

Report of Director City Development

Report to Executive Board

Date: 4th September 2013

Subject: Belle Isle and Middleton Neighbourhood Framework

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Middleton Park	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input 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? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. This report seeks Executive Board approval of the Belle Isle and Middleton Neighbourhood Framework which will support new development and wider investment.
2. The Neighbourhood Framework will help promote development opportunities to developers, guide development schemes, inform the determination of planning applications and identify wider improvements to ensure that new development is sustainable and provides benefits to the wider community.
3. Extensive input from local stakeholders and the wider community has helped to ensure that the framework effectively sets out the community's aspiration for change.
4. The document identifies opportunities for housing development, improvements to open space and green connectivity, improved linkages to nearby facilities and employment areas particularly by bus to help people access jobs, and sets out the likely need for new schools and medical facilities to meet growing demand as a result of population growth and new housing development.
5. Ward members have been involved throughout the preparation of the framework, have inputted to the drafting of the document and are supportive of the proposals included for development and investment.

Recommendations:

Executive Board is asked to note the contents of this report and:

- (i) Approve the Belle Isle and Middleton Neighbourhood Framework;
- (ii) Agree to the Belle Isle and Middleton Neighbourhood Framework being used to inform the emerging site allocation plan as part of the local plan making process;
- (iii) Agree to the Belle Isle and Middleton Neighbourhood Framework being used to inform, guide and be used as a material consideration when determining planning applications.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the work undertaken to prepare a Neighbourhood Framework for Belle Isle and Middleton and sets out the primary proposals included within the document.
- 1.2 This report seeks Executive Board's approval of the neighbourhood framework to set out the community's regeneration ambitions, help to promote the development opportunities in the area to developers, be used to inform the emerging Site Allocations Plan, and become a material consideration when determining planning applications.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Belle Isle and Middleton consist of a mixture of inter and post war housing estates to the south of Leeds City Centre. The original estates were predominantly built in the 1930s with the area expanding rapidly since the 2nd world war. The Council owns a large amount of cleared and vacant land across Belle Isle and Middleton, 10 ha of which has been included in the Brownfield Land Programme approved by Executive Board in January 2013. It is currently anticipated that the first Middleton sites in this programme will be prepared for marketing and disposal in 2014 with development taking place in subsequent years. There are also other previously developed sites in the area such as the former Merlyn Rees School site and smaller infill opportunities.
- 2.2 Over the last 15 years there has been considerable housing development in areas adjoining the traditional Belle Isle and Middleton estates, though this has been limited in the extent to which it has promoted integration between new and old neighbourhoods. The needs of the area continue to change with an aging population, and a high number of people out of work in part due to poor health. To help to guide and promote future development in the area and to ensure the benefits of investment are realised as part of an integrated approach to regeneration, a strategy is required which helps set out local aspirations for change, the delivery of which could be supported by new development through S106 contributions and the Community Infrastructure Levy.
- 2.3 On this basis, a Neighbourhood Framework has been prepared for Belle Isle and Middleton which:
 - accompanies and strengthens existing neighbourhood management and partnership work by articulating the community and stakeholders aspirations for physical changes and new development;
 - promotes development opportunities to potential investors and developers;
 - provides guidance to developers about the key principles for future development;
 - will inform the preparation of the Site Allocation Plan; and
 - will be used as a material consideration when determining planning applications.
- 2.4 The Localism Act provides the communities in areas such as Belle Isle and Middleton with the opportunity to come together to lead the preparation of a

Neighbourhood Plan. Such an interest has not emerged in the area to date and in this absence, it was considered appropriate for the Council to prepare a document which can effectively promote its assets in a timely way, as the property market recovers. The Framework could form the basis for any future work on a Neighbourhood Plan by the local community should a Neighbourhood Forum be established for all or part of the area.

- 2.5 The Neighbourhood Framework will build upon the 2008 Middleton Regeneration Strategy and the 2009 Middleton masterplan which set out key design principles for new housing in the area. The 2011 Investment Strategy for South Leeds also informs this framework – this set out broad development and investment opportunities across the wider south Leeds area, including ideas for further growth along the Dewsbury Road corridor as promoted by a number of significant land owners. The framework will provide more detail about possible future development in Belle Isle and Middleton and will identify how planning contributions from developments in adjoining areas can deliver improvements in the Belle Isle and Middleton.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 Preparation of the Neighbourhood Framework commenced in July 2012 when a number of officer and stakeholder workshops were held to understand the issues, challenges and opportunities facing Belle Isle and Middleton and the work already underway. Socio economic data was also reviewed to better understand how the area works. This allowed some initial ideas to be considered and wider public engagement to be undertaken in November 2012. Following this, the framework was prepared informed by the responses received.
- 3.2 The draft framework was consulted on in March 2013 following which a small number of further changes have been made to the document.
- 3.3 Once approved, the framework will be formally published and disseminated to partner organisations, community groups and made available through the Council's website. The Council will use the framework to promote the area to developers and guide proposals as they emerge. This will assist the delivery of the sites included in the brownfield land programme as well as helping to bring forward other investment as set out in the document. The framework will also support the work of the Belle Isle and Middleton Neighbourhood Improvement Board.
- 3.4 As the document sets out an overarching vision and high level development and investment opportunities, there is further work to be done to define the nature of individual schemes. Where development sites have been identified which are in Council ownership, planning briefs or statements will be prepared and agreed which set out the acceptable nature of development, known site constraints, and key principles relating to access and greenspace for example, prior to sites being offered on the open market. There are also further opportunities for community involvement where greenspace investment has been identified and where green leisure uses already take place to ensure that future changes come forward in a way which is supported by local residents.
- 3.5 The key elements of the framework are set out in the following paragraphs:

Housing

- 3.6 There are a number of cleared housing sites and other infill redevelopment opportunities promoted totalling c35ha. This includes a small amount of greenbelt land to the south western edge of Middleton. The principle of selective greenbelt release is supported in the Core Strategy, but detailed proposals to change greenbelt boundaries will be considered through the site allocation process. This could be achieved in this area with the loss of low grade agricultural land. Some of the sites identified lend themselves for older people's housing which in turn will help to release more houses in the area for families.

Economy

- 3.7 There is a need to strengthen the existing local centres and neighbourhood shops within the area. Middleton Park Circus and Middleton District Centre will both be strengthened through the expected development of Asda and Aldi, which will have the added benefit of providing a wider retail offer and in particular a more extensive range of fresh, healthier food. Both will provide opportunities for local employment and training for people in Belle Isle and Middleton. Future developments within the area and in surrounding areas should also commit to employing local people both during construction and operation to maximise opportunities for local people. Improving links to surrounding areas is therefore critical to helping people get to new jobs in adjoining areas such as the Dewsbury Road corridor, White Rose Centre and the Aire Valley.
- 3.8 To complement the proposed new stores, the Middleton Retail Park must be sustained by creating a better visitor experience while a site as been identified in this area to create a family friendly restaurant, something which is missing from the area. Public realm and streetscape enhancements are required to improve other shopping areas including Middleton Park Circus and some of the neighbourhood centres across the area, to help to make them more attractive to businesses and customers.

Greenspace

- 3.9 Improvements to greenspace and public realm and better pedestrian and cycle connections will help to improve the liveability of the area whilst also providing improvements to health and well-being. Middleton Park has already been improved but should be invested in further to ensure it is well used by residents and visitors from outside of the area. The routes across the park to nearby attractions such as John Charles Centre for Sport should also be improved and well signed to make it more attractive for residents to use these facilities and pursue a healthier lifestyle.
- 3.10 Contributions from new development should be used to invest into existing greenspace rather than provide significant new areas- the area is currently well served with open space but its quality and usability can be improved. However, on some of the larger development sites, discussions will need to take place as detailed proposals are sought, about the way in which the Garden City ethos can be effectively incorporated and how this may relate to the provision of any new greenspace. Equally the provision of fewer but better and more accessible play areas and facilities for young people is supported by local residents. Such

improvements and improved access to greenspace and nearby attractions will help to promote more active and physical recreation and make the area more child friendly.

- 3.11 Opportunities have been identified for community led improvements which could include the creation of community gardens and local food growing schemes. This will not only improve the appearance of the area but has the potential to provide significant health benefits for residents. Such approaches could also be progressed on an interim basis on some of the cleared sites identified for redevelopment.

Connectivity

- 3.12 Bus services to the city centre are good, but there are no services to nearby areas of employment such as White Rose Shopping Centre. New services should be introduced to help people visit this centre for leisure and work purposes. Routes to other parts of south Leeds and the Aire Valley should also be introduced. The revised New Generation Transport (NGT) route now runs through Belle Isle Circus and north towards the city centre along Belle Isle Road. This will provide greater benefits to the area with the introduction of frequent and fast services to the city centre and north Leeds and will provide further improvements to liveability.
- 3.13 A 'green loop' around the area is proposed which will improve accessibility to adjoining areas and facilities, including centres of employment. This will also contribute to the green setting of the area and local residential amenity.

Community Facilities

- 3.14 There are a number of community buildings within the area providing services run by the Council and partners. These facilities range in quality, usage and sustainability and some need to be better promoted to maximise their benefit to the local area. The Council is currently reviewing assets across the city and the framework will inform this work, so that any changes proposed to facilities and services take place in a co-ordinated way in the context of wider neighbourhood improvements.
- 3.15 The demand for other public services will increase as the population grows and new development is realised. The demand for health related services will increase and may require more surgery provision. The area already benefits from the medical services provided at the St George's Centre.
- 3.16 More school places will be required and whilst this in part may be delivered through the extension of existing schools, new schools may also be required. Some of the housing development sites lend themselves to new schools and discussions are ongoing with Children's Services about which may be most appropriate.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 Stakeholder workshops were undertaken in June and July 2012 to discuss the issues facing Belle Isle and Middleton and the ongoing work to improve the area. These workshops involved officers from across the Council, Aire Valley Homes and Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisations (BITMO), partners such as the police and housing associations, and third sector organisations such as faith groups, Health for All and Groundwork. These workshops helped to inform initial ideas about the scope for new development and the wider improvements that could be supported by this to help to further improve the area.
- 4.2 A public engagement programme followed in November 2012. Using Aire Valley Homes' outreach bus, a touring exhibition was taken throughout the area over the course of a week, with pre-advertised stops at shopping areas, schools and other community facilities, the purpose being to engage local people to better understand the area from a resident and community perspective and to capture views on potential changes.
- 4.3 Discussions took place with over 150 people, from which it was clear that many residents have positive views about the area, feel that there is a close-knit community and that there are good bus services to the city centre. However, concerns were also raised about the quality and maintenance of play areas and open space and levels of anti-social behaviour. The following were identified as being the key priorities for change:
- Better quality play areas;
 - More housing in the area, particularly affordable housing;
 - Better policing;
 - Improved traffic calming measures;
 - The need for a family friendly pub;
 - Improvements to bus services, in particular the introduction of services to White Rose shopping centre;
 - The need to better promote public services and existing facilities in the area.
- 4.3.2 Further public consultation took place in March 2013 on the draft document. This included a meeting with lead members of community groups and two drop in sessions for the wider community. Respondents were broadly supportive of the principles which had emerged and were pleased that this form of document had been prepared. Most comments related to the proposal to create a vehicular route between the original Middleton estate and New Forest Village.
- 4.3.3 Middleton Park ward members have been closely involved throughout the preparation of the Framework, have contributed to the drafting of the document and are supportive of the overall development and wider investment opportunities identified.
- 4.3.4 The Executive Member for Development & Economy and Executive Member for Neighbourhoods Planning and Support Services have both been briefed on the Neighbourhood Framework and are supportive of the approach being taken to bring forward new development in this area.

4.4 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.4.1 An Equality Impact screening was completed for the engagement and consultation phase of the neighbourhood Framework to ensure that effective community engagement took place.

Further screening took place prior to Executive Board report submission to ensure that equality diversity cohesion and integration issues raised continue to receive appropriate consideration. This is attached at appendix 1 of this report.

4.5 Council policies and City Priorities

- 4.5.1 The Neighbourhood Framework will provide a basis for further work in delivering against a number of the City Priorities including Housing and Regeneration, Sustainable Economy and Culture, and Safer and Stronger Communities.

4.6 Resources and value for money

- 4.6.1 No specific resources have been identified to support the preparation of the neighbourhood frameworks. Officer time from within the Regeneration Programmes Division, Area Support, Planning and the Sustainable Design Unit has been met from within existing resources. Costs of community consultation, printing and any other work to inform the preparation of the frameworks has been met by the Regeneration Programmes Division budget.
- 4.6.2 The majority of development sites identified in the framework are Council owned and could provide a capital receipt for the Council. There are costs associated with the implementation of some of the wider improvements identified in the framework such as greenspace enhancements. Possible grant funding sources and the use of planning contributions will assist with the delivery of such work.

4.7 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.7.1 There are no specific legal implications. Legal input will be required as the Council engages with developers to bring forward schemes.

4.8 Risk Management

- 4.8.1 The bringing together of the Framework has been managed according to the principles of the Council's DSC project management methodology. The principle risks associated with this work concern the need to ensure proper engagement with local stakeholders and to effectively identify the full range of local issues such that the Framework has a basis in fact and is deliverable.
- 4.8.2 The drafting of the framework is the product of robust research and consultation and has been brought forward with full reference to the Council's activities in reviewing development potential. As such it is considered that there are minimal risks to the Council in agreeing the Framework as a tool for assisting planning and guiding development in the area.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The Council owns a number of brownfield sites in the Belle Isle and Middleton areas which could come forward for development as part of a co-ordinated regeneration strategy for the area.
- 5.2 To ensure the local regeneration vision is clear, to promote the area to developers, inform the emerging site allocations plan and assist in the determination of planning applications a Neighbourhood Framework has been prepared setting out where new housing could be developed and the other investment needs in the area to ensure that all residents benefit.
- 5.3 The Framework has been prepared with substantial input from ward members and the local community. Once approved, the document will be disseminated widely and published on the Council website and will assist the work of the Belle Isle and Middleton Neighbourhood Improvement Board.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 Executive Board is asked to note the contents of this report and:
- (i) Approve the Belle Isle and Middleton Neighbourhood Framework;
 - (ii) Agree to the Belle Isle and Middleton Neighbourhood Framework being used to inform the emerging site allocation plan as part of the local plan making process;
 - (iii) Agree to the Belle Isle and Middleton Neighbourhood Framework being used to inform, guide and be used as a material consideration when determining planning applications.

7 Appendix

- 7.1 Belle Isle and Middleton Neighbourhood Framework

8 Background documents¹

- 8.1 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.