



## Report of the Chief Planning Officer

### *PLANS PANEL SOUTH AND WEST*

Date: 25 April 2013

Subject: POSITION STATEMENT - Little London PFI regeneration project

APPLICANT	DATE VALID	TARGET DATE
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<p><b>Electoral Wards Affected:</b></p> <p>Hyde Park and Woodhouse</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes    Ward Members consulted</p>
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<p><b>Specific Implications For:</b></p> <p>Equality and Diversity    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Community Cohesion    <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Narrowing the Gap    <input type="checkbox"/></p>
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### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**Members are asked to note the contents of this Position Statement in advance of revised proposals and planning applications being brought forward for the Little London Regeneration Area**

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION:**

- 1.1 This position statement is to update the Panel on revised proposals for Little London Community Hub, following detailed permission being granted for development of the area in March 2011. The permission for this part of the regeneration project comprised 7 retail units, a replacement housing office, community centre and some residential development of 12 flats. Since this time there have been significant changes to the PFI project in Little London following a Government spending review, which have involved the removal of the Community Hub which no longer forms part of the PFI project.
- 1.2 However, new proposals will be brought forward to develop the site through a revised approach, to include improved community facilities, primary school expansion, and new retail provision.
- 1.3 This position statement explains the background and history to the site and updates Plans Panel on proposals to move this site forward to delivery alongside and complementary to the PFI project.

## **2.0 Site and Surroundings**

- 2.1 The site is a rectangular area of land off Oatland Lane and Lovell Park Road at the heart of the Little London regeneration area. The site currently accommodates 7 council-owned run-down single storey retail units (with only 2 units occupied), a Neighbourhood Housing Office, community centre, car parking, play area and public open space. Little London Primary School adjoins the site.

## **3.0 Planning Background**

- 3.1 Members may be familiar with the original Little London PFI regeneration project. The project has aimed to deliver a long standing objective of the Council to help transform this area. The aims of the project have been:-
- To deal with the regeneration of the area in a holistic manner.
  - To develop sustainable communities to enable neighbourhood regeneration.
  - To encourage community, private and public interests to work together to deliver community regeneration to improve the diversity and quality of housing stock.
  - To deliver a mix of attractive and affordable housing for family purposes (new build housing and the refurbishment of over 800 council owned properties as well as other minor operations.)
  - To replace an existing commercial centre with an improved local centre providing retailing and community services including a new community centre and housing office.
  - To improve the overall accessibility, legibility and connectivity of the area.
  - To undertake a wide range of environmental improvements to ensure that greenspace is enhanced and is accessible, attractive to use and is located in the right place to ensure maximum community benefit is achieved.
- 3.2 In 2007 the Little London Development Framework (LLDF) was agreed at Plans Panel West as informal planning guidance to support the Housing PFI project which was at that time in the early stages of procurement. The LLDF is a planning framework that sets out broad regeneration principles for the area. The framework also provides a master plan context for a more detailed development guide for both short and medium term development. .The LLDF outlines this site as the heart of the community, with the opportunity to develop the site either side of the Greenspace area. The LLDF also shows a green corridor running through the site from the adjacent Carlton Gate site into the Oatland Green housing area and towards Meanwood Road.

- 3.3 Outline planning permission for the development of the wider Little London regeneration area was granted in 2008. The outline permission for the community hub was for 7 retail units, 1 housing office, 1 community centre and residential development.
- 3.4 In March 2011, a Reserved Matters application for the community hub was considered by Panel as part of a suite of eight applications submitted by the Preferred Bidder for the PFI project. These also included a reserved matters application for residential development (113 units) at Carlton Gate and residential development (12 units) at Oatland Lane (on the Community Hub site). At this same meeting, six full planning applications involving the refurbishment of dwelling houses and flats, new boundary walls, alley gates and landscaping relating to various neighbourhood areas were approved.

#### **4.0 Delivery Background**

- 4.1 The procurement of the Housing PFI project commenced in 2007, with the selection of a Preferred Bidder, (Sustainable Communities 4 Leeds) in 2010.
- 4.2 In March 2011 the Council was informed by the new Government of the implications for the national PFI housing programme of the November 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review, which required a fundamental review of the value for money (VFM) of those projects still in procurement.
- 4.3 The Council's response was submitted to the Government in May 2011 following detailed work with both it and the proposed Preferred Bidder. Changes to the project to enable the revised submission to meet new VFM benchmarks included removal of the Little London Community Hub redevelopment.
- 4.4 Following the removal of the Community Hub from the Housing PFI project, officers have sought an alternative means for the delivery of Little London Community hub outside of the Housing PFI project to ensure a full regeneration solution for the wider area. A letter to residents outlining continued commitment to the principles of the delivery of the community hub (i.e. improved retail and community facilities) was issued by the Executive Member in summer 2011.
- 4.5 At the Executive Board meeting of 15 February 2013. the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods submitted a report providing an update on the current position of the Little London and Beeston Hill and Holbeck PFI Housing project and detailing a chronology of its delayed procurement and the confirmation in January 2013 that the Treasury was no longer willing to accept the financial terms negotiated for the funding of the PFI project. It was resolved:
- (a) That the Council's continued commitment to securing PFI housing investment for the neighbourhoods of Little London, Beeston Hill and Holbeck be confirmed.
  - (b) That the current position on procurement of the project and the delays in reaching Financial Close be noted, and that approval be given for the strongest possible representations to be made to Government in clarifying and resolving its new requirements.
  - (c) That the separate regeneration projects that are underway or planned in the Beeston Hill, Holbeck and Little London areas be noted and supported.
  - (d) That the first call on the capital receipt from the sale of land at the Little

London Community Hub be made to fund the relocation of the Neighbourhood Housing Office and reprovision of new community centre facilities.

(e) That a further report setting out the confirmed financial position and a revised programme for financial close be reported to Executive Board at the earliest opportunity.

## **5.0 Revised proposals**

- 5.1 Alternative options for redevelopment of the site and review of the local facilities have been explored. Alongside this work the requirement for new primary school capacity in the area has emerged. At its meeting of December 2012 Executive Board approved publication of a statutory notice for expansion of Little London Primary school on the Community Hub site. The revised approach to the site therefore involves the expansion of the Primary School to 3 forms of entry, relocation of the Neighbourhood Housing Office (NHO) within the site, refurbishment or rebuild of the community centre and securing investment from a private retail concern to provide a new local convenience store. Under the revised approach there will be no residential development on the Community Hub site.
- 5.2 Feasibility work is currently underway to ascertain the land requirements for the expanded primary school and how the community centre and Neighbourhood Housing Office would be accommodated on-site. The existing Council-owned shops would be demolished to facilitate the expansion of the school and creation of new community buildings.
- 5.3 The site currently occupied by the NHO has been marketed for interest from retailers and the Council is in discussions with a national retailer regarding a sale and redevelopment of this part of the site. The NHO will occupy a temporary facility on-site (adjacent to the existing community centre) during this redevelopment process – a planning application for this was submitted in January 2013 and has now been approved.
- 5.4 The site feasibility work will be completed by April of this year, with a view to the school expansion being fully complete and open by Sept 2015. Subject to contract, the Council anticipates that the new retail facilities could be trading by early 2014, with the community centre and NHO complete later in 2014/early 2015. In order to inform the feasibility work for the hub and future planning applications for the various site uses, a revised Master plan is being developed for the site.
- 5.6 This Master plan will take the key principles for the site as outlined in the Little London Development Framework and adapt them for the new school development and alternative community and retail provision that would be delivered on the site. Work will continue to ensure linkages are made between the Hub and Housing PFI sites/ wider Little London area so that improved routes and connectivity is established in the neighborhood.
- 5.7 Individual planning applications will be submitted by various parties as plans develop for the site uses as outlined in this report. The anticipated timescales for these are as follows:

Retail – April 2013

School Expansion - September 2013

Community centre & Neighbourhood housing office - September 2013

**6.0 CONCLUSION:**

- 6.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this Position Statement in preparation for revised proposals and planning applications being brought forward for the Little London Regeneration Area Background Papers:

