

Report of the Director of City Development and the Director of Environment & Housing

Report to Executive Board

Date: 4th September 2013

Subject: Relocation of Nursery Facilities and Development of Red Hall

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	Cross Gates & Whinmoor, Harewood	
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:		
Appendix number:		

Summary of main issues

The Council has 28 hectares of land at the Red Hall site currently occupied by operational nursery and horticultural facilities and by unused playing fields. The site has important strategic value to the Council as a future capital receipt due to its location in an area of allocated housing growth. The site itself has potential to provide for a high quality new residential neighbourhood embodying 'liveability' principles, whilst acting as a catalyst to the provision of infrastructure that will support the development of the wider East Leeds Extension area.

In order to realise the development potential of Red Hall it is necessary for the Parks and Countryside service to vacate the site. Executive Board has previously approved a relocation strategy for the current uses, involving the use of land at Whinmoor Grange and requested that work is brought forward to enable the eventual disposal and development of Red Hall.

The current role of the nursery includes plant production, community engagement and a centre for horticulture excellence and training. There is an opportunity to develop a brand new nursery that will be more efficient in design, accessibility and production. The additional benefits of a new nursery include the following:

- opportunities to generate further income through purpose built plant retail and café facilities;

- enhanced sponsorship opportunities in community parks;
- create opportunities for cross council trading by maintaining current production capacity, on a site that will be 40% smaller in footprint;
- establish the horticultural nursery as a key centre for apprentices and learning.

In order to realise this aspiration, it is proposed that a design for a new horticultural nursery and ancillary facilities for staff requiring a base in the east of the city at Whinmoor Grange be commissioned to RIBA stage D. Following the completion of this process it is proposed that a detailed report be brought back to Executive Board in the form of a design and cost report.

An indicative cost for the development of a replacement nursery facility at Whinmoor Grange has been estimated at £5 million, which would include an access road shared between the nursery and relocated playing pitches. It would also include the integration of other operational teams current based at Red Hall. The aspiration would be for a new nursery to be operational by the end of 2016.

The indicative development scope of the resulting Red Hall site suggests capacity for around 375 new homes, alongside retained listed buildings, part of the route for the new East Leeds Orbital Road, retained playing pitches and new green spaces. This will be further refined, consulted on and confirmed in an Informal Planning Statement, to be brought back to Executive Board for future consideration.

Recommendations

Executive Board is asked to:

- a. approve the use of land at Whinmoor Grange to develop a replacement horticultural nursery;
- b. approve commencement of the design and site layout of a circa 6 hectare horticultural nursery facility and ancillary facilities at Whinmoor Grange to RIBA stage D, funded from existing budget provision (Capital Scheme No. 16442), indicating how this would relate to adjoining parts of the site;
- c. that a further report be brought back to Executive Board in the form of a Design and Cost report, outlining the processes involved in progressing the development of a horticultural nursery at Whinmoor along with further detail on funding;
- d. note the progress on feasibility work to inform the development of the Red Hall site;
- e. consider and confirm the key development principles set out in the report and accompanying concept plan, including the retention of two pitches on site;
- f. agree to the process and timetable for the production of a draft Informal Planning Statement to guide future planning applications, disposal and development of the site for housing and related infrastructure, to include requirements for greenspace, scale and type of development, highways, pedestrian and cycle movement, as well as more detailed design guidance.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report updates Executive Board on proposals for the development of a new horticultural nursery at Whinmoor Grange to replace existing operational facilities at Red Hall. It highlights the current role and benefits of the nursery, an outline business case for its relocation and future benefits of a new nursery. The report seeks approval to commission detailed design proposals to RIBA stage D for the Whinmoor Grange site.
- 1.2 The report also provides an update on work to establish the medium-term strategic disposal opportunity that will subsequently arise for the Council's land holdings at Red Hall and the progress made on feasibility work to inform the scope of redevelopment. Outline proposals for an Informal Planning Statement are set out that would guide the sale and scope of future planning applications.

2 Background information

- 2.1 The Red Hall site covers around 29 hectares and is located between the Outer North Ring Road and A58 Wetherby Road. The majority of the site is in Council ownership comprising operational Parks & Countryside facilities (17ha) and playing fields and open space (11ha), though the original Red Hall House and stables (1ha) are owned and occupied by the Rugby Football League as its headquarters. A plan showing the site is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.2 The Nursery currently uses the site for seasonal bedding plant production in glass houses, poly tunnels and for storage of trees and shrubs on open ground.
- 2.3 The Red Hall site as a whole is one of the Council's most significant and valuable strategic land holdings due to its size and location on the northern fringe of the built up area of Leeds. There is strong potential in the medium-term to realise a substantial capital receipt through disposal for development. The opportunity to redevelop the site was established through the 2006 Unitary Development Plan Review, which allocated the land for both housing and a key business park, within the 'East Leeds Extension' housing allocation, an area of some 215ha extending from the Leeds-York rail line in the south to the outer ring road to the west of Red Hall in the north.
- 2.4 Executive Board has previously considered the opportunity to realise this development potential and in so doing develop a brand new, more efficient nursery on an alternative site. The Board approved a strategy for the relocation of uses and redevelopment of the Red Hall site as follows:
- In December 2008, Executive Board approved the development of a 5 acre cemetery for part of the site at Whinmoor Grange, to be delivered as part of a larger master plan to accommodate the relocation of council operations from Red Hall;
 - In October 2011, an informal planning statement for Whinmoor Grange was approved by Executive Board, establishing locations for the 5 acre cemetery,

operational Parks & Countryside facilities and playing fields to be relocated from Red Hall, as illustrated in **Appendix 2** of this report;

- In May 2012 Executive Board agreed to a relocation strategy for the Red Hall horticultural nursery, depot and office facilities to Whinmoor Grange and approved the refurbishment of Farnley Hall coach house to form decant office accommodation for the Parks & Countryside service. The Board also asked officers to develop a detailed planning brief for the Red Hall site and to undertake feasibility works for both Red Hall and Whinmoor Grange in order to allow for their future redevelopment.

2.5 The following sections set out the current role and benefits of the horticultural nursery and the development context for the Red Hall site.

2.6 **The Horticultural Nursery Facilities**

2.6.1 The nursery at Red Hall has three primary roles:

- i. the production and distribution of plants;
- ii. community engagement;
- iii. a centre for horticultural excellence and training.

i. The production and distribution of plants

2.6.2 The nursery produces in excess of two million bedding plants and approximately 250,000 edibles per year, with close to 90% of production done from seed. Trees and shrubs are also bought in primarily for landscape schemes and managed at the nursery until required at specific sites.

2.6.3 The nursery has developed a reputation for horticultural produce of the highest quality, including sourcing, growing and distributing plants for successive RHS Chelsea Flower Show entries, including achieving gold in 2010 and 2011. Furthermore the nursery has an important role to play in making Leeds an attractive city to live. During recent years the nursery has been successful in developing an enterprising culture and has proactively sought out opportunities to generate income. Examples include the establishment of an on-site retail offer and the development of floral sponsorship opportunities which generate a combined income per annum of £406k.

2.6.4 The following table provides a summary of the financial position of the nursery based on 2012/13 actual performance. An allowance has been made for the value of produce displayed in parks and green space throughout the city. Taking this into account, the nursery makes a surplus of £29k.

Description	2012/13 £'000
Sales	200
Value of produce used in Leeds parks and green space	339
Net Income generated horticultural sponsorship	179
Total Income	718
Employee costs	-457
Operating costs	-232
Total Spend	-689
Net Position	29

ii. Community engagement

2.6.5 The nursery has a vital role in assisting the Parks & Countryside service in engaging with community groups and other third sector organisations. In recent years there has been substantial growth in volunteer participation across the service, which is reflected in the continued growth of 'in bloom' groups across the city. The nursery plays an important role in sustaining the 'in bloom' initiative which has social, economic, environmental and transformational benefits. The economic value of volunteer participation in this initiative is estimated at £800k annually, with each group having a direct relationship in some form to the nursery.

2.6.6 The nursery also has a key role as a partner in the Feed Leeds initiative, to support the cultivation of land for food produce by local people and organisations in Leeds. The nursery supports this initiative by:

- Growing fruit, vegetables and herbs;
- Offering a customer starter pack including seeds, pots and compost;
- Providing information on how to grow fruit and vegetables ;
- Providing demonstrations on how fruit and vegetables can be combined with non-edible plants to provide aesthetically pleasing displays and baskets;
- Supporting schools in adopting this approach, so that children understand where food comes from as well as helping promote healthy eating;
- Assisting community groups by using the nursery greenhouses to grow in the early stages which can be collected when matured;
- Supporting community projects and organisations (including Back2Front in Harehills, Space to Grow, the development of a vegetable growing initiative with O2 telephonic and the growing zone Kippax).

iii. Centre for horticultural excellence and training

2.6.7 The nationally recognised successes achieved at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show are an endorsement of the nursery's capacity to produce horticultural produce to the highest standard. This has enabled staff in the nursery and wider service to develop important learning and skills.

2.6.8 The nursery provides training opportunities for all young people with an interest in horticulture, as well as enabling school children to gain an insight into this industry. The Parks and Countryside service is committed to ensuring that the service offers employment opportunities to young people in the form of a revitalised apprenticeship programme. The nursery plays a central role in providing apprentices with a rounded understanding in horticulture, which will in turn provide a sound starting point for those participating in the scheme to make a lasting and meaningful contribution to the city.

2.7 **Development Potential at Red Hall**

2.7.1 The redevelopment of the Red Hall site can play an important role in the future of this part of the city by supporting housing growth, meeting housing needs and generating value to support the provision of critical local infrastructure that can serve and act as a catalyst for further housing development in the wider East Leeds area.

2.7.2 As part of the capital receipts programme this site would also provide a significant contribution to support the Council's capital programme and delivery of services at a time of downward pressures on budgets and reduced income.

2.7.3 As a development opportunity Red Hall has the capacity to deliver a high quality new place, effectively integrated into and enhancing surrounding residential neighbourhoods, to embody key liveability principles through design and specification and to support the Council's aims for a Child Friendly City. It is also an opportunity for the Council to set the standards expected of other landowners and residential developers with interests in the East Leeds Extension development area.

2.7.4 Under the Local Development Framework Site Allocations Plan currently under consultation it is proposed that the playing fields part of the site is allocated for housing, alongside the adjoining housing allocations rolled forward from the UDP. This responds to a change in national planning policy towards out of town office developments and is reflected in the proposed approach to development of the site set out in this report.

2.7.5 A small part of the Red Hall site, known as the '5 acre field', is within the greenbelt, though it is part of the operational nursery and in this respect is brownfield land.

2.7.6 In June 2011 a consortium of developers and land interests submitted an outline planning application for 2000 homes, local retail facilities, a health centre, community centre and primary school development, with associated drainage and landscaping in the 'Northern Quadrant' of the East Leeds Extension, between the A58 Wetherby Road and A64 York Road, immediately to the east of the Red Hall site. It is currently anticipated that this application will be determined at the September meeting of the City Plans Panel.

2.7.7 This development interest shows the strength of the housing market in this area and the likelihood that house builders would be very interested in the land opportunity that would be presented at Red Hall.

- 2.7.8 Any development in the East Leeds Extension will be subject to policy provisions within the UDP that require the construction of a new East Leeds Orbital Road (ELOR) to serve the development sites and relieve pressure on the existing strategic highways network.
- 2.7.9 The Northern Quadrant application includes an alignment for ELOR through its site connecting to new roundabouts on each of the A64 and A58. ELOR would be required to continue westwards from the A58 through the Red Hall site to join up with the existing outer ring road. The development of the Red Hall site would therefore be expected to demonstrate how it co-ordinates with adjoining developments and supports the construction of ELOR.
- 2.7.10 In January 2013 Executive Board agreed that the Council should take a leading role in the delivery of infrastructure to support the development of the East Leeds Extension and approved funding for the Council to undertake a feasibility study to establish the most appropriate alignment of ELOR throughout its full length, incorporating the Northern Quadrant proposals and a route through Red Hall. This work is due to be completed and reported to the October meeting of the Board.

3 Main issues

3.1 Developing a Nursery at Whinmoor Grange – Outline Business Case

- 3.1.1 A review of the business case associated with development of an in house horticultural nursery has been undertaken. The following bullet points summarise the main points from this review:
- Following a market testing process, that incorporated both UK and European horticultural plant growers, it was apparent that there is only limited scope within the private sector to supply the quantity, range and quality of bedding plants and hanging basket produce required to sustain existing floral features;
 - Only one supplier stated that it could supply the volume of plant material required of those companies that responded to market testing enquiries;
 - None could supply all the varieties required;
 - None could meet the reduced peat requirement necessary to support the council EMAS aspirations;
 - A Worcestershire based organisation, which states that it could meet the volume requirement, based on cost estimate provided was significantly more expensive than the comparative cost of production in house.
- 3.1.2 Re-establishing the nursery as a holding facility, with only limited production capacity, has also been considered. The effectiveness of this is questionable, given that the storage of any plants ordered in would require a protected environment in which they can be both covered and heated prior to city wide distribution. Given the scale of produce used in Leeds, this would in effect necessitate the development of a substantial green house facility that would require only marginal additional investment to function as a horticultural nursery. In addition, efficiency savings are likely to be minimal because the implementation of such a system would lead to significant seasonal peaks and troughs in labour

requirements, coupled with a likely growth in revenue costs associated with buying produce.

- 3.1.3 Further to the above, due consideration has been given to the volume of bedding used internally across parks and green spaces. In light of budgetary pressures, changes have been implemented that sought to rationalise resource input in this area. Any further reductions would have a significant impact in terms of the service capacity to maintain community park green space standards.
- 3.1.4 Core cities have all either retained an in-house plant nursery or a covered holding facility. Two core cities have invested further with one recently renewing a nursery facility and the other carrying out a substantial refurbishment of their existing facility. Both of these cities have continued to make a firm commitment to the 'in bloom' initiative and see floral features as an integral part of an attractive city seeking inward investment.

3.2 **Future Benefits of Developing a Nursery at Whinmoor Grange**

- 3.2.1 The development of a new horticultural nursery at Whinmoor Grange will provide a range of benefits, in addition to presenting a number of opportunities for growth in revenue.
- 3.2.2 The council will have a brand new nursery that will be more efficient in design, accessibility and production. The current facility is based on an operational depot with physical barriers to access for members of the public resulting in the need to establish health and safety procedures for each customer wishing to gain entry. Plants for sale are available in existing production greenhouses with a current turnover of £200k. The design of a new nursery presents an opportunity to enable accessible public parking adjacent to the nursery with a purpose built visitor and plant retail facility which could be enhanced further with the addition of a café and on site toilet facilities. The nursery could therefore be promoted as a destination of choice to visit for the public, community groups and schools to consolidate learning and provide the opportunity to purchase plant material.
- 3.2.3 Developing a new nursery presents a unique opportunity to construct a more efficient facility on a much smaller footprint. Indicative analysis prior to commencement of detailed design, would indicate that a 40% reduction in the current footprint of the nursery could be achieved for the same level of production. The nursery would be environmentally sustainable via the use of forestry by-products for heat, recycling water and generally more thermally efficient. This would indicate the need for a 6 hectare nursery at Whinmoor Grange.
- 3.2.4 Sustaining production in this way would mean that existing plans to develop trading opportunities within the city region could be fulfilled and developed by supplying plants to other local authorities and other organisations. Overall this presents the opportunity to maximise the potential for income generation through charging and trading.
- 3.2.5 Sustained production capacity will also enable the continued development of sponsorship opportunities. Some progress has been made in securing sponsorship of flower beds in community parks, thus generating revenue which

can be ring fenced to that park. In consultation with local community groups, it will be possible to use this to support volunteer activities and enable local projects to improve community parks. For example, this approach has already been developed at Calverley Park which is generated around £2k per annum in sponsorship which is more than the supply and net cost and maintenance of the beds.

- 3.2.6 There are 11 gardening apprentice opportunities that have been advertised for recruitment in September 2013. The nursery will play an important role in supporting learning of apprentices in terms of soil science, horticultural design, and plant management as well as a base as part of the apprenticeship itself. In order to provide a rounded horticultural experience apprentices need the opportunity to undertake some of their training in a nursery environment with similar placements in the areas of fine turf management, woodland management and sports turf management.
- 3.2.7 There will be opportunities to support the development of new green spaces within and around the East Leeds Extension, to sustain a jobs and skills programme within the Parks and Countryside service over a long term period, to include a significant apprenticeship offer. This concept is central to the development of Green Park which is located adjacent to Thorpe Park and which represents a further development of note within the east of the city. The aspiration is that the future maintenance of this new green space will be supported by a team of apprentices.

3.3 **Next Steps**

- 3.3.1 In order to progress with the relocation and vacate the Red Hall site, it will be necessary to undertake detailed design work to determine development options for a nursery facility at Whinmoor Grange. Norfolk Property Services (NPS) has been commissioned to undertake a feasibility study to establish outline design principles for a new horticultural nursery based on a more efficient footprint that will allow a continuation of present operating capacity. It is proposed that a design team be appointed to further progress proposals for both scheme design and costs to the completion of RIBA Stage D, indicating how this would relate to adjoining parts of the wider Whinmoor Grange site, including new pitch provision. An indicative cost estimate of £150,000 has been provided by NPS to undertake this design work. Funding is available within existing authorised budgets to meet this expenditure.
- 3.3.2 An indicative cost for the development of a replacement nursery facility at Whinmoor Grange has been estimated at £5 million, which would include an access road shared between the nursery and relocated playing pitches. It would also include the integration of other operational teams current based at Red Hall. It is estimated that the cost of the access road and additional operational facilities would represent around 25% of the total cost identified. The cost assumptions will be checked and refined through the feasibility study. The aspiration would be for a new nursery to be operational by the end of 2016.

3.4 **Scope for Development of Council Land at Red Hall**

- 3.4.3 Officers have commenced feasibility work on the development scope for Red Hall and have held initial discussions with Executive and Ward members during August to establish base principles.
- 3.4.4 A key consideration is to balance the potential contribution the site can make to housing growth requirements and the appropriate density of development with the need to deliver the necessary infrastructure to support and enhance local facilities and services through development.
- 3.4.5 Although the existing sports pitches have fallen into disuse due to their poor drainage, there is an opportunity through development of the Council's land at Red Hall to retain and improve some of the playing fields on site together with re-provision of the remainder off-site at Whinmoor Grange, to provide an overall upgrade in pitch provision for this part of the city.
- 3.4.6 There is also a need to ensure that the development and occupation of housing on the site can be supported by the provision of adequate school places. It is anticipated that a new two form of entry primary school will be provided as part of the adjacent Northern Quadrant development to manage the increased demand from that site, however there would be a need to create further provision to manage the additional school places required by the development of Red Hall. These school places would need to be met by the expansion of schools in the vicinity of the East Leeds Extension subject to the completion of successful statutory processes. The development of Red Hall would deliver planning contributions towards the provision of these school places.
- 3.4.7 Further new primary and secondary school provision will be planned in as part of developments in the southern parts of the East Leeds Extension and through the regeneration programme for the existing built up area of East Leeds. The emerging strategy for this has been a particular focus of the East Leeds Regeneration Board.
- 3.4.8 The development of the site will also have to accommodate and fund the construction of ELOR through the site; some initial assumptions have been made on the alignment but will be adjusted and refined following completion of the feasibility study. The study will also provide outline cost estimates for each section of ELOR to enable more detailed appraisal and valuation work to be undertaken.
- 3.4.9 The aim would ultimately be that a high quality 'liveable' place is created, that enhances rather than causes detriment to adjoining neighbourhoods, that delivers appropriate infrastructure for the site and local communities but is still capable of delivering a capital receipt to the Council through a viable development.
- 3.4.10 A plan showing the indicative development framework for the site with a proposed approach to ELOR and the playing pitches is shown at **Appendix 3**. This is a high level concept plan which outlines the amount and allocation of different uses across the site.

- 3.4.11 The key principles of the draft concept plan are as follows with further details set out in the following paragraphs:
- i. **Scale and type of development** - development area of up to 12.5 hectares and capacity for up to 375 homes;
 - ii. **Highways and accessibility** - provision of a dual carriageway route through the site as part of the ELOR; provision of two main accesses to the site via Red Hall Lane and the Outer Ring Road allowing public transport to fully penetrate the development. Strategic Cycle links will be incorporated into the layout to complement emerging proposals in the wider ELE ;
 - iii. **Greenspace** - provision of up to 3 hectares of new greenspace, including local play areas and re-use of brownfield land in the greenbelt; retention and refurbishment of two full size playing pitches and existing natural woodlands;
 - iv. **Listed Buildings** - Retention of the main Red Hall buildings and their curtilage.

i. Scale and Type of Development

- 3.4.12 The scale of development is based on an assumed mix of 3, 4, and 5 bed family homes that would maximise values on the site, with a focus on the larger properties. On this basis an assumed density of 30 dwellings per hectare is being applied. Further consideration needs to be given to housing types, densities and the range of housing mix, including affordable housing, which would be further tested as and when marketing of the site can take place.
- 3.4.13 The developable area of the site – 12.5 ha – has been identified as a product of the possible housing densities, the greenspace requirement arising and the need to accommodate the ELOR.

ii. Highways & Accessibility

- 3.4.14 The completed ELOR feasibility study will provide further clarity on the most appropriate route and design through the site, whilst maximising its development potential as a liveable neighbourhood. The route currently shown broadly follows the alignment indicated in drafts of the ELOR work, together with necessary sight lines to meet the highways design standards that would be required. High quality landscape buffers are envisaged as part of this to provide the necessary visual and environmental protection to the new developed areas. At its northern most point ELOR would take land from that part of the site known as the '5 acre field' which is outside of the UDP allocation in the green belt, but currently in operational nursery use. It would connect to the roundabout at the A58 joining up with the Northern Quadrant section of the road, with the precise location of this to be confirmed – there is potential that it could take some land from the Red Hall site in order to ensure the most appropriate alignment on the A58 itself.

- 3.4.15 The highway objectives for the road include the need to perform effectively as a strategic orbital route so that it diverts traffic away from the existing road network and relieves congestion on the existing ORR. As such the location of the roundabout at the outer ring road may also need further consideration to ensure this objective can be met and to support potential longer term improvements to the outer ring road west of the roundabout. This might entail a route and ring road connection further to the north, which could increase the developable land on site but would involve land take from the greenbelt and possibly the need for land acquisitions. This does not currently form part of the concept plan.
- 3.4.16 Indicative internal routes have also been shown on the proposals, with two means of vehicular access to the site. Further detailing will be required to show pedestrian and cycling connectivity into and across the site and how these link up with strategic routes in and around the East Leeds area, so that non-motorised modes of transport are safe, attractive and accessible as a choice for local travel. Further work will be required to establish the potential for bus routes through the site.

iii. Greenspace

- 3.4.17 The majority of the greenspace proposed for the development is shown on the outer edge of ELOR adjoining a retained existing mature woodland area at the north west of the site. Access to this would be gained from the site at the two proposed junction points in the ELOR at the outer ring road and A58, to allow safe pedestrian and cycle movements. The amount of greenspace for the site would be based on the planning policy requirements for the number and type of homes that would be built. Part of this provision is proposed for the '5 acre field', reclaiming this brownfield use in the greenbelt.
- 3.4.18 This greenspace would play several roles. As well as providing green amenity space for the new development, it would offer a high quality area of landscaping between ELOR and properties on Whinmoor Lane and the open countryside. The green space would also form part of a wider East Leeds Extension network, connecting southwards to Roundhay Park, westwards through greenspaces provided in the Northern Quadrant development (including a potential new country park) and ultimately to the new Green Park in the south of the area at Austhorpe/Cross Gates.
- 3.4.19 In addition, it is proposed to retain and refurbish at least two playing pitches at Red Hall with associated access, changing and parking facilities. This would be accommodated on site with associated access, changing and parking facilities. The provision of pitches would be in addition to the greenspace requirement arising from any residential development of the site, but these would also be available for informal use. The remaining three pitches previously laid out at Red Hall would be re-provided at Whinmoor Grange alongside the nursery and cemetery developments, as per the Informal Planning Statement agreed by Executive Board in October 2011. The new pitches at Whinmoor Grange would also form part of the wider green space network.

iv. **Listed Buildings**

- 3.4.20 The original Red Hall listed buildings are an important local landmark in the area. Their setting and views of them will need to be respected in any development of the surrounding land to ensure the history of the site is reflected in its future design and layout. The prominence to be given to the buildings and the need to enhance their setting will provide a benchmark for the quality of design that will be expected.
- 3.4.21 Under the feasibility budget approved by Executive Board in May 2012, initial site checks have been undertaken at Red Hall but further technical work is required to inform how the proposed development principles could be taken forward into a more detailed proposition, taking site and infrastructure constraints into account.
- 3.4.22 It is known that areas of the Red Hall site are affected by poor drainage and consideration needs to be given to this as part of a development proposition as well as how any cumulative impact will be managed when other development across the area is taken into consideration. A drainage study is being commissioned to inform the development scope and infrastructure costs.
- 3.4.23 Feasibility work is also being undertaken to establish ground conditions, design, layout and deliverability principles for provision of three pitches at Whinmoor Grange, so that the overall pitch provision strategy across the two sites can be confirmed.
- 3.4.24 Subject to Executive Board consideration of the draft development principles set out here and further technical work, the concept plan at Appendix 3 will be refined and eventually form a key element of a draft Informal Planning Statement. This will need to be developed in consultation with Members and the community prior to consideration by Executive Board and eventual adoption to guide future planning applications, the sale and development of the site. It would cover the development principles outlined in this report, to ensure clarity on the requirements for greenspace, pitches, scale and type of development, highways, pedestrian and cycle movement, as well as more detailed design guidance that will evolve as the work and dialogue with stakeholders progresses.
- 3.4.25 It is intended that the key development principles and planning issues arising are reported to City Plans Panel for information, as a precursor to the production of the Informal Planning Statement.
- 3.4.26 The suggested process for moving the Red Hall site development forward is as follows:

Aug-Dec 2013	Initial technical studies commissioned and completed
Sept 2013	Report principles to City Plans Panel
Jan 2014	First draft of Informal Planning Statement completed
Feb 2014	Ward Member consultation
March 2014	Revised draft for community consultation
June 2014	Informal Planning Statement to Executive Board

- 3.4.27 Following consideration of the Informal Planning Statement for the site and subject to Executive Board approvals, the site will be marketed for disposal. Site disposal would not actually take place until the current Red Hall operational facilities and playing pitches are relocated to Whinmoor (as previously agreed at Executive Board in May 2012), when vacant possession can be guaranteed. It is currently estimated that this work will be completed by the end of 2016.
- 3.4.28 Executive Board is asked to note progress being made on the feasibility work and agree to the outline development principles set out above. It is also asked to agree the timetable and process for approval of the Informal Planning Statement.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 The principle of relocating a horticultural nursery from Red Hall to Whinmoor Grange has been subject to consultation through the process of determining a revised Whinmoor Grange Informal Planning Statement. This process included consultation with Crossgates & Whinmoor and Harewood ward members and a number of public meetings and drop in sessions.
- 4.1.2 The feedback from that consultation was shared with Executive Board on the 12th October 2011. Specific feedback from this consultation relating to the potential development of a horticultural nursery at this site has been used to inform a brief for consultants prior to commencement of design work. This includes the need to incorporate appropriate planting to screen the nursery within the site.
- 4.1.3 Further consultation will be undertaken on the proposals for Whinmoor Grange as part of the design process and the outcome of this will be included in future reports to Executive Board.
- 4.1.4 The Red Hall concept plan at **Appendix 3** has been brought forward in consultation with the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning & Support Services and the Executive Member for Economy & Development.
- 4.1.5 Crossgates and Whinmoor Ward Members have also been consulted on the key development principles and are supportive of these, along with the intent to bring the site forward for development, subject to further input into the Informal Planning Statement, particularly in regard to the location of retained pitches.
- 4.1.6 The Red Hall concept plan has also been presented at the 5th August East Leeds Regeneration Board meeting, where members were supported the overall approach and the contribution to wider strategic objectives for the area.
- 4.1.7 There have not to date been any substantive proposals on which public consultation could have been carried out. Further stakeholder and public engagement will be undertaken on the principles of development and on the Informal Planning Statement as it is developed in accordance with the programme proposed. Further reports to Executive Board will provide details of this so there is clear evidence that local people and others who may be affected by development of the site have been able to influence the proposals.

4.2 **Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

- 4.2.1 Separate equality, diversity cohesion and integration screening exercises have been carried out for the initiation of the design process for relocating the horticultural nursery to Whinmoor Grange and for the initiation of the feasibility work for the redevelopment of Red Hall.
- 4.2.2 A copy of each the EDCI screening forms is included in **Appendix 4**. In both cases the screening has confirmed that equality, diversity, cohesion and integration considerations have been effectively considered and that a full impact assessment was not required at this stage of development, although this may be required in the future.
- 4.2.3 The screenings will be revisited at the next review points in each project, with particular reference to the need to consider local stakeholder and interest groups that may be affected by the more detailed proposals.

4.3 **Council policies and City Priorities**

- 4.3.1 The Vision for Leeds 2011 to 2030 is to be the best city in the UK by 2030. It has specific aims that the economy will be prosperous and sustainable and that all Leeds' communities will be successful, where there are high quality buildings, places and green spaces, which are clean, looked after and respect the City's heritage.
- 4.3.2 The Vision states that Leeds will be the best city to live where people have good quality, reliable public transport and access to walking and cycling routes. It will be a city where housing growth is sustainable and local people benefit from regeneration investment.
- 4.3.3 The Best Council plan sets out a new leadership style of civic enterprise, where the council becomes more enterprising, businesses and partners become more civic.
- 4.3.4 The use of Council owned land and changes to where and how services are delivered proposed in this report supports the Vision for Leeds and Best Council Plan by contributing to housing growth, boosting the local economy and generating income for the Council. The proposed development of Red Hall particularly supports the Sustainable and Inclusive Growth strand of the Plan, whilst the capacity to efficiently produce horticultural produce in house will allow the continuation of high standards across Leeds parks, green space, streetscapes and civic areas.

4.4 **Resources and value for money**

- 4.4.1 At its meeting in May 2012 Executive Board approved a budget of £200,000 to obtain technical advice for Red Hall and Whinmoor Feasibility studies. This work is now progressing (capital scheme number 16442/000/000) and a breakdown of budget allocation is as follows:

£150,000 - Feasibility and detailed design on nursery relocation from Red Hall to Whinmoor (details of this are included in the separate report to the Board);

£25,000 - Technical studies, including drainage study at Red Hall to inform the Informal Planning Statement;

£25,000 - Feasibility on playing pitch and changing facilities provision at Whinmoor.

4.4.2 Stage 1 checks (local searches and ground conditions) for both sites have now been completed.

4.4.3 The disposal of Red Hall will generate a capital receipt for the Council. The May 2012 Executive Board report assumed that a proportion of this would be used to fund the relocation of operational facilities from Red Hall to Whinmoor as per the agreed relocation strategy.

4.4.4 The disposal receipt will also need to take into account planning costs, abnormal site costs and infrastructure costs including contribution to the provision of ELOR. Valuation work will be undertaken as the work to produce the Informal Planning Statement progresses, informed by the outcome of further technical work and its impact on the development scope/capacity.

4.5 **Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

4.5.1 There are no legal implications to this report as officers are seeking Executive Board's approval to commence the process to detail development opportunities on Council-owned land and to consult with stakeholders. There will be a subsequent report to Executive Board which will address concerns/issues raised and any legal implications.

4.6 **Risk Management**

4.6.1 The design brief for Whinmoor Grange will include the need to identify and mitigate any site or construction risks at the earliest possible stage. Any capital construction project that is agreed for Whinmoor Grange will be managed by an officer from Leeds City Council Asset Management service with support from the Parks and Countryside service. A risk register will be maintained throughout the project.

4.6.2 There are two broad risks related to the future development of Red Hall. The first is that there are technical constraints on-site that have an unforeseen impact on the viability of housing development or which significantly reduce the potential capital receipt. This will be mitigated by the early feasibility work that is underway to establish site conditions; this will be further detailed to ensure the technical solutions are known and fed into the Informal Planning Statement for the site so that the Council is fully aware of the cost implications and any potential purchasers can make a fully informed offer on a best consideration basis.

- 4.6.3 The second broad risk is that the housing market conditions in 2016 are currently uncertain and it may not prove an optimal time to sell, in view of the potential for a greater receipt at a later date. It will be important to balance the timing of disposal and development with the need to provide infrastructure such as ELOR as part of the Council's approach to leading and facilitating the sustainable development of the wider East Leeds Extension area.
- 4.6.4 Market conditions and issues relating to the timing of disposal will continue to be monitored and reported back to Executive Board for consideration.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The relocation of the horticultural nursery facility from Red Hall to Whinmoor Grange will support the development of an informal planning statement for Red Hall and ultimately allow the authority to bring the site to market for disposal with vacant possession.
- 5.2 A business review undertaken by the Parks and Countryside service supports the principle of relocating the nursery to Whinmoor Grange. The relocation of the nursery and construction of a new facility presents a unique opportunity to construct a more efficient facility on a 40% smaller footprint with improved visitor focus and trading opportunities whilst emphasising the requirement to maintain current productive capacity.
- 5.3 The Council's land at Red Hall represents an important strategic disposal opportunity, where there is potential to realise a significant receipt to support the capital programme and core services; to fund the re-provision of modernised Council services and facilities; to act as a catalyst to the provision of critical local infrastructure; and to support housing growth through the creation of a new high quality residential neighbourhood.
- 5.4 Feasibility work has commenced to enable these opportunities to be more fully detailed and consulted on in an Informal Planning Statement, which would be used to guide future planning applications, the sale and development of the site. A programme is proposed which would result in a draft of this statement being presented to Executive Board in the summer of 2014. Disposal of the site would be subject to further consideration by Executive Board and further advice on market conditions when the site is expected to be vacated in 2016.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 Executive Board is asked to:
- a. approve the use of land at Whinmoor Grange to develop a replacement horticultural nursery;
 - b. approve commencement of the design and site layout of a circa 6 hectare horticultural nursery facility and ancillary facilities at Whinmoor Grange to RIBA stage D, funded from existing budget provision (Capital Scheme No. 16442), indicating how this would relate to adjoining parts of the site;

- c. that a further report be brought back to Executive Board in the form of a Design and Cost report, outlining the processes involved in progressing the development of a horticultural nursery at Whinmoor along with further detail on funding;
- d. note the progress on feasibility work to inform the development of the Red Hall site;
- e. consider and confirm the key development principles set out in the report and accompanying concept plan, including the retention of two pitches on site;
- f. agree to the process and timetable for the production of a draft Informal Planning Statement to guide future planning applications, disposal and development of the site for housing and related infrastructure, to include requirements for greenspace, scale and type of development, highways, pedestrian and cycle movement, as well as more detailed design guidance.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.