

Report of Director City Development

Report to Executive Board

Date: 17 September 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 follows on from the report considered by Executive Board on 25th June and seeks approval to the Beckhill Neighbourhood Framework which will guide and support new development and wider investment in the Beckhill area of Meanwood. The Neighbourhood Framework provides a strategic guide for regeneration of the area and contributes to the Best Council Plan, in particular promoting sustainable & inclusive economic growth.
2. The Neighbourhood Framework will help to guide development, inform the determination of planning applications and identifies wider improvements to maximise the benefits of new development across the area whilst reducing the impact of some of the urban design challenges which are currently presented.
3. Engagement with local stakeholders and the local community has helped to ensure that the framework incorporates the community's aspiration for change. 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. Neighbourhood improvements will be funded over time via S106 planning contributions and the Housing Revenue Account will fund improvements which directly relate to the improvement of Council Housing and related land or assets.

Recommendations:

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

- (i) approve the Beckhill Neighbourhood Framework as informal planning guidance to support the area's regeneration;
- (ii) support the approach to prioritisation, phasing and funding the delivery improvements to the Beckhill area as set out in paragraphs 3.9 – 3.12, to be led by the Chief Asset Management and Regeneration Officer.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report follows on from the report considered by Executive Board on 25th June and provides an overview of the work undertaken to prepare a Neighbourhood Framework for the Beckhills area and sets out the final version of the document. Executive Board approval is sought for the Neighbourhood Framework as well as the phased approach to the delivery of improvements across the area.

2 Background information

- 2.1 On 25th June 2014, Executive Board considered a report which provided background information about the Beckhill area, the development sites that could be made available and the requirement for other investment to improve the environmental quality, appearance and perception of the area.
- 2.2 Neighbourhood Frameworks are prepared in areas where the Council has extensive land holdings, as a tool to support housing growth and wider investment into neighbourhoods which suffer from high levels of deprivation and environmental degradation. The Localism Act introduced the opportunity for local communities to prepare Neighbourhood Plans and while take up has been significant across Leeds, this has been predominantly in the outer areas. However, many of the Inner areas such as the Beckshills and Belle Isle and Middleton where a Neighbourhood Framework was approved by Executive Board in September 2013, present the greatest opportunity for change and need of regeneration, which must be effectively guided and managed to ensure that the regeneration benefits are fully realised.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 A draft Neighbourhood Framework was presented to Executive Board which had been prepared following initial consultation with local residents and stakeholders. Approval was granted for this to be consulted on further with residents and stakeholders.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 As set out in section 4, consultation took the form of drop in sessions at two locations within the Beckhills as well as at the Community Café at Stainbeck Church. Discussions took place with attendees about the proposals included within the draft framework and people were encouraged to complete a questionnaire.

3.2 There was strong support amongst the residents engaged in this consultation for the framework as a tool to support regeneration in the area and for the specific proposals included within the draft document. The views expressed were consistent with earlier views of residents and stakeholders which had previously been incorporated in the drafting of the Framework. There is therefore a good level of validation and support for the regeneration vision for the Beckhills and how it could be achieved.

3.3 As such, there have been few changes made to the version of the Framework presented to Executive Board on 25th June, with the most significant addition being the inclusion of the former shop site on Beckhill Approach as a focus for environmental improvements.

3.4 The key elements of the framework are as follows:

Housing

3.5 Three Council-owned sites have been identified for the provision of new housing amounting to c.5ha - the former Miles Hill Primary School, former housing land on Beckhill Approach and the former Hilltop pub site on Beckhill Grove. The site of the former pub includes a small amount of land currently allocated as N1 green space in the Unitary Development Plan. Development of this green space will need to be offset by enhancements to more usable areas of open space and the creation of new green space achieved as a result of the demolition of 67-141 Beckhill Avenue known locally as the 'banana block'.

Beckhill Approach

3.6 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 prominent concrete retaining wall contributes to a negative image and perception of the area and may deter private investment. The range of proposed improvements are set out below:

- the height of the retaining wall will be reduced and new railings installed. This will increase safety and improve the appearance and perception of the area. This will have a significant impact upon how developers view the Beckhill Approach housing site and the relationship future 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 and accessibility of the area, particularly for older people.

Green Space and Recreation

3.7 A range of green space 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 will 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 Stain Beck open space corridor adjacent to the Miles Hill Primary School and Beckhill Approach development sites;
- improvements to existing areas of open space to make them more attractive and useable. 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' – 67-141 Beckhill Avenue

3.8 The framework supports the 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 area, improving both visual and physical connectivity. Approval to progress the demolition has previously been granted and work continues to take place to rehouse the remaining residents.

Other Environmental/ Neighbourhood Improvements

3.9 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 city-wide street lighting PFI contract, although implementation proved difficult due to limited vehicular access and as such the required standards have not been consistently met. Work has been undertaken between the Council and the PFI contractor to explore options for improving lighting provision and further works will be progressed to ensure that street lighting in the Beckhills meets the required British Standard;
- former garage sites are proposed for improvement to make them more visually attractive, but retaining their usability as open car parking areas;
- an Integrated Waste Management Strategy is being prepared by the Locality Team to tackle the issue of waste and litter on the estate by

identifying better waste collection processes including recycling collections.

3.10 Delivery

3.11 As set out in section 4, the delivery of the various improvements can be secured through the use of planning contributions received from future development and funding from the Housing Revenue Account, where this relates to the improvement of Council Housing and related land or assets.

3.12 The improvements are 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 this will provide, the proposal is to prioritise improvements in this area. These will primarily be funded through the Housing Revenue Account given that these will directly improve Council Housing and related assets, 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.

3.13 The demolition of 67-141 Beckhill Avenue will be progressed by following the rehousing of the remaining residents. This is likely to occur in the next 6-12 months. Within the same timescale progress will be made to prepare the development sites for marketing to enable subsequent planning applications, disposal and development.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 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 any improvements would be delivered. The historic consultation and engagement work was therefore been used to underpin the preparation of a draft framework, rather than starting afresh.

4.1.2 The initial 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.

4.1.3 Through these discussions people expressed positive views about the area, but raised concerns 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 this consultation, the initial ideas were worked up further and were included within the draft neighbourhood framework presented to Executive Board on 25 June.

4.1.4 Following Executive Board's agreement for public consultation on the draft framework, a number of drop in sessions were undertaken in July, with residents being asked to complete a questionnaire which sought their views about the proposals included.

- 4.1.5 Drop in sessions on the 16th and 19th July used the Housing Leeds mobile office which allowed consultation to take place on Beckhill Avenue and Beckhill Approach, two areas which will see substantial change over the coming years. This had the benefit of providing easy access for residents to the consultation with officers from Housing Leeds also in attendance to provide assistance on housing related queries.
- 4.1.6 In addition, the framework and comment forms were made available at the community café at Stainbeck Church for three weeks. Ward Members and Officers also attended the café to speak with residents on the 17th July. The consultation activity was widely publicised in the local area with flyers delivered to each property and posters displayed at Stainbeck Church as well as local shops.
- 4.1.7 25 people took the time to complete a questionnaire during the consultation. It was clear through these formal responses and during conversations with attendees that there was strong support for the proposals within the framework. The opportunity was also taken to begin to discuss with residents some of the improvements in more detail, including the nature of fencing to be proposed on Beckhill Approach, the way in which the retaining wall can be changed and what equipment a trim trail might include.
- 4.1.8 It has not been necessary to make any significant changes to the framework following the consultation, although the site of the former shop on Beckhill Approach has now been identified for environmental improvements.
- 4.1.9 Separately, discussions are taking place with residents at 67-141 Beckhill Avenue to explore their rehousing options, which will allow this building to be demolished.
- 4.1.10 The Beckhill Improvement Group and ward members have been involved throughout the process of preparing the framework and have helped to shape the proposals included within the document. Ward members are supportive of the Neighbourhood framework including sites identified for the development of new housing and are keen to see the delivery of some of the neighbourhood improvements identified as quickly as possible.
- 4.1.11 As the proposals included within the framework are brought forward as projects, further consultation will be required with local residents and stakeholders. It is likely that as evidence of regeneration and positive changes becomes visible, there will be a greater level of interest and engagement from local residents about future works.
- 4.1.12 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.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 An Equality Impact screening was completed for the engagement and consultation phase of the neighbourhood Framework to ensure that effective community engagement took place.
- 4.2.2 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 as an 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. However, the improvements set out within the framework will support improvements to the health and well-being of residents and will seek to reduce the deprivation of the area.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

- 4.3.1 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.
- 4.3.2 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 identification within the Framework of sites for new homes..
- 4.3.3 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.
- 4.3.4 Many of the improvements will assist in the delivery of the Ageing Well Agenda and help Leeds to be an Age Friendly City. Improvements to footpaths and open spaces will provide specific benefits to older people, whilst the trim trail will provide additional opportunities to remain active and healthy.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 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.
- 4.4.2 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 green space, public realm and connectivity enhancements will cost in the region of £750,000. This cost has increased slightly since early estimates, as additional work has been included to footpaths and other items that are more complex than originally thought. The improvements will be funded through planning contributions made from new developments, with the Housing Revenue Account funding improvements which directly relate to the improvement of Council Housing and related land or assets.
- 4.4.3 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.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

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

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 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. It is essential that regeneration activity in the Beckhills continues to engage and involve local residents so that they have an increasing sense of ownership in the neighbourhood and play a central role in shaping the future of their area.
- 4.6.2 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 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 and guide for wider improvements in the area to ensure a rounded approach to regeneration such that the benefits of new development and investment are delivered to all residents.
- 5.2 The Neighbourhood Framework has been prepared with input from ward members and local stakeholder groups, and has been the subject of consultation with local residents.
- 5.3 Subject to approval, the framework will support the marketing, disposal and design of the Council owned sites and inform the targeting of investment into the wider area. Improvement works will commence in the current financial year with the Beckhill Approach area being prioritised for investment in the first instance.
- 5.4 The sites identified within the framework for new housing development will be marketed by the Council in 2015 with a view to construction commencing in 2016.

6 Recommendations

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

- (i) approve the Beckhill Neighbourhood Framework as informal planning guidance to support the area's regeneration;

- (ii) support the approach to prioritisation, phasing and funding the delivery improvements to the Beckhill area as set out in paragraphs 3.9 – 3.12, to be led by the Chief Asset Management and Regeneration Officer

7 Appendix

7.1 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.