



Cabinet

Tuesday, 9 October 2018

Proposal for the Abbey Road Site

Report of the Executive Manager, Transformation

Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Business and Economic Growth: Councillor Andy Edyvean

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The Council has a long-held ambition to vacate the depot at Abbey Road. This would enable the site to be available for housing growth in the borough. Work is being undertaken by officers on how the services that operate from the site can be delivered from alternative locations and a report will be presented to November Cabinet on those options.
- 1.2. This report considers the work being undertaken to prepare the site for the delivery of future housing and sets out a route to market for Cabinet to agree. There are several things that can be achieved from the delivery of housing on the site:
 - Much needed additional housing numbers (both private and affordable) to assist with the 5 year housing land supply
 - The potential for a landmark scheme that showcases great design
 - A capital receipt for the Council that will assist in the costs of providing the depot services from alternative sites.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet

- a) Agrees that officers undertake the necessary work to submit an outline planning application for housing on the Abbey Road site, accompanied by a design code
- b) Dependent on an appropriate planning permission for the site being secured, authorises the Deputy Chief Executive to undertake a marketing exercise for the disposal of the site with the benefit of a planning permission for housing
- c) Requests a follow up report with the results of the marketing exercise and detailing any other options for the Council to consider with regards the future development of the site.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

When the Council attains its ambitions of vacating the depot site, then it will have a land holding that is likely to be surplus to operational requirements. The site is in a residential area and designated as a brownfield site. As such it could be suitable for conversion to a housing site. This report does not ask for approval to dispose of the site, rather to put together a scheme for a potential housing development which can then be marketed and considered by Cabinet at a future date.

4. The Abbey Road Site

- 4.1. The Abbey Road site is currently used for storage of refuse trucks, vehicle maintenance and sorting of some recyclables. It has some contamination from previous uses and is also home to a nuclear bunker. The R2Go office team and Streetwise are based from the site as well as the County Council transport service. The site is approximately 1.8 ha, forming a loose rectangular shape as seen on the below plan. The site is relatively flat in topography and there are however a number of existing buildings on site, the most notable of which is the brick-built former bus depot.
- 4.2. The land is bounded on all sides by housing, save for the lower eastern boundary which abuts local allotment gardens. Vehicular access to the site from the north is via Abbey Road, and from the south is onto Buckfast Way. Although the site is located in the heart of the residential neighbourhood, it is only a short walk to the centre of West Bridgford and its local amenities. The adjacent western access road, to the rear of Abbey Road, may be considered for inclusion within a scheme, but access to existing properties would need to be retained.



5. Homes England Land Release Fund

- 5.1. The Council has secured £300k of Homes England Land Release Funding (LRF) for the Abbey Road site. This money is specifically allocated to Local Authorities who are in a position to release land for housing by March 2020. The funding allocated to the Council can be allocated to preparing Abbey Road for disposal or development. This could include surveys, site remediation works and design work to get to the stage of securing planning permission on the site.
- 5.2. According to the Homes England requirements, a site supported by an LRF funding award can count as released at the point at which any one of the below occur (whichever occurs first):
 - An unconditional contract, development agreement or building licence with a private sector partner is signed or freehold transfer takes place (whichever is sooner)
 - It has transferred to a local development vehicle
 - Housing starts on site.

6. Work to Date

- 6.1. In November 2017 Cabinet considered a report on property company options which also covered the Council's desire to facilitate the delivery of more housing and as part of that report set out some options for Abbey Road following the adoption of Local Plan part 2.
- 6.2. In the event, the Abbey Road site was not included in Local Plan part 2 – primarily because as a brownfield site listed on the Council's brownfield register, it is already deemed to be a developable site for housing.
- 6.3. A number of surveys have been undertaken on the site and the next step is to consider how to bring the housing forward. The following options are available to the Council:
 - Dispose of the site as straight land sale with or without overage
 - Work up a scheme for the site and dispose of it with the benefit of planning permission once an acceptable scheme is approved by the planning authority
 - Work up a scheme for the site and then act as the developer itself
 - Set up a joint venture company with a developer partner.
- 6.4. It is recommended that in order to have some certainty over the quality and standard of a future housing development, and to facilitate a prestige legacy site following the depot vacating the site the following actions are undertaken:
 - the Council works up a scheme for the site,
 - the Council submits this for planning permission
 - the Council then has the option to either

- a) sell the site with the benefit of planning permission or
- b) develop the site itself with or without a joint venture partner.

7. Indicative Timeline

- 7.1. Subject to Cabinet agreement to progress designing a residential scheme for Abbey Road, the following gives an indicative timeline to delivery:
- November-December 2018 – procure architects to develop and submit an outline planning application and design code for the site
 - June 2019 – planning application to go to Planning Committee for determination
 - September 2019 – subject to appropriate planning permission having been granted, the site is marketed
 - October/November 2019 – results of the marketing exercise are presented to Cabinet along with any other options for the delivery of the site.
- 7.2. It is important to state that any planning application submitted by the appointed architects on behalf of the Council will be subject to the Council's planning policies and will be determined by the Planning Committee, objectively, on its merits.

8. Alternative Options Considered and Reasons for Rejection

- 8.1. The Council could market the land as a developable site without the benefit of an outline planning permission and design code. The reason this option is not recommended is that the Council would have less influence on the design and layout of the final scheme with this option.
- 8.2. The Council could promote a different use for the site other than housing – eg industrial or employment units. This is not recommended because the site is in a residential area, and because the Council is keen to promote additional housing due to the challenges of delivering 5 year housing land supply. The Council operates employment sites elsewhere in Cotgrave and is acquiring some units in Bingham.
- 8.3. How the site is ultimately delivered will be subject to a further Cabinet report and decision. Cabinet will then be able to consider any bids submitted for the purchase of the site in comparison to it developing the site itself.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

- 9.1. The future development of the Abbey Road site is subject to achieving vacant possession. Currently the land is an operational asset providing depot services for Rushcliffe, as well as housing tenants such as Streetwise and Nottinghamshire County Council transport services. A further report will be submitted in November setting out the proposals for relocating these services.

9.2. The £300k of Land Release Funding is dependent on releasing the site for housing as set out in paragraph 5.2. The Council has received this funding already. Any delays in delivering the site past March 2020 could result in the government asking for this funding to be returned.

10. Implications

10.1. Financial Implications

- The £300k of Land Release Funding will be allocated to the surveys, architect's fees and remediation works (eg demolition of existing buildings) required to enable the Council to get to a position to market the site. This is additional funding since the capital programme was set in March 2018 and increases project viability.
- The capital receipt for the site will assist with the costs of relocating the depot operations to alternative location(s), including the revenue consequences of relocating R2Go.
- The capital budget has always presented the depot relocation as ideally being cost neutral – ie the development of Abbey Road is not earmarked to create a capital receipt in excess of covering the costs of relocation. Any uplift on this would be a helpful, but unbudgeted capital receipt. There is also a risk that the cost of relocation could exceed the capital receipt secured which would result in additional financial pressure on the Council's medium term financial strategy. This would need to be mitigated by either re-phasing existing schemes or by internal/external borrowing.

10.2. Legal Implications

- There are no legal implications arising from this report.

10.3. Equalities Implications

- The design code will include reference to building homes for life and the scheme will be designed with accessibility in mind. In addition, the affordable housing element of the scheme (30 percent) will be designed with local need in mind.

10.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

- The design code will include reference to designing out crime.

11. Link to Corporate Priorities

- Redevelopment of the Abbey Road site will support the delivery of the Council's Corporate Priorities by:
 - Delivering economic growth to ensure a sustainable, prosperous and thriving local economy; and

- Maintaining and enhancing our residents' quality of life.

12. Recommendations

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet:

- Agrees that officers undertake the necessary work to be able to submit an outline planning application for housing on the Abbey Road site, accompanied by a design code
- Dependent on an appropriate planning permission for the site being secured, authorises the Deputy Chief Executive to undertake a marketing exercise for the disposal of the site with the benefit of a planning permission for housing
- Requests a follow up report with the results of the marketing exercise and detailing any other options for the Council to consider with regards the future development of the site.

For more information contact:	Kath Marriott Executive Manager - Transformation and Operations Tel: 0115 9148291 kmarriott@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	Nil
List of appendices:	