

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S **REPORT TO ECONOMY AND PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

18 March 2024

Report Title: Knutton Masterplan

Submitted by: Deputy Chief Executive

Portfolios: Finance, Town Centres and Growth

Ward(s) affected: Knutton, Cross Heath

<u>Purpose of the Report</u>	<u>Key Decision</u>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
To update Scrutiny Committee on the Knutton Masterplan			
<u>Recommendation</u>			
1. Scrutiny Committee notes this report on progress with delivery of the Knutton Masterplan			
<u>Reasons</u>			
To update the Scrutiny Committee on progress with various elements of the Knutton Masterplan.			

1. Background

- 1.1 For several years, the Council has been working with its partners Aspire Housing and Staffordshire County Council to develop and deliver the Knutton Village Masterplan "Putting the Heart into Knutton Village". This masterplan, which was funded by One Public Estate, sets out proposals for a range of interventions in and around Knutton village, including new housing development together with improving community, business, and leisure infrastructure for the village.
- 1.2 The Knutton Village Masterplan has been consulted on with residents on several occasions, including a workshop with ward councillors and key groups during development of the initial proposals, and a wider community consultation during the shaping of the masterplan. Projects that were to be included in the Town Deal business case were also re-confirmed with members of the community prior to its submission.
- 1.3 The principal project elements of the Town Deal project are:
 - a) Construction of a Football Changing Room at the Wammy.
 - b) Delivery of housing within the village.
 - c) Expansion of Newcastle Enterprise Centre

- d) Provision of a new village hall following the closure of the old community centre in the spring of 2020

2. Updates

Construction of a Football Changing Room at the Wammy

- 2.1 The Council has already engaged with Newcastle Town Football Club to drive forward provision of football at the Wammy. As a large and experienced grassroots affiliated football club they are ideally placed to deliver football activity on the site and to engage with surrounding communities. It is intended that they will take on operation of the football changing rooms once complete, to run alongside the football pitches that they already operate at the site.
- 2.2 The Council has also worked with the Football Foundation and Staffordshire Football Association to attract Football Foundation funding to support development of the changing room facility and to ensure, that in addition to delivering on Council and Town Deal objectives, the new facilities meet the required Football Association standards for changing facility provision.
- 2.3 Planning consent for the changing rooms was received in June 2023, planning application reference 23/00142/DEEM3.
- 2.4 The Council had previously tendered for a contractor to build the changing facility, with the aim of being able to mobilise following the granting of planning permission for the development. Unfortunately, it was not possible to conclude the contract and it has been necessary for the Council to re-tender the opportunity. Tender responses were received in February 2024 and following a tender assessment process a report is being considered at the Cabinet meeting on 19 March 2024 to appoint a contractor for the works. Following this, construction of the changing rooms will start as soon as the contract is signed, and the contractor is able to mobilise.

Delivery of Housing within Knutton

- 2.5 The masterplan covered proposals for housing development in the wider village context, some of which were to be taken forward through other funding means. Current focus is on two sites where Town Deal funding is proposed to support delivery. These are the former recreation centre site at High Street and the site of a former community centre adjacent to the mini roundabouts at the junction with Milehouse Lane. Both of which have been cleared for redevelopment.

Details of each development are highlighted below.

The Former Recreation Centre Site at High Street

- 2.6 Masterplan recommendations for the High Street site included new, quality residential units, new green space with children's play facilities, new community centre, an uplift to the Enterprise Centre frontage and attractive landscaping along High Street. In developing proposals for the High Street site, the three key partners have endeavoured to reflect these aspirations, whilst creating good links between the Acacia Avenue and High Street areas and creating a village feel to any new housing development proposed. The general layout for High Street is Appendix A.

- 2.7 In line with the Masterplan aspirations, the Council has been working with Aspire Housing to develop a scheme for the housing element of the High Street site, with the development occupying the site edged in red in Appendix B, attached. The development arm of Aspire Housing, Durata Developments, has submitted a planning application to transform the site with 54 residential units, new landscaping, improved connectivity between Acacia Avenue and High Street and an improved play area. The planning application, reference 23/00771/FUL, was submitted in September 2023 and it is anticipated that it will be considered by Planning committee in Spring 2024.
- 2.8 The development proposed by Aspire Housing is to provide new, high-quality housing that meets the needs of the local area with the design of houses to reflect the characteristics from the surrounding area. Green space and an improved children's play area near to Acacia Avenue are incorporated into the design. Town Deal funding is proposed to be used to assist Aspire in dealing with the abnormal costs of brownfield land reclamation to enable the housing development to proceed.

The Former Community Centre Site

- 2.9 The Council has also been working with Aspire Housing to develop a scheme for the former community centre site next to the double roundabout at the junction of High Street with Milehouse Lane. A planning application reference 24/00023/FUL was submitted in January 2024. The proposed development comprises 21 houses and 8 walk up apartments with associated parking and landscaping. A general layout plan is Appendix C. Town Deal funding is also proposed to be used to assist Aspire in dealing with the abnormal costs of development on this site.
- 2.10 To enable the developments at High Street and the former community centre site to proceed the Council needs to sell land in the Council's ownership to Aspire Housing. Officers in the Council's Assets Team are progressing the land sales to facilitate delivery of these significant elements of the Knutton Masterplan.

Expansion of Newcastle Enterprise Centre

- 2.11 Staffordshire County Council has operated Newcastle Enterprise Centre on Knutton High Street for 35 years. There has been a long-held aspiration by the County Council to expand the workspace available, but no viable proposals have been previously forthcoming that would enable payback of borrowing within Staffordshire County Council's accepted timeline. Expansion of the Enterprise Centre will bring new employment opportunities in the village and also provide subsequent economic benefits to surrounding businesses from consequential spend in the local area. A Town Deal grant for Knutton Enterprise Centre will help to bridge the viability gap of expanding the Enterprise Centre. This delivers both the employment and economic benefits set out in the Knutton Masterplan and The Town Deal Business Case.
- 2.12 The County Council has been working with both Council officers and Aspire Housing to agree the layout arrangement of the additional workspace. Enabling creation of an additional 4,500 sq. ft of workspace will require circa 0.37 acres (0.15 hectares) of land from the adjacent former recreation centre site currently in the Council's ownership. This is indicated in Appendix D. This requires the sale of land from the Borough Council to the County Council to enable the development to proceed. Officers in the Council's Assets Team are progressing this land sale to enable development to proceed.

- 2.13 Planning consent has been granted for the extension of the Enterprise Centre. Application reference 23/00138/FUL. Subject to completing the land sale and the results of a Staffordshire County Council tendering process to appoint a contractor, it is intended that development will start on site in March 2024.

Provision of a new Village Hall

- 2.14 One of the aspirations of the Knutton Village Masterplan is to provide new community facilities in the village. At the time of developing the original Masterplan proposals, a community centre was operational at a site adjacent to the mini roundabouts at Lower Milehouse Lane. This had to closed in the spring of 2020 due to safety concerns around the condition of the building. The consultation clearly reflected a desire from the community for a better quality and more intensively used community facility to be available. Whilst the Council, through Town Deal investment, can facilitate development of a new village hall, the extent to which it is used is outside of the control of the Council and will depend on the level of engagement from the local community and proactive management of any facility that is provided.
- 2.15 To enable the running of the village hall to be sustainable from both an environmental and a financial perspective it is proposed that use of sustainable / renewable energy sources will be used alongside a thermally efficient building design to reduce the impact of the building. Construction of the village hall and associated infrastructure is to be funded from the Knutton allocation of Newcastle Town Deal funding. At its meeting of November 2023, Cabinet authorised the development of proposals for the village hall to planning permission stage. A planning application for the village hall is being developed but has not yet been submitted.
- 2.16 To enable the village hall to embed in the local community and ensure its longer-term success it will be necessary to identify a group or organisation willing to take on management of the facility. The Council will need to invite expressions of interest from people or organisations who wish to run the village hall for the benefit of the Knutton community. If this project is to progress beyond planning stage, then it is vital that interest is attracted.

3 Recommendation

- 3.1 Scrutiny Committee notes this report on progress with delivery of the Knutton Masterplan.

4 Reasons

- 4.1 To enable delivery of commitments within the Council Plan 2022 – 2026, Priority Two A successful, Sustainable and Growing Borough.
- 4.2 To enable delivery of priorities identified in the Knutton Village masterplan.
- 4.3 To enable delivery of agreed projects within the Knutton element of Newcastle Town Deal Investment Plan.

5 Options Considered

- 5.1 Delivery of a masterplan and subsequent projects within Knutton has been a long-standing aspiration for the Council, stemming from a 2018 proposal within the Asset Management Strategy for the master planning of Knutton village. The projects and proposals set out in this report are in line with work that has been subsequently undertaken by the Council, with its partners and previously approved by Cabinet to deliver improvements within Knutton Village. The proposals enable the development of derelict land within Knutton village, bringing it back into productive use and lever in a substantial amount of funding from both Staffordshire County Council and Aspire Housing (through Durata Developments) and from other funding sources. Delivery of the proposed projects within this report is the only option to consider if the Council is to deliver on both its own aspirations for the High Street site in Knutton village and for the benefit of the residents of Knutton village.

6 Legal and Statutory Implications

- 6.1 Section 2(1) of the Local Government Act 2000 permits local authorities to do anything they consider likely to promote or improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of their area. That would include actions to deliver the Knutton Village Masterplan.
- 6.2 The proposals to enable the delivery of projects within Knutton Village requires the disposal of land currently owned by the Council to enable the developments to proceed.
- 6.3 The land which formed the Knutton Recreation Centre site was acquired from Staffordshire County Council in 1989. The use was restricted to a community recreation centre use. The price paid by Staffordshire County Council to re-acquire a section of the site for the Enterprise Centre takes into consideration this restriction. The land sale to Aspire Housing will require covenant consent from Staffordshire County Council and a sum will be paid to them to reflect this once a purchase price with Aspire has been agreed.
- 6.4 Proposals to build a new village hall on Knutton High Street will require the Council to add an additional asset to its portfolio and eventually to come to an agreement with a management body to take on management of the village hall.
- 6.5 Planning consent has been granted for the extension of Newcastle Enterprise Centre. A planning application has been submitted for residential development at land at High Street, Knutton and also for the former community centre site. These applications have not yet been determined.

7 Equality Impact Assessment

- 7.1 No differential impact arises from the proposals contained in this report.
- 7.2 The proposals contained in this report are intended to benefit both the current and prospective residents of Knutton Village.
- 7.3 The proposals open up new employment and business opportunities in a less affluent area of the Borough in an accessible location on Knutton High Street.

- 7.4 The proposals introduce a new community facility in an accessible location on Knutton High Street which will be open to all members of the community to use on an equal basis.

8 Financial and Resource Implications

- 8.1 The proposals require a Town Deal grant to be made to Staffordshire County Council for the expansion of Newcastle Enterprise Centre. This is within the Town Deal allocation for delivery of the Knutton Village Masterplan.
- 8.2 The proposals will generate a capital receipt from the sale of land to Staffordshire County Council to enable the expansion of Newcastle Enterprise Centre.
- 8.3 The proposals require disposal of land to Aspire Housing which is currently under negotiation. This will generate a capital receipt for the Council.
- 8.4 The proposals require a Town Deal grant to be made to Aspire Housing, this is within the Town Deal allocation for delivery of the Knutton Village Masterplan.
- 8.5 Construction of a village hall will add an additional building to the Council's property portfolio. It is intended to seek an external organisation to take on management of the village hall once constructed. Town Deal monies will be committed from the existing Newcastle Town Deal project allocation for Knutton Village to enable construction of the village hall.

Town Deal Monies

- 8.6 The overall Town Deal allocation for Knutton is £3.534 million.
- 8.7 The agreed contribution to Staffordshire County Council for extension of the Enterprise Centre is £1.14 million
- 8.8 To date Aspire Housing has received £156,829 Town Deal monies for development of schemes at High Street, Lower Milehouse Lane and land at Knutton Ex-Servicemen's Club. A further £6,932 has been requested in relation to this phase of work. Further funding is required to assist with the abnormal costs of land remediation on the two housing sites to be delivered. This would take the total Town Deal allocation for Aspire Housing to £813,776.
- 8.9 The indicative Town Deal allocation for construction of the Village Hall and associated infrastructure is £1 million.
- 8.10 The Town Deal allocation for construction of the village hall will be determined once tender prices are received.

9 Major Risks & Mitigation

- 9.1 The major risk is in the Council not being able to achieve its aspirations for delivery of agreed actions within the Knutton Village Masterplan. In progressing these proposals, the Council has consulted with the local community on several occasions and is working with key partners to lever in additional investment to Knutton village.

- 9.2 External delivery partners have their own risk management plans in place for their respective elements of delivery. An overall risk assessment for Newcastle Town Deal is maintained on the Council's risk management system.
- 9.3 Construction inflation remains a risk for the village hall development until all procurement is complete and a contract price agreed. By competitively procuring through a recognised portal the Council will seek to manage some of the risks of procurement. Cost management through design processes will also be a consideration.
- 9.4 Should the Council be unable to find a suitable tenant to manage the village hall then this development would not be a viable proposition as the Council does not have the resources to manage the village hall directly itself. Early engagement will be undertaken to find prospective tenants for management of the village hall.
- 9.5 Development of all the elements set out in this report requires the completion of legal agreements with key partners. The Council is working closely with such partners to complete mutually agreeable arrangements.

10 UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)

- 10.1 The proposal, by achieving the development of new workspace in a less affluent area of the Borough, which is in existing urban setting contributes towards UNSDG 8 and 9.
- 10.1 The proposal, by providing more homes and community facilities in a local village contributes to UNSDG 11.



11 Key Decision Information

- 11.1 This report concerns developments in the Knutton and Cross Heath Wards
- 11.2 The proposals contained in this report require the allocation of funds from the Knutton element of Newcastle Town Deal to a value in excess of £1.5 million, as they total £1,877,176 from the Town Deal allocation of £3,534,000, covering the Enterprise Unit and the Aspire allocations.

12 **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

- 12.1 7th November 2023 Newcastle Town Deal – Projects in Knutton [2023 10 12 Knutton full report draft 1.pdf \(newcastle-staffs.gov.uk\)](#)
- 12.2 18th October 2022 Newcastle Town Deal [Newcastle Town Deal.pdf \(newcastle-staffs.gov.uk\)](#)
- 12.3 9th June 2021 Knutton masterplan: report on public consultation and proposed amendments to the draft Knutton Masterplan. [Cabinet report on Knutton WYG public consultation June 2021.pdf \(newcastle-staffs.gov.uk\)](#)
- 12.4 13th January 2021 Newcastle Town Deal, submission of the Investment Plan including Knutton [Newcastle Town Deal.pdf \(newcastle-staffs.gov.uk\)](#)
- 12.5 11th November 2020 Knutton Masterplan [Knutton Masterplan.pdf \(newcastle-staffs.gov.uk\)](#)
- 12.6 7th November 2018 One Public Estate – Knutton Master planning Project [1 \(newcastle-staffs.gov.uk\)](#)
- 12.7 19th September 2018 Asset Management Strategy, proposed master planning at Knutton [1 \(newcastle-staffs.gov.uk\)](#)

13 **List of Appendices**

- 13.1 Appendix A Overview of High Street
- 13.2 Appendix B Aspire development site High Street
- 13.3 Appendix C Former community centre site layout plan.
- 13.4 Appendix D Enterprise Centre Development Land

14 **Background Papers**

- 14.1 Knutton Village Masterplan
- 14.2 Staffordshire County Council planning application for the expansion of Newcastle Enterprise Centre 23/00138/FUL [23/00138/FUL | Proposed west wing workshops \(amended plans received\) | Newcastle Enterprise Centre High Street Knutton Newcastle Under Lyme Staffordshire \(newcastle-staffs.gov.uk\)](#)
- 14.3 Durata Development planning application for residential development, land at High Street / Acacia Avenue Knutton.23/00771/FUL [23/00771/FUL | Full planning application for a residential development with associated access, internal infrastructure, landscaping and wider works. | Land At High Street / Acacia Avenue Knutton Newcastle Under Lyme Staffordshire ST5 6BX \(newcastle-staffs.gov.uk\)](#)
- 14.4 Durata Development planning application for residential development, site of former community centre at junction of High Street / Lower Milehouse Lane. [24/00023/FUL | Residential development - 21 residential dwellings with associated access, landscaping and wider works. | Site Of Former Knutton Community Centre At Junction Of High Street And Lower Milehouse Lane Newcastle Under Lyme Staffordshire \(newcastle-staffs.gov.uk\)](#)
- 14.5 Newcastle Town Deal Town Investment Plan
- 14.6 Putting the Heart into Knutton Village Business Case.