

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 7 FEBRUARY 2017

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

OLD RIVER LANE PROPOSAL

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL BISHOP'S STORTFORD

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To provide initial indicative costing to commence the development of the Old River Lane Site and to confirm board and accountability arrangements

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE: that:

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| (A) | the revised governance structure, including the establishment of a Board to oversee the Old River Lane Project be approved and delegate the allocation of Board membership to the Leader of the Council and lead Director; and |
| (B) | the initial indicative budget requirements of £450k be approved. |

1.0 Background

1.1 Following an unimplemented planning permission granted to develop a retail led scheme, the Council acquired the site which comprises land at Old River Lane. The site currently consists of surface parking, and two office blocks and three houses. One of the offices (Charrington House) is partly occupied, including the provision of a customer contact centre for the Council, whilst the second has recently been granted planning permission to be demolished and to create a temporary surface car park. The site also is adjacent to the Waitrose Supermarket which is expected to want to collaborate on the future of the site.

1.2 In order to provide a strategic overview, the Council commissioned Allies & Morrison in January 2016 to undertake a town centre planning framework, which would provide a long-term coherent vision for the development of the town centre focusing primarily on the following issues:

- land use and accessibility;
- a better understanding of the changes that are taking place in the town centre as a result of changes in the way we purchase goods and services and in the way businesses operate; and
- a review of car parking, retail, leisure, business premises and the quality of the environment, taking into account future growth in the population of the town and the surrounding area.

1.3 The Framework consultation closed in December 2016, with the final report expected in February 2017.

1.4 During a meeting of the Bishop's Stortford Town Centre Steering Group in December 2016, it was proposed and agreed that a new governance structure would be adopted to enable the various projects to move forward.

1.5 The following report details the proposed governance structure and also provides an outline of the expected budget requirements to progress the Old River Lane project to the next stage.

2.0 Report

2.1 The existing Bishop's Stortford Town Centre Steering Group will continue to have oversight of the whole Town Centre area and promote and facilitate the delivery of projects and developments coming forward from the Town Centre Planning Framework. The membership of the group will be reviewed in order to reflect the wider remit of the group and will be renamed The Bishop's Stortford Town Centre Steering Board.

2.2 A new group, the Old River Lane Delivery Board will be established with responsibility for the delivery of the development programme of the site in council ownership (Old River Lane). Membership of this group will be largely East Herts Council representatives with specialists attending as necessary to advise and inform the Board. It is proposed that responsibility for

establishing membership of each group is delegated to the Leader of the Council and the lead Director.

- 2.3 In addition there will be a Work stream leads group for each Board. The proposed structure is detailed at **Essential Reference Paper 'B'** and proposed terms of reference for each group are set out at **Essential Reference Papers 'C' and 'D'**.
- 2.4 An indicative timeline has been established to inform the proposed work scheduling for the Old River Lane development and a similar timeline will be developed for the Bishop Stortford Town Centre Steering Board to provide a timeframe for the development of the Planning Framework.
- 2.5 Approval is requested for an initial budget of £450k in order to advance the ORL and Planning Framework project. The breakdown of this can be found at **Essential Reference Paper 'E'**. This contains exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and has, therefore, been withheld from the press and public. **Essential Reference Paper 'E'** includes commercially sensitive information which if made public could compromise any tendering activities.
- 2.6 The funding source for this activity is the Commercial Property Fund reserve (current balance £1.27m). It should be noted that a bid had been submitted for One Public Estate(OPE) funding which, if successful, may reduce the total requested above by up to £40k.
- 3.0 Implications/Consultations
- 3.1 These are set out in **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

None

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