

Item 6 (a) – 12 Otford Road, Sevenoaks Business Park Development Project

The attached report was considered by the Cabinet, and the relevant minute extract is below:

12 Otford Road, Sevenoaks Business Park Development Project (Cabinet – 8 February 2024, Minute 83)

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Improvement & Innovation presented the report which set out the development opportunity to enliven an underutilised Council site in one of the main commercial areas in the district for the benefit of businesses, residents and visitors. The main purpose was regeneration and to support economic development which was a key policy objective for the Council. The funding proposal was to use Public Works Loan Board linked to the schemes viability to meet the terms of the loan.

She further advised that the proposal was to build and hold in the long term, rather than to sell on completion. However, the exit strategy could change depending on the needs of the Council and market conditions which could be decided nearer to completion of the development. The development proposal was subject to planning and continued financial viability as the scheme was developed through the usual design stages, pre and post planning application stage. She also noted that Members had separately highlighted that the proposed development site was partially located in a flood risk area, and that appropriate risk mitigation strategies would be considered as part of the detailed design process.

The Finance and Investment Advisory Committee had thoroughly considered the report and it was well debated before supporting the recommendation to Cabinet. It was also brought to Members attention that Officers were aware of the LCWIP and it would be considered in the planning stage of the project. Other comments were made regarding pathways and the proposed site had been earmarked for economic development and an employment site.

The Property Investment & Development Surveyor further advised that the proposed project was for a mixed use scheme consisting of industrial units and a drive-through. Subject to receiving the necessary approval, a project team to prepare detailed designs and submit a planning application would be appointed. The current programme envisaged a planning submission in September 2024 with a determination in December 2024 and a start on site in spring 2025 with completion in summer 2026.

Detailed design work would allow further derisking of the project and once a final design was achieved, and would address the cycle highway, further financial appraisals would be undertaken to ensure the scheme remains viable.

Members considered the report and expressed support for a site which was waiting to be developed. The Chairman used her discretion and allowed the local Member to address the meeting, who raised concern regarding the residents who lived in close proximity. The Property Investment & Development Surveyor advised that residents would be consulted before submission of the planning application, and consultation of hours of use would take place with the planning authority.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That

- (a) it be recommended to Council that the capital funding of the Otford Road development scheme as outlined at Appendix B (Project Costs & Funding) be approved; and
- (b) the scheme would only progress subject to financial viability and planning consent being received, be noted.
- (c) subject to approval of the recommendation by Council at (a) above, provision of the project cost estimated at £3,635,004 is made within the Capital Programme; and
- (d) subject to approval of the recommendation (a) by Council, the Strategic Head of Property and Commercial, following consultation with the Head of Legal & Democratic Services and the Chief Officer Finance and Trading, be delegated authority to enter into necessary professional appointments/contracts to deliver the scheme.