and all associated background studies and strategies.

B. Delivery

- Procuring a development partner;
- Infrastructure costing and planning;
- Viability testing; and
- Ongoing feasibility work for Westenhanger station.

C. Legal

- Legal costs for preparing Development Agreement and options agreements; and
- Long term stewardship strategy.

This will be matched by SDC funding for:

- Project management, strategic planning and administrative staff capacity;
- Sustainability Appraisal;
- Evidence base for Local Plan, including specialist studies on transport; sport and leisure; flood risk; green infrastructure; waste management and viability testing;
- Employment opportunities strategy;
- Community and stakeholder engagement;
- Member training including study tours; and
- Communications.

Future financial support from DCLG could enable the council to fund specialist external consultants or external stakeholders to provide independent review of the emerging Framework Masterplan and associated technical documents in accordance with best practice. This will help enshrine quality in to the proposals coming forward.

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