

**Proposal** Bradbourne Lakes Landscape Improvement

**Applicant** Sevenoaks District Council

**Ward(s)** Sevenoaks Northern

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the £251,900 applied for, as set out in the report, for scheme Bradbourne Lakes Landscape Improvement be approved on the following grounds:

Principal Criteria met:

- The project is identified in an adopted strategy/plan;
- Strong partnership working;
- Strong community benefit;
- Social and environmental benefit;
- Good management in place; and
- There is strong community support of the scheme.

## 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 CIL is sought to carry out the restoration of Bradbourne Lakes including landscaping works, upgrading footpaths and dragging the lakes.
- 3 The application was received before the application deadline closed on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2022. This proposal has previously been considered by the CIL Spending Board held on 9 December 2019.
- 4 The applicant's land use consultants are updating the figures for the infrastructure works and anticipate the application to the Heritage Lottery

Fund will increase from £550,000 to £1.2 million. The overall cost of the proposal is expected to be approximately £1,753,000. The applicant is seeking additional CIL funding to contribute towards the additional costs.

### **Description of Proposal**

- 5 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.
- 6 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.
- 7 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.
- 8 In 2015, Sevenoaks District Council applied for National Heritage Lottery Funding to restore the Lakes following a visitors survey carried out by the Bradbourne Residents Association in 2012. This funding submission was unsuccessful.
- 9 The applicant submitted an Expression of Interest to the National Heritage Lottery Funding. A decision from the National Heritage Lottery Funding panel has now been given and the Council's Expression of Interest is able to proceed to a full development application on the 11 August 2022.

### **Funding**

- 10 Sevenoaks District Council Land Use Consultants are in the process of updating figures for the infrastructure works. It is now expected the application for National Heritage Lottery Funding will increase from £550,000 to approximately £1.2 million. In light of this, a further application for CIL

funding has been received for an additional £251,900.

- 11 Sevenoaks District Council have identified the following additional funding sources and grants to support their application to the Board:
  - £15,000: Ibstock Enover Trust
  - £50,000: Enover Landfill Grant
- 12 It should be noted that these grants are not secure and are currently being investigated. It should also be noted that no bid to the relevant town or parish council for CIL funding has been made. In this instance, it is confirmed by the applicant that no CIL funding bid has been made to Sevenoaks Town Council. CIL funding was granted at the December 2019 Board for £252,400. This grant is subject to planning permission in accordance with the terms of the CIL application being granted within five years of the decision date.
- 13 Therefore, to meet the funding gap for the full cost of the project, the applicant has applied to the Board for £251,900 of CIL funding. This equates to 14% of the total project cost. The overall CIL amount including the previously granted £252,400 would equate to 29% of the total project cost.

### **Representations and Support**

- 14 The application submitted indicates that the applicant is working in partnership with any Bradbourne Residents Association, Kent Wildlife Trust and West Kent Mind to deliver the scheme.
- 15 The application is supported by the following local representatives and organisations:
  - Councillor Margot McArthur (Cleaner & Greener Portfolio Holder), Councillor Dr Merylyn Canet (Sevenoaks Northern) and Councillor Irene Collins (Sevenoaks Northern)
  - Linda Larter MBE (Clerk to Sevenoaks Town Council)
  - Bradbourne Residents Association

### **Lead Officers Appraisal of Bid**

#### *Principal Criteria met*

- The project is identified in an adopted strategy/plan;
- Strong partnership working;
- Strong community benefit;
- Social and environmental benefit;

- Good management in place;
- There is strong community support of the scheme.

*Principal Criteria not met*

- The scheme has not clearly demonstrated whether it has maximised funding sources / CIL funding from the relevant town or parish council(s);
- The need for the scheme (Economic) is not clearly demonstrated in the application.

*Appraisal*

*Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community*

- 16 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.
- 17 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 application pro forma and the referenced “Vision for the Future” masterplan. It is understood that whilst this area provides a facility for local residents. However it is understood that residents of the District do travel from a wider area to visit the lakes and it is clearly a community asset for the local and wider community.
- 18 The proposal would primarily bring substantial social and environmental benefits to the local community as well as the wider community that the facility would serve.
- 19 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.
- 20 The proposal would offer a number of social benefits as well due to the number of visitors that use the Lakes for recreational use. The park is open to the public and is an important asset to the area’s heritage and the local

area's character. The proposal plans to improve the existing footpaths which are in a diminished condition and limit the accessibility for vulnerable park users for example, the elderly and people who are disabled. Additional seating is proposed to allow more users to enjoy the park as well as informal play facilities to enhance younger users' enjoyment of the park. The proposal's improvements 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.

*There is sufficient evidence to show strong partnership working.*

- 21 The application pro forma states that Sevenoaks District Council are leading on the project and are being supported by Bradbourne Residents Association, Kent Wildlife Trust and West Kent Mind. Kent Wildlife Trust and West Kent Mind intend to provide services at the Lakes demonstrating good partnership working in the delivery of the project. Furthermore, Bradbourne Residents Association organise bimonthly working parties to help maintain the park and other social events for users to enjoy.
- 22 Therefore, after careful consideration, there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the project is being carried out in partnership with other organisations.

*The project is identified in an adopted strategy/plan.*

- 23 As submitted in the application pro forma, 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.
- 24 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.
- 25 The proposal is not included as a project in the Infrastructure Funding Statement or the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. However, it is noted that CIL may be spent on projects outside of these projects.
- 26 Therefore, after careful consideration, there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the project is identified in an adopted strategy or plan.

Sufficient evidence has been provided to show a clear community benefit to the scheme

- 27 The applicant has set out a number of community benefits the scheme can bring to the public. The Lakes are a well-used open space within the locality providing an opportunity to enjoy green-blue infrastructure. This can facilitate good mental health and wellbeing. The proposed works would also make the Lakes a more pleasant area thereby encouraging exercise.
- 28 Therefore, after careful consideration, there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the project shows clear community benefits.

Strong community support for the project

- 29 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.
- 30 As set out in the application pro forma, 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.
- 31 The consultation event invited park users to share their comments on the Vision Plan proposals, which were developed by the appointed consultants. An online survey was also carried out where a majority of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the proposals set out.
- 32 Following on from this, a further consultation with Bradbourne Residents Association is planned to go through the proposals in the upcoming weeks.
- 33 Therefore, after careful consideration, there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the project has strong community support for the scheme.

Project Management

- 34 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.
- 35 It is anticipated that the scheme will begin in mid/late 2023 and would be completed by Autumn/Winter 2026.

*There is sufficient evidence that the applicant has tried to help us achieve our Net Zero targets*

- 36 The applicant has listed how the project intends to help the Council achieve its ambition to reduce carbon emissions and achieve its Net Zero 2030 target in the application pro forma addendum. The applicant also notes that the Lakes restoration is a Council priority and contributes towards a number of Net Zero actions. Whilst the application pro forma does not specify how the project contributes towards these, it is noted that there are significant environmental and ecological benefits as detailed earlier in this report.
- 37 Therefore, it is considered there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate the proposal will help to achieve the Council's Net Zero targets.

*Other considerations*

*Requirement for Planning Permission*

- 38 An additional consideration of the criteria which applications are assessed against is whether a proposal has the appropriate consents in place to carry out the project.
- 39 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. It is intended to apply for planning permission should the National Lottery Funding bid be successful. The granted CIL funding of £252,400 is conditional on the grant of planning permission from the decision date. It is considered that the decision date is the date the approval was ratified at Cabinet and so is 9<sup>th</sup> January 2020. Therefore, there is still over two years left for planning permission to be obtained.
- 40 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.

*Sufficient evidence to show that the applicant has not previously benefited from CIL exemptions.*

- 41 The applicant has confirmed that they have not previously benefitted from a CIL exemption for the project.
- 42 In accordance to the CIL Chargeable Schedule, CIL is chargeable on the following developments: residential, supermarkets and superstore and retail warehousing. The proposed works would not fall within these remits and as such would not be subject to a CIL charge.

- 43 Therefore, there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate the applicant has not previously and would not benefit from a CIL exemption for the proposal.

#### **Application Considerations - Weakly Performing Criteria**

- 44 When carrying out the assessment of this funding application, Officers felt that the application did not perform strongly against the following criteria:

##### *There is not as strong economic benefits to the community*

- 45 The applicant has set out a number of potential economic benefits in relation to the scheme. It is considered that these are more generalised and an indirect benefit of the scheme, for example, decreasing medical costs through increased exercise. Moreover, the proposed economic benefits appear to align more with social benefits.
- 46 Therefore, it is not sufficiently clear what the direct economic benefits are to the project.

##### *Insufficient evidence has been submitted to demonstrate a strong link between new development and the scheme.*

- 47 The applicant has not made reference as to how the proposal will support new development or how new development has created a need for the project.
- 48 Therefore, it is not sufficiently clear that there is a strong link between the proposal and new development.

##### *Insufficient evidence has been provided to show that funding has been maximised.*

- 49 The applicant has stated that additional funding has been sought through the application of grants. These are currently not secure. Furthermore, the applicant has not explored any additional sources of funding including discussions with the relevant town or parish council(s).
- 50 Therefore, there is not sufficient evidence to demonstrate that other funding sources have been maximised.

##### *Other considerations*

##### *The project already received CIL funding*

- 51 As noted throughout the report, the project has already received CIL funding at the December 2019 CIL Spending Board.

- 52 When considering this application for CIL funding, Members of the Board should consider whether a sufficient case has been made for additional CIL funding to be granted.

## **Conclusion**

- 53 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.
- 54 It is noted that the applicant is asking for a small amount of funding in comparison to the total project cost. The requested amount of £251,900 equates to 14% of the project's overall costs. The project was previously granted £252,400 of CIL Funding in December 2019. Should the Board be minded to agree to this application for further funding, the overall amount of CIL would be £504,300 which would equate to 29% of the overall project costs.
- 55 After reviewing the application and supporting evidence, it is recommended by Officers that the funding request of £251,900 of CIL funding be approved to support the delivery of the project. It is clearly demonstrated that the scheme provides clear public benefits and approving this bid would provide good value for CIL money applied for, compared to the cost of the overall project.

## **Background Papers**

**Appendices** Original bidding proforma and supporting information

**Background Papers** None

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