

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Council
Date of Meeting:	28 May 2019
Subject:	Garden Community Programme – Garden Town Status for Tewkesbury at Ashchurch.
Report of:	Head of Development Services
Corporate Lead:	Chief Executive
Number of Appendices:	None

Executive Summary:

In August 2018, the Government - via the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (formerly DCLG) – announced a further round of the Garden Communities programme building on its existing programme of Garden Communities in the UK. Local Authorities were invited to bid for Garden Communities status. The objective of the Garden Community programme is to support the Government's objective of delivering 300,000 homes per year by mid-2020's.

This round announced the five new Garden Towns: Grazeley, Hemel Hempstead, North Uttlesford, Meecebrook in the north of Stafford and Tewkesbury Ashchurch, in addition to the 23 garden towns already part of the programme.

A bid was made for Garden Town status for Tewkesbury at Ashchurch upon the recently completed Tewkesbury Ashchurch Concept masterplan.

Notification was given to the Council in April that the Garden Towns bid for Tewkesbury at Ashchurch has been successful.

Upon receiving the Garden Town status, the Council is also in receipt of capacity funding of £750,000. This allows the Council to bring in additional resource to create a garden town team, focussing on successful project management and community engagement. This will further allow the delivery of the programme and ensure that growth occurs which benefits the existing and new communities and can maximise the potential to create prosperity to benefit the wider community.

Tewkesbury Borough Council, in collaboration with Cheltenham Borough Council, has also submitted a Garden Village bid to the Garden Communities programme for the West Cheltenham development opportunity. The Garden Village designation is for a smaller development opportunity (in the region of 3,000 homes) whereas the Garden Town is larger at 10,000 units. Due to the internal Government process of reviewing bids, no announcement has yet been made on this application.

Recommendation:

1. That authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Lead Member for the Built Environment and the s151 Officer to use the capacity funding to fund resources (including recruitment of key staff) and associated work, to help develop the necessary plans to support the delivery of the Garden Town programme for Tewkesbury at Ashchurch.
2. To note that Officers will continue work to develop a delivery programme in relation to the Garden Town for Tewkesbury at Ashchurch in discussion with Members (through the established TBC governance structure), alongwith the relevant key stakeholders including Homes England, the local community, the Parishes, Wychavon District Council, the Highways Authorities, and the relevant landowners/developers.
3. To DELEGATE AUTHORITY TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE to make all necessary decisions alongwith establishing appropriate governance structures (other than those that, as a matter of legislation, are to be made by the Council and those that relate to the determination of any planning applications) to deliver the Garden Town for Tewkesbury at Ashchurch and, if successful, to make all necessary decisions to deliver the West Cheltenham Garden Village and receive further status reports as each project progresses.

Reasons for Recommendation:

To put in place arrangements to make all necessary decisions with regard to the delivery of the Garden Town for Tewkesbury at Ashchurch (and West Cheltenham, in conjunction with Cheltenham Borough Council, if successful) as part of the Government's Garden Community Programme.

Resource Implications:

As part of the garden community programme, the Council has been successful in obtaining Government funding of £750,000, (known as 'capacity funding') to support the delivery of the programme. A full review of detailed resource requirements is being undertaken as part of the broader project to ensure the delivery of the Garden Town, (including the recruitment of key staff) to deliver the necessary requirements to deliver a project of this scale.

The Council is already in receipt of Local Sites Investment Funding (LSIF) and Homes England capacity funding due to the recognition of the development potential in this area and the earlier designation of Housing Zone in the area.

Legal Implications:

The initial funding has been awarded under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. The council is, therefore, not required to enter into any specific conditions but delivery of the project is closely monitored.

Any further legal implications will be considered carefully as the delivery project evolves.

The projects included in the garden community programme does not prejudice or presuppose the planning system – the appropriate planning processes will still need to be followed.

The adoption of any development plan documents or supplementary planning documents in relation to the area will remain a matter for Council as a matter of legislation under section 23 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Risk Management Implications:

A key risk of not accepting the status is the loss of the related funding to proactively plan for that development. Planning proactively through the masterplanning as well as coordinating with the communities, and wider stakeholders and delivery bodies will enable development to come forward which is comprehensively aligned in the most effective fashion with infrastructure needs.

Performance Management Follow-up:

A detailed management structure will be put in place with updates presented to Executive Committee on a regular basis.

Environmental Implications:

As part of the planning application and statutory plan preparation, any environmental implications will be tested, fully considered and addressed accordingly.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

- 1.1** In August 2018 the Government announced a bidding round for the Garden Community programme. This was split into two levels, garden villages of above 1,500 homes and garden towns of above 10,000 homes. The Council submitted a bid for 10,195 homes based on the Ashchurch Concept Masterplan and therefore the bid fell within the larger category 'Garden Towns' programme. Garden Towns are concerned with delivering exemplar quality developments in terms of design, living space, greenspace, infrastructure such as road rail education and health facilities.
- 1.2** The prospectus invited local authorities and private sector partners (with express support of the local authority) to apply. It stated that selection of garden communities for assistance will be based upon satisfaction of all criteria. This was a competitive process.
- 1.3** The announcement of Government assistance does not in any way pre-judge the planning process, nor fetter the Secretary of State's decision in relation to any statutory decisions.

2.0 THE BID

- 2.1** In mid 2017, the Council commissioned Building Design Partnership (BDP) to prepare a concept masterplan of this area. This was in relation to the longer term development opportunities in the area and was a direct action as a result of recommendation of the Inspector for the examination in public on the JCS.
- 2.2** The JCS was adopted in December 2017 and included a commitment to its partial review in respect of the housing shortfall for both Tewkesbury and Gloucester. A JCS Review Issues and Options consultation ran from 12 November 2018 to 11 January 2019. One of the key questions in the consultation was to consider the time period that the JCS Review covers. A proposal was made to extend the plan to at least 2041. The concept masterplan for Ashchurch, which was subject to public consultation as part of the JCS 2 Review consultation, covers that plan period.

- 2.3** The concept masterplan sought an understanding of the longer term development opportunities in the Ashchurch area and concluded with a development quantum over 8,000 homes including 100 hectares of employment land. Such a development quantum could meet the longer term housing needs of Tewkesbury Borough.
- 2.4** The Council's bid for Garden Town status was based upon the technical details of the concept masterplan together with additional development opportunities to reach a quantum of 10,195 homes to meet the garden town size criteria. The additional development areas included the Mitton land as defined in the JCS (as a potential strategic allocation within Wychavon - meeting Tewkesbury's housing need), committed development opposite the MOD base, land previously defined on the MOD base for employment converted to housing and a further development parcel below Pamington.
- 2.5** In preparing the bid the Council provided details on the strategic approach to development, leadership, vision, number and types of homes, employment land, jobs created, infrastructure needs including schools and local centres, deliverability and an estimated delivery trajectory as well as plans indicating the broad area of growth. To support the bid, letters of support were received from various stakeholders including Ministry Of Defence (MOD) Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), Gloucestershire County Council, Wychavon District Council, JCS partners, the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Laurence Robertson MP.
- 2.6** The Garden Town status provides the opportunity to deliver homes and jobs in the area and deliver key infrastructure to help deliver the significant growth opportunities. The Garden Town also provides opportunity to help deliver key transport improvements in the area including the A46 which alongside being a local priority has a National imperative. The significant growth potential in the vicinity of the Garden Town also provides the broader opportunities for improvements to the rail connectivity. Furthermore Garden Town status allows opportunity for community and business engagement in the process and provides opportunity for place making of a scale only possible with this quantum of development. Similarly development of this scale brings with it leverage to deliver community enhancement to benefit existing and future communities in the area.
- 2.7** As a successful recipient of garden town status, the Council has been allocated a Homes England representative, who will work with it to support and deliver the programme. This allocation enhances an already excellent working relationship with Homes England and offers opportunities for increased ability to seek to influence associated infrastructure issues, such as the A46 offline solution and limited rail services serving Ashchurch for Tewkesbury station. Similarly it provides the opportunity to lever influence on funding streams to help deliver the programme.

3.0 PLANNING STATUS

- 3.1** A concept masterplan for the Ashchurch area has been prepared which formed the basis of the bid. As stated earlier this concept masterplan currently forms part of the options considered as part of the Joint Core Strategy Review. Securing at an early date an appropriate planning status upon which planning decisions can be made, which are reflective of the aspirations of the Garden Town and the Concept Masterplan, is essential.

3.2 Having a strategic and planned development strategy for the area will mean that development can occur in a controlled way, maximising community engagement and place shaping, illustrating to government the Council's commitment to the garden town programme, providing the Council with safeguards and increased control of how the development is brought forward. Similarly it demonstrates the strategic need for infrastructure and allows a collective case to be made seeking delivery of key elements of that infrastructure. Officers are considering the most appropriate route to secure the necessary planning status of the area and further reports detailing this will be prepared in due course.

4.0 MANAGEMENT, STAFFING AND GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 Effective Governance arrangements in relation to the Garden Town will be critical to the delivery of the programme. The Governance arrangements will be refined and developed in conjunction with key stakeholders including Homes England (including existing communities, businesses, and the other JCS authorities). This will ensure the Garden Town objectives and the Council's aspirations are met. Further information in relation to governance will be reported to the Executive Committee in due course.

4.2 An existing Governance structure exists in the shape of the J9 Member Reference Panel which involves Members and Officers. Alongside this group there is a J9 stakeholder group which has kept stakeholders up to date on key developments in the area including the preparation of the bid, the commissioning of the masterplanning work. This structure will be refined to allow greater engagement and to reflect the redefined programme.

4.3 An initial phase of the programme will consider in detail what resources are required to ensure the successful delivery of the programme. This will include a number of new posts, which are likely to become a dedicated garden town team, with focus on delivering successful community engagement and project management. This process will be subject to the usual Human Resource implications. It is anticipated that these posts will report directly to the Chief Executive as the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO), evidence demonstrates that this is an effective way of managing programmes of this nature.

4.4 Once appointed, the dedicated officers on this project will work to develop a delivery programme in relation to the Tewkesbury Ashchurch Garden Town in discussion with the relevant key stakeholders including existing Council departments, eg Planning and Economic Development teams, Homes England, the local community, the Parishes, Wychavon District Council the Highways Authorities, and the relevant landowners/developers.

5.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 None.

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Concept Masterplan for the area has been subject to consultation. Any future planning documents will require consultation regardless of the route that is taken to secure a planning framework. Alongside planning consultation methods, effective sustained and continued consultation is crucial to community cohesion in the creation of the new Garden Town.

7.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

- 7.1** Joint Core Strategy.
Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options Consultation.

8.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

- 8.1** National Planning Policy Framework.
National Planning Practice Guidance.

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

- 9.1** The Council is in receipt of initial funding of £750,000 this is in part to fund resources to help deliver the project. The scope of such a large project will impact many departments and therefore a wider review on how best to support the project, as well as discussions with the other garden communities, is ongoing. Once a review is complete, this will be reported back to the Executive at a later date.

10.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

- 10.1** Such details will be finalised as the project develops however social community cultural and economic matters will be essential to be balanced in the preparation of the strategy.

11.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

- 11.1** None.

12.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

- 12.1** None.

Background Papers: None.

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Appendices: None.