

Report of Director City Development

Report to Executive Board

Date: 25 June 2014

Subject: Beckhill Neighbourhood Framework

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Chapel Allerton	<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 to consult on the draft Beckhill Neighbourhood Framework which will support new development and wider investment on the estate. The Neighbourhood Framework provides a strategic context for the area and contributes to the Best Council Plan, in particular promoting sustainable & inclusive economic growth.
2. The Neighbourhood Framework will help to promote development opportunities to developers, guide development schemes, inform the determination of planning applications and identifies wider improvements to maximise the benefits of new development across the estate whilst reducing the impact of some of the urban design challenges which are presented.
3. Engagement with local stakeholders and the wider community has helped to ensure that the framework effectively sets out the community's aspiration for change. In addition, ward members have been closely involved and are supportive of the proposals included in the document.
4. The document identifies three development sites along with environmental, recreational and greenspace improvements. The neighbourhood improvements are proposed to be funded via S106 planning contributions and the Housing Revenue Account.

Recommendations:

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

- (i) Approve that the Chief Asset Management & Regeneration Officer undertakes public consultation on the draft Beckhill Neighbourhood Framework in July 2014 with a further report to be presented to Executive Board by October with any proposed changes to the Framework and to seek approval to the final document.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the work undertaken to prepare a Neighbourhood Framework for Beckhills and sets out the proposals included within the document. It also seeks Executive Board's approval of the neighbourhood framework for consultation and identifies the possible delivery and funding approach to ensure the neighbourhood improvements identified within the document can be achieved.

2 Background information

- 2.1 The Beckhill Estate is located to the south of Meanwood and was developed in the 1970s using a Radburn approach which is characterised by parking courts with pedestrian access to properties. Experience in Leeds shows that such layouts are far from ideal with problems further exacerbated in the Beckhills due to the topography on which the estate is built. The dense layout has led to the creation of numerous narrow and steep ginnels many with large numbers of substandard steps and limited overlooking from adjoining properties. This creates an intimidating and illegible layout, with access challenges and personal safety issues, particularly for the elderly and mobility impaired.
- 2.2 A number of large concrete retaining walls were also constructed to help to maximise the density of development, but these too create a negative impression of the area. The location of open space and the play area specifically is not well overlooked due to the topography of the area resulting in it being poorly used and attracting anti-social behaviour.
- 2.3 Following the demolition of a number of buildings in the area, there is a total of 4.53ha of brownfield land available for redevelopment. This includes the former Miles Hill Primary School and adjacent cleared housing land on Beckhill Approach. The cleared housing site was included as part of the Round 6 Housing PFI proposals for elderly housing in 2010, but was not progressed following the government's withdrawal of the Round 6 PFI programme arising from the Comprehensive Spending Review later that year. Whilst there has been a desire by the Council to secure development of both sites at an earlier stage, the housing market and wider economy have limited the potential to bring the sites forward.
- 2.4 The final cleared site is the former Hilltop pub site on Beckhill Grove. The site is included in the Council's Brownfield Land Programme, while the Miles Hill school site and adjacent cleared housing land is included within the Capital Receipt Programme.
- 2.5 Approval for the demolition of 67-141 Beckhill Avenue, which is known locally as the 'Banana Block' was granted in 2005. However, this has not been progressed as there was no long term strategy for the area. However, as residents have left, homes have remained void and work is progressing to rehouse the remaining residents.
- 2.6 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. On this basis, a Neighbourhood Framework has been prepared for the estate 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; and
- will be used as a material consideration when determining planning applications.

2.7 The Localism Act provides communities in areas such as the Beckhills 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. However, 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 the area.

3 Main issues

3.1 It is important that redevelopment proposals come forward in a coordinated way and that new development is well integrated with existing properties. There is also an opportunity to ensure the benefits of new development are felt across the wider area. With this in mind, work on the Neighbourhood Framework commenced in September 2013 with officers from across the Council coming together to understand the range of initiatives currently being progressed, review the challenges facing the area and explore the potential for change. Previous public consultation responses were also reviewed to allow a draft framework to be prepared.

3.2 Public consultation was undertaken in February 2014 which sought views from residents about the ideas to be incorporated within the framework. Some of the proposals were amended as a result of the consultation. It is now proposed to undertake further public consultation before the final version is presented to Executive Board for approval. Once approved, the Neighbourhood Framework will be formally published and disseminated to partner organisations and community groups, and made available through the Council's website. The Council will use the framework to promote the three development sites, guide proposals as they emerge, direct investment into the area and support the determination of planning applications.

3.3 The key elements of the framework are set out in the following paragraphs:

Housing

3.4 3 sites have been identified for the provision of new housing totalling c5ha. This includes a small amount of N1 greenspace as defined in the UDP. This will be offset by enhancements to more usable areas of open space and the creation of

new greenspace achieved as a result of the demolition of 67-141 Beckhill Avenue known locally as the 'banana block'.

Beckhill Approach

- 3.5 A number of improvements have been identified for the Beckhill Approach area which is recognised to be the most challenging part of the Beckhills due to its topography and density of housing. In particular the concrete retaining wall provides a negative image and perception of the area. The range of improvements are set out below:
- The height of the retaining wall will be reduced and new railings installed. This will increase safety and improve appearance and perception of the area. This will have a significant impact upon how developers view the Beckhill Approach housing site and the relationship the new development has to existing properties.
 - Improved boundary fences to properties to improve the appearance of the area and the sense of defensible space. This will be targeted to the Council owned properties, whilst efforts can also be made to encourage private owners to make improvements where required.
 - Improvements to footpaths and steps to ensure that they are safe and meet current standards. This will also improve the appearance of the area.

Greenspace and Recreation

- 3.6 A range of greenspace improvements have been identified to ensure that the open space which exists in the area is attractive and useable:
- Creation of an east/west green corridor through the Miles Hill Primary School and Beckhill Approach development sites to improve connectivity from Stainbeck Road into the Beckhill area. This corridor can include:
 - A new or improved Multi Use Games Area (MUGA); and
 - New play area which will involve the relocation of the facility from the top of Miles Hill.
 - A new trim trail or outdoor gym within the Stainbeck open space corridor adjacent to the Miles Hill Primary School and Beckhill Approach development sites.
 - Improvements to existing areas of open space to give them more of a function/ purpose. This could include the opportunity to create community gardens.
 - Improve footpath and pedestrian connectivity throughout the area by renewing steps and repairing footpaths, whilst also improving connectivity and signage to adjoining areas of open space.
 - Demolition of the 'Banana Block' on Beckhill Avenue with the cleared site being graded out and landscaped. This will open up views to Miles Hill from the lower reaches of the estate, improving both visual and physical connectivity throughout the area.

Other Environmental/ Neighbourhood Improvements

- 3.7 A variety of further improvements have been identified which will further improve the liveability of the Beckhill area:

- The street lighting across the area has been replaced as part of the street lighting PFI. However, the required standards have not been met consistently and further work is to be undertaken to deliver further improvements to the street lighting provision.
- Sites which have seen garages demolished are proposed for improvement through low level planting making them more visually attractive, but retaining their usability as car parking areas.
- An Integrated Waste Management Strategy is to be prepared by the Locality Team which will tackle the issue of waste and litter on the estate by identifying better waste collection processes including recycling collections.

3.8 Delivery

3.9 As set out in section 4, the delivery of the various improvements can be secured through the use of planning Contributions received from new development and the use of funds from the Housing Revenue Account.

3.10 The improvements will need to be prioritised and phased so that they can be programmed in line with funding availability. Given the need for investment into the Beckhill Approach area and the benefits these will provide the proposal is to prioritise improvements in this area. Many of these improvements could be funded through the Housing Revenue Account with changes to the retaining wall being given the highest priority due to the benefits this will provide through improving the public realm, safety and perception of the area.

3.11 The demolition of 67-141 Beckhill Avenue is likely to be progressed by the end of the current financial year once existing residents are rehoused. Within the same timescale progress will be made to bring the development sites to the market.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.2 The residents of the Beckhill estate have been consulted for a number of years about development opportunities and changes in the area. Engagement levels have gradually decreased as the community has become more sceptical about when they any improvements would be delivered. The historic consultation and engagement work was therefore used to underpin the preparation of a draft framework, rather than starting afresh.

4.3 The ideas for change and improvement were consulted on in early February 2014 through drop in sessions including a specific session with young people as well as door to door discussions with residents in the most difficult to reach parts of the estate. The Beckhill Improvement Group and ward members have also been involved throughout the process and have shaped and are supportive of the emerging ideas.

4.4 Through these discussions people said that they had a close family network nearby, the area is served by good public transport and that the views make it a pleasant place to live. However, concerns were expressed about the level of anti-social behaviour, litter and rubbish, poor environment, the condition of the

'Banana Block' on Beckhill Avenue, and the need for an improved play area and Multi-Use Games Area. Following the consultation, the framework was amended to reflect the comments received.

- 4.1 Discussions are taking place separately with residents at 67-141 Beckhill Avenue to explore their rehousing options, which will allow this building to be demolished.
- 4.2 It is now proposed to consult more widely on the draft neighbourhood framework to ensure that local residents and stakeholders are supportive of the changes identified. As part of this consultation process, some of the improvements will be set out in more detail, giving residents an opportunity to influence the way in which changes will be made.
- 4.3 In particular it is intended to engage with the full range of age groups in the area as part of this consultation to better understand and respond to concerns they may have in seeing a reconfiguration and redevelopment of the area. Young people will have certain aspirations for the provision of play and recreation space, whilst it is also recognised that there is an opportunity to overcome access and movement challenges currently posed by the estate layout for older people and to affect better linkages through the site to adjoining services and facilities.
- 4.4 Whilst the topography of the area creates a challenging environment for older people, 8.4% of the population are over the age of 65. For older adults on the estate the major risk factors to health have been highlighted as frailty such as sight loss, dementia, risk of falls, winter deaths and prevalence of long term conditions. These, alongside social and design factors, contribute to social isolation and social exclusion if their community environment is not suitable to their needs. This results in loneliness which then further contributes to significant poor physical and mental health problems in older people. As such consultation must seek to engage with older people through established networks and the framework must seek to help older people by improving movement, live independently and allow different age groups to work alongside each other.
- 4.5 The Executive Member for Transport & the Economy and Executive Member for Neighbourhoods Planning & Personnel have been briefed on the Neighbourhood Framework and are supportive of the emerging document and approach taken.

4.6 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.6.1 An Equality Impact screening was completed for the engagement and consultation phase of the neighbourhood Framework to ensure that effective community engagement took place.
- 4.6.2 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 with the appendix of this report. Equality and Diversity issues will continue to be considered as further consultation is undertaken and as specific schemes are prepared and delivered.

4.7 Council policies and City Priorities

- 4.7.1 The Neighbourhood Framework will provide a basis for further work in delivering against a number of priorities in the City Priority Plan including Housing and Regeneration, Sustainable Economy and Culture, and Safer and Stronger Communities.
- 4.7.2 It will also assist in directly delivering the Best Council Plan 2013-17 objective of 'promoting sustainable & inclusive economic growth', in particular the priority to maximise housing growth, through the disposal and development of new homes on the sites identified in the Framework.
- 4.7.3 There will be secondary benefits to the Best Council objectives of 'supporting communities and tackling poverty' through the positive changes to the area and the employment and training opportunities that will arise from implementation of the proposals in the framework (particularly in the construction trades) and to 'building a Child Friendly city', through the emphasis on new and improved green spaces for play and recreation.

4.8 Resources and value for money

- 4.8.1 The preparation of the neighbourhood framework has been met from existing resources within Asset Management and Regeneration, Area Support, Planning and the Sustainable Design Unit.
- 4.8.2 The development sites identified in the framework are Council owned and will generate a capital receipt for the Council. It is estimated that the implementation of some of the wider improvements identified in the framework such as greenspace, public realm and connectivity enhancements will cost in the region of £575,000. The improvements will be funded through planning contributions made from new developments and the Housing Revenue Account.
- 4.8.3 The works will be undertaken on a phased basis in line with funding availability. Work to the Beckhill Approach area will be prioritised given the improvements this will make to the public realm, safety and perception of the area.

4.9 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.9.1 The report is a Key Decision and is eligible for Call In.
- 4.9.2 There are no specific legal implications at this stage. Legal input will be required as the Council engages with developers to bring forward schemes.

4.10 Risk Management

- 4.10.1 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.
- 4.10.2 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 and investment in the area.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The draft Neighbourhood Framework for the Beckhill area provides development and design guidance for the three cleared sites; the former Miles Hill Primary School, former housing land on Beckhill Approach and the former Hilltop pub site on Beckhill Grove. It also provides a context for wider improvements in the area to ensure the benefits of new development are seen by existing residents.
- 5.2 The framework will ultimately support the marketing and disposal of the Council owned sites and will inform the design of new developments and support the planning determination process.
- 5.3 Consultation on the draft framework will now take place. As part of this process residents will also have an opportunity to influence how specific improvements are delivered.

6 Recommendations

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

- i) Approve that the Chief Asset Management & Regeneration Officer undertakes public consultation on the draft Beckhill Neighbourhood Framework in July 2014 with a further report to be presented to Executive Board by October with any proposed changes to the Framework and to seek approval to the final document.

7 Appendix

- 7.1 Draft Beckhill Neighbourhood Framework
- 7.2 Equality Impact Screening

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.