

Proposal Bradbourne Lakes Landscape Improvement

Applicant Sevenoaks District Council

Ward(s) Sevenoaks Northern

RECOMMENDATION: That the **£252,400.00** applied for, as set out in the report, for scheme “Bradbourne Lakes Landscape Improvement” be refused on the following grounds:

- Funding for the scheme is not approved on the basis that other proposed schemes have been given greater priority;
- The need for the scheme (Economic) is not clearly demonstrated in the application;
- The scheme has not clearly demonstrated whether it has maximised funding sources / CIL funding from the relevant town or parish council(s)

Introduction

- 1 Sevenoaks District Council has 54 elected Members and is responsible for delivering services for local communities as well as producing statutory plans and strategies.
- 2 The application was received before the application deadline closed on Monday 30 September 2019. This proposal has not been previously considered by the CIL Spending Board.

Description of Proposal

- 3 The Bradbourne Lakes is a local park situated in Northern Sevenoaks, which has local and historical significance to the town. The park has five ornamental lakes with waterfalls, cascades and a circular walking route around them. The Lakes are also important for biodiversity and wildlife, including veteran trees.
- 4 The Lakes has a number of areas which are overgrown and poorly maintained, including dense overgrown vegetation which inhibits the use of park for leisure and ecology purposes. In 2015, Sevenoaks District Council applied for Heritage Lottery Funding to restore the Lakes following a visitors survey

carried out by the Bradbourne Residents Association in 2012. In July 2017, Sevenoaks District Council instructed consultants to produce a Vision Plan to restore the Lakes which included:

- Dredging the lakes;
- Structural repairs to the lake edges, walls and ornamental features;
- Ecological enhancements through native hedge and marginal planting to the lakes to improve water quality; and
- Upgrades to footpaths and park furniture to create safe accessible routes for all park users.

Funding

- 5 Sevenoaks District Council has estimated that the total cost of the project to carry out the works will be over £1.2 million.
- 6 The District Council has identified the following additional funding sources and grants to support their application to the Board:
 - Ibstock Enovert Trust - £15,000
 - Enovert Landfill Grant - £50,000
- 7 It should be brought to the attention of Members that both funding sources are not confirmed and therefore not secured.
- 8 It should also be noted that no other sources of funding have been explored, including a bid to the relevant town or parish council for CIL funding. In this instance, it is confirmed by the applicant that no CIL funding bid has been made to Sevenoaks Town Council. However, this is the first time that the applicant has submitted this project to CIL Spending Board for CIL funding.
- 9 Therefore to meet the funding gap for the full cost of the project, Sevenoaks District Council has applied to the Board for £252,400.00 of CIL funding.

Representations and Support

- 10 The application submitted indicates that Sevenoaks District Council will be working in partnership with the Bradbourne Residents Association to deliver this project.
- 11 The application is supported by the following local representatives and organisations:

- Cllr. Margot McArthur (SDC Member for Edenbridge South & West and Cleaner & Greener Portfolio Holder)
- Cllr. Dr. Marilyn Canet (SDC Member for Sevenoaks Northern)
- Cllr. Irene Collins (SDC Member for Sevenoaks Northern)
- Linda Larter MBE (Clerk to Sevenoaks Town Council)
- Mr Byron Brown (Chair, Bradbourne Residents Association)
- Mr John Ingram (Committee Member, Bradbourne Residents Association)

Lead Officers Appraisal of Bid

Principal Criteria met

- Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community
- The project is identified in an adopted strategy/plan
- Sufficient evidence has been submitted to demonstrate a strong link between new development and the scheme.
- There is strong community support of the scheme

Appraisal

Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community

- 12 When considering an application for CIL funding from the Board, it must be demonstrated that there are clear economic, social and environmental benefits to the scheme proposed. This enhances the sustainability case as to whether the scheme should receive CIL funding.
- 13 The proposal is a significant area of historic and ecological value which benefits the local northern Sevenoaks area, as well as the wider area, as set out in the supporting information that the applicant has supplied with the application. The proposal would bring substantial social, economic and environmental benefits to the local community as well as the wider community that the facility would serve.
- 14 The predominant benefit from the proposal is the significant environmental enhancements that it would bring to the Lakes including improving water quality and raising standards for biodiversity and ecology opportunities. This includes encouraging a number of different species of wildlife into the Lakes, creating opportunities for diverse flora and fauna. The area is also within a High Risk Flood Potential Area, according to the Environment Agency. By carrying out these improvements, the proposal also seeks to enhance the role that the Lakes play in reducing the risk of localised flooding in the area and contribute to the town's flood defences.

- 15 There are also a number of social benefits to the scheme as well, due to the number of visitors that use the Lakes for recreational use, including a number of social functions which are provided by the Bradbourne Residents Association. The improvement to the Lakes can improve the health and wellbeing of residents by providing high quality open space to encourage exercise. There is also the opportunity to create educational value through work with schools and other groups.

The project is identified in an adopted strategy/plan

- 16 As submitted in the funding application, the Bradbourne Lakes site is owned and managed by Sevenoaks District Council. It has been documented in the submission that extensive work has been carried out to determine how the Lakes will be managed and enhanced through extensive consultation since 2012.
- 17 In 2017, the applicant commissioned consultants to prepare a Vision Plan for the Lakes which was subsequently agreed by the Sevenoaks District Council's Cabinet in October 2018.
- 18 Therefore, after careful consideration, there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the project is identified in an adopted strategy or plan.

There is strong community support of the scheme

- 19 In 2012, the Bradbourne Residents Association carried out a visitor survey of the Lakes which recorded a strong desire for restoration for the site. This in essence began an extensive process for community engagement.
- 20 As set out in the funding application, the applicant has demonstrated that extensive consultation has been carried out with the local community. A consultation event was carried out in August 2018 which informed the final Vision Plan for the Lakes.
- 21 The consultation event invited park users to share their comments on the Vision Plan proposals, which were developed by the appointed consultants. A online survey was also carried out where a majority of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the proposals set out.
- 22 Therefore, after careful consideration, there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the project has strong community support for the scheme.

Other considerations

Project management

- 23 The site is owned and managed by Sevenoaks District Council. The scheme has been drawn up with input from Land Use Consultants, the appointed consultant who was involved in the preparation of the Vision Plan for the Lakes. Sevenoaks District Council, as the applicant, has only confirmed that they will be responsible for the delivery and maintenance of the scheme.
- 24 It is anticipated that the scheme will begin in mid-2020 and would be completed by the end of 2020.

Requirement for Planning Permission

- 25 An additional consideration of the criteria is which applications are assessed is whether a proposal has the appropriate consents in place to carry out the project.
- 26 The applicant acknowledges that planning permission will be required for some aspects of the scheme. However, planning permission has not been applied for at present due to the programme timeframes.
- 27 When considering this application for CIL funding, Members of the Board could consider whether the clear merits of the scheme outweigh the absence of planning permission.

Application Considerations - Weakly Performing Criteria

- 28 When carrying out the assessment of this funding application, Officers felt that the application did not perform strongly against the following criteria:
 - **The need for the scheme (Economic)**
The applicant has set out a number of potential economic benefits in relation to the scheme. However, during the assessment process, Officers considered that the economic benefits described were more closely aligned to social benefits. Therefore, it is not sufficiently clear what the direct economic benefits are to the project.
 - **The scheme not maximising funding sources / CIL funding from the relevant town or parish council(s)**
The applicant has been clear that additional funding has been sought through the application of grants, which have not been secured at present. Furthermore, the applicant has not explored any additional sources of funding including discussions with the relevant town or parish council(s).

- **Other proposed schemes put forward to the Board have been given greater priority.**

A total of 26 projects have been put forward during the latest round of CIL funding for this CIL Spending Board. Whilst the project provides locally significant infrastructure, there were other projects which were considered more strategically significant in nature.

Conclusion

- 29 Sevenoaks District Council has submitted an application to the Board to consider funding to improve the Bradbourne Lakes through a number of landscape enhancements. The need for the scheme has been clearly demonstrated and there are a number of social, economic and environmental benefits. The proposal is formally identified in a number of plans and strategies and is supported by the local community. It is noted that the applicant is asking for a small amount of funding in comparison to the total project cost, and has not benefited from CIL funding previously.
- 30 After reviewing the application and subsequent supporting evidence, it is recommended by Officers that the funding request of £252,400.00 be refused. Whilst the project does provide a clear public benefit, the project does not maximise all sources of funding and the application does not provide clear economic benefits. It is was also deemed that the project is more locally significant, in comparison to other infrastructure projects which were more strategic in nature.

Appendices Original bidding proforma and supporting information

Background Papers Bradbourne Lakes - Consultation Feedback
 Bradbourne Lakes - Masterplan Report
 Printed Cabinet Minutes (11 October 2018)

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