

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO

Cabinet
09 June 2021

Report Title: Knutton Masterplan: report on public consultation and suggested amendments to the draft Knutton master plan.

Submitted by: Executive Director, Commercial Development and Economic Growth

Portfolios: Finance, Town Centres & Growth

Ward(s) affected: Knutton and Silverdale

Purpose of the Report

To report on the public consultation which has taken place on the Draft Knutton master plan and to consider what amendments should be made to the draft plan in the light of the response received.

Recommendation

1. That the draft master plan be amended along the lines set out in section 3 of this report.
2. That a further report be made shortly on the level of funding offered to the Newcastle Town Deal Board which will have a significant bearing on the financial implications to the Borough Council in implementing the proposed investment in Knutton set out in the master plan.

Reasons

1. To reflect local views and how best these may be met.
2. To ensure that the proposals set out in the master plan are readily implementable.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 In November 2020 Cabinet approved, for consultation purposes, the draft Knutton masterplan, which set out proposals for new housing development in and around the village, together with investment in modernising the community, business and leisure infrastructure of the village. This report summarises the results of that consultation and proposes a number of amendments to the masterplan in the light of a review of comments received.
- 1.2 A further report will be made to Cabinet when the result of the Newcastle Town Deal bid is known (which may possibly have been received by the time this meeting is held) as this will clarify with greater accuracy the financial implications to the Borough Council in implementing the proposals set out in the master plan.
- 1.3 As agreed in the November 2020 Cabinet report, talks have been held with Aspire Housing over the establishment of a joint venture arrangement between Aspire and the Borough Council to effect the speedy development of a number of sites in Borough Council ownership identified in the master plan and ensure a number of 'early wins'. These are ongoing and will be subject to a later report. In the context of these discussions, your officers have agreed to

make a submission, along with Aspire Housing, for funding under the recently announced 'Brownfield Land Release Fund' to address the abnormal costs associated with the redevelopment of the former Recreation Centre site in the centre of the village. This requires to be submitted by 2nd June. The outcome of the bid will be reported to Cabinet in due course.

2. The Public Consultation

2.1 The public consultation was designed and carried out by planning consultants White Young Green (WYG) in January and February this year. Because of the social restrictions resulting from the Covid pandemic it was not possible to carry out a conventional 'face to face' consultation in a local hall or community centre with consultation boards and with the consultants, WYG, and representatives of the client team on hand to engage with local people. As a result of this a *virtual* consultation was designed comprising a series of consultation boards explaining the draft proposals and uploaded to a dedicated online exhibition space, showing the options considered and the proposals being put forward in the draft masterplan. The link to this was publicised by

- a number of A3 posters placed within a number of prominent public buildings and around Knutton and neighbouring Cross Heath (akin to those which publicise planning proposals),
- the Council's web site.
- a press release of the consultation provided to The Sentinel and Radio Stoke and
- backed up by a social media campaign including the use of Twitter and Facebook encouraging local people to view the web page and have their say on the proposals.

2.2 The Portfolio Holder, Cllr Northcott, and local ward councillors for Knutton and Cross Heath have been kept abreast of the consultation process and made their own contributions to the consultation.

2.3 As a result of this publicity, WYG received 93 responses to the consultation (together with a larger number who visited the web page but chose not to leave comments). This number, together with the depth and detail of the responses themselves, is encouraging, demonstrating that in spite of the restrictions on public meeting, local people have participated in the process and have had the opportunity to express their views on

- what they liked / didn't like about the proposals,
- what they thought should be changed / improved and
- what they thought were the priorities for investment in the Knutton area.

WYG have analysed the responses and have provided a report on the consultation. This is appended to this report (Appendix A). The majority of respondents agreed with the priorities for investment set out in the consultation, believed that Knutton would benefit from this investment and considered that the masterplan was focussing on the right areas (more detail – see attached appendix).

2.4 The client team overseeing / steering the preparation of the master plan, comprising officers from Newcastle Borough Council, Aspire Housing and Staffordshire County Council has subsequently met with WYG to review the consultation and discuss the weight and nature of the responses received. In this regard, comments can be divided into three broad groupings

- those which can be seen as *improvements* to the draft and which are both desirable and capable of being taken on board,
- those which are already included in the master plan (but perhaps not set out as clearly as

they should have been), and

- those which lie outside the scope of the plan (e.g. the problems associated with Walleys Quarry) or which are not capable of being implemented (e.g. the re-provision of the old Recreation Centre in the centre of the village).

This has led the team to recommend a number of amendments to the draft master plan and these are summarised in the next section.

3. **Proposal - suggested amendments to the draft masterplan**

These suggested amendments are summarised in the WYG report 'Consultation', attached as Appendix A to this report. In brief, these are:

- to introduce 'traffic calming' at the entrance into Knutton from the west of Black Bank Road / Knutton High Street,
- to introduce flood risk mitigation as part of the development of the Black Bank Road site,
- investment in shop frontages on the High Street,
- footpath and cycleway improvements,
- a reconfiguration of the proposed Acacia Avenue play facilities, and
- a more ambitious range of use and activities of the proposed Village Hall.

4. **Reasons for Proposed Solution**

4.1 The amendments suggested have been made after assessing the comments received, how desirable and how practical they are to take on board and the weight which should be attached to those comments (for instance, in terms of numbers commenting and alignment with the aims of the commission). Those recommended amendment are considered to be *improvements* on the draft masterplan and are achievable (albeit, some at additional cost).

5. **Options Considered**

5.1 In the wider sense, three options might be said to be considered

- ignore the comments and proceed as per the draft master plan. Realistically this was never an option, otherwise the consultation process would have had no purpose
- review the comments received and make a judgement on which were both desirable and implantable (as discussed in para 4.1), and
- take on board *all* the comments received. This is unrealistic; it would have led to some changes that were not improvements and some, in any case, would have been unimplementable.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

6.1 The Borough Council is not under a statutory obligation to invest in Knutton. It is, though, under an obligation to consult on its plans and to take note of comments received - and this, largely, is the purpose of this report.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 Knutton and Cross Heath are amongst the least well off parts of Newcastle Borough and investing in modern housing development, new community facilities, employment, leisure and the environment will have the effect of reducing the level of inequality the area experiences.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 8.1 This section will be completed as part of the *next* Cabinet report on the outcome of the Newcastle Town Deal submission which includes a significant proposal for funding elements of the Knutton masterplan entitled 'Putting the Heart back into Knutton Village'

9. **Major Risks**

- 9.1 This section was completed in the earlier report on the draft Knutton masterplan. (The current report addresses the *consultation* process on the draft masterplan).

10. **UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)**

- 10.1 The trend towards greater suburbanisation and long-distance commuting between where people live and where they work and spend their leisure time encourages greater car use as facilities are, inevitably, further apart and difficult to reach by foot, cycle or public transport. Investing in *urban* communities and providing more homes in *urban* areas, on the other hand, reduces this trend, since it encourages people to want to live in those nearby urban communities. Furthermore, redeveloping brown field land reduces the pressure on undeveloped (green field) land. These are small wins, but the alternative – the continued 'hollowing out' of the core urban area as people aspire to live further out, is significantly more damaging in terms of the UNSD Goals.

11. **Key Decision Information**

- 11.1 This content of this report impacts on more than one ward. The report deals with proposals which *will* have a financial impact on the Borough Council and this will be the subject of a later report.

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

- 12.1 'Knutton Masterplan' report to cabinet November 2020.
- 12.2 'One Public Estate – Knutton Masterplanning Project' report to Cabinet November 2018.

13. **List of Appendices**

- 13.1 Knutton Masterplan Section 6 'Consultation'.