



EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

REPORT OF:	Executive Member for Growth and Development
LEAD OFFICERS:	Strategic Director of Growth & Development
DATE:	Thursday, 8 February 2024

PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:	Growth and Development
WARD/S AFFECTED:	Little Harwood and Whitebirk; Roe Lee;
KEY DECISION:	Y

SUBJECT: Northeast Blackburn Strategic Housing Site Masterplanning

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report outlines the outcome of the formal tender exercise for the appointment of a masterplanner to bring forward a combined Masterplan, Design Code, and Infrastructure Delivery Plan for the newly allocated Northeast Blackburn Strategic Housing Site (SHS). The site has been allocated in the new Local Plan (2021-2037), formally adopted by the Council on the 25th January 2024, and is illustrated on the plan attached as Background Paper 1.
- 1.2 The SHS is in multiple land ownership (eight principal landowners, including the Council), with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council as the largest landowner owning approximately 45% of the total site area.
- 1.3 The SHS is of nearly 100 hectares in size and is expected to deliver around 1,500 high quality homes along with other appropriate supporting uses. Development of the site will be spread over multiple phases, expected to commence within the first 5 years of the new Local Plan, extending well beyond the Local Plan end date of 2037.
- 1.4 The Council is leading (in collaboration with other landowners) on procurement of the next stages of masterplanning work to ensure that an appropriate, high quality, deliverable and viable scheme can be progressed to an Outline Planning Application (expected in 2025).
- 1.5 In October 2023 an Invitation to Tender (ITT) was released via The Chest, with ten bids received from consultants interested in delivering the requested masterplanning services on the site.
- 1.6 Following evaluation of the bids, one bidder was invited for a clarification interview. They have now been confirmed as the preferred bidder to be appointed to work on the SHS. The consultant is to be appointed following approval of this report, and their contract will commence from mid-February.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

- 2.1 Approves appointment of the preferred consultants (Stantec) to undertake the Masterplan, Design Code, and Infrastructure Delivery Plan for the North East Blackburn Strategic Housing Site (SHS) allocation;
- 2.2 Delegates authority to the Growth Programme Director and the Executive Member for Growth and Development, to approve and sign a new collaboration agreement with other landowners to cover the next phases of work on the SHS (masterplanning and preparation of an Outline Planning Permission);
- 2.3 Authorises the Strategic Director of Growth and Development in consultation with the Executive Member for Growth and Development, to approve the procurement of consultants for the preparation of an Outline Planning Permission at an appropriate point later in 2024 once masterplanning is underway and relevant information requirements around Environmental Impact Assessment to support an application are understood;
- 2.4 Approves spend of up to a maximum of £1m of capital funding for the period 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27 to bring forward the Strategic Housing Site with work including, masterplanning, procurement of surveys, preparation and submission of the Outline Planning Permission for the site and any other design or commissioning works associated with site enabling infrastructure. These costs apply to all landowners across the site (not just the Council) and a mechanism for sharing costs or providing funding amongst all landowners will be agreed as part of the new collaboration agreement referenced under 2.2.
- 2.5 Approves a virement of £1m from the budget for the MediPark Scheme in the Capital Programme to fund the expenditure in 2.4 above (noting that some of this expenditure will be recovered by way of the collaboration agreement referred to).
- 2.6 Notes that a further report will come forward seeking approval of the Masterplan, Design Code and Infrastructure Delivery Plan once the design work is complete.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council has now adopted its new Local Plan (2021-2037). The North East Blackburn SHS, and development of a new neighbourhood on the edge of this area of town, is identified as one of the six key ideas that underpin the 'balanced growth' strategy of the plan. Successful (and timely) development of the site will be a key element of delivering the overall housing strategy set out within the new plan.
- 3.2 The North East Blackburn SHS is 97.52 hectares in size and is expected to deliver around 1,500 high quality homes in total (during this local plan period and beyond) spread across four phases. Both the Local Plan policy (Policy H195), and the ITT documents issued, make clear that a Local Centre / Community Hub is expected to form a part of this new residential development. The site is bounded by the A6119 (Brownhill Drive) to the west and includes land between Belvedere/East Lancs Road to the north, Whalley Old Road to the south, and up to the borough boundary in the east. The site boundary and location are shown attached in Background Paper 1.
- 3.3 The site is owned by eight principal landowners with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council being the largest of these owning approximately 45% of the site by area. In 2020, a collaboration agreement (MoU) was signed by all key parties to help undertake the work necessary to progress

the site through to a formal allocation in the new Local Plan (2021-2037). A revised collaboration agreement is currently being prepared to agree the roles and responsibilities for the next stages of work, and how costs will be shared, up to the point of securing outline planning permission for the entire site.

- 3.4 In order to drive the site forward, the Council sought after an appropriately qualified masterplanning team to cover the range of specialisms required to deliver the Masterplan, Infrastructure Delivery Strategy and Design Code to ensure that delivery of the first housing units on the site can be realised within the first five years of the plan. The policy requirement (set out in Policy H195) for the site is clear that these elements must all be in place before planning approval can be granted, to ensure that appropriate infrastructure is viable and deliverable, and that a high-quality development is secured.
- 3.5 In October 2023 an Invitation to Tender (ITT) was released via The Chest for an open tender for a period of five weeks, to allow consultants to express their interest in being appointed as the masterplanner for the site. A brief was provided which summarised the key requirements as:
- The preparation of a comprehensive and holistic masterplan for the phased development of the site that achieves a balance between constraints and opportunities and demonstrates how the objectives set out in the brief will be delivered.
 - Building on existing information (used in the preparation and examination of the new Local Plan to support the site allocation) to show an integrated and efficient approach to bulk earthworks, roads and drainage balanced against the objectives of the masterplan.
 - Show how the infrastructure to serve the development can be built in a viable and cost-effective way taking into account the need to phase its delivery.
 - Carry out a thorough appraisal of the impacts on the setting of heritage assets and an approach to mitigation as an integral part of the masterplan that addresses the concerns raised by Historic England.
 - Place a strong emphasis on environmental quality in all aspects of the development including green spaces and blue spaces and show how Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) objectives will be met on the site.
 - Demonstrate a thorough understanding of utility requirements and the need, if any, for reinforcement (or diversions). This should then feed into the infrastructure delivery strategy; and
 - Demonstrate that there will be an inclusive and effective approach to communication and engagement using mixed media which targets all parts of the local community.
- 3.6 A total of ten bids were received by the closing date of Friday 1st December. The bids were evaluated on a 60%/40% quality vs cost basis, with more detailed results set out in Section 4 of this report.
- 3.7 The highest scored bidder, Bidder J (Stantec), were invited to meet with Council officers to clarify aspects of their tender before the decision was made to recommend them to be appointed as the preferred consultant.
- 3.8 The Council administered the tender process throughout and subsequent evaluation stages in accordance with the Council's Procurement Strategy.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

- 4.1 **ITT Tender results** - The Council received ten tenders for the North East Blackburn SHS Masterplan, Design Code and Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

The overall score for each bidder is detailed in Table A below. Each bid was scored on a 60% quality and 40% cost (price) basis.

The Quality score detailed below comprises the aggregate score of four sub-weighted quality questions which focused on:

- 1) The consultant team put forward, their suitability, skills and relevant experience;
- 2) Three examples of similar projects completed in the last 5 years;
- 3) Project/programme management and key stakeholder consultation; and
- 4) Design methodology and stage of work to produce the required outputs.

The Price % score comprises the aggregate score of two sub-weighted quality questions which focused on:

- 1) The total price of the commission; and
- 2) The total of time-based rates for any potential additional work.

Table A: ITT Tender Results			
Bidder Reference	Price	Quality	Total score %
Bidder A	4%	44%	48%
Bidder B	13%	43%	56%
Bidder C	16%	45%	61%
Bidder D	4%	41%	45%
Bidder E	4%	45%	49%
Bidder F	5%	43%	47%
Bidder G	2%	41%	44%
Bidder H	36%	28%	63%
Bidder I	4%	38%	41%
Bidder J	31%	40%	71%

- 4.2 Bidder J (Stantec) scored the highest overall, with a significant margin between the second highest scoring bidder (Bidder H). A meeting was arranged with them to provide an opportunity to answer any clarification questions that had been raised by Council Officers and the other landowners during the evaluation process.
- 4.3 Stantec have provided a thorough bid with good responses which met the scope of works set out in the brief. They provided 3 case studies which proved that they have extensive experience working on similar masterplans before for different local authorities and identified numerous requirements and considerations within their design methodology.
- 4.4 Stantec Inc. are a multi-disciplinary international professional services company in the design and consulting industry. They have worked on various projects from large-scale inner-city regeneration to urban extensions and new communities.
- 4.5 For the reasons outlined above, it is recommended the Council accepts the bid from Stantec and appoints the company as the preferred masterplanner.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The North East Blackburn Strategic Housing Site allocation is identified as one of the six key ideas in the new Local Plan, forming a central part of the overall housing strategy. The scale and location of the strategic urban extension enables provision of high-quality homes to be brought forward, to significantly help diversify the local housing offer, and support development of a new sustainable community.
- 5.2 Site specific Policy H195 of the new Local Plan sets out a number of Key Development Considerations (KDCs) to ensure that the site is planned and delivered as a high quality, sustainable, and ultimately deliverable scheme. KDC1 makes clear that a masterplan (including Design Code and Infrastructure Delivery Strategy) must be agreed by the Council prior to the granting of planning permission on any part of the site allocation.
- 5.3 Commencement of the masterplanning process now will ensure that the Council can maintain an adequate pipeline of housing sites through the first five years of the new Local Plan.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The fee proposal by Stantec will be paid by the Council in regular instalments from appointment through to contract conclusion, anticipated December 2024. Sufficient funds will be made available in the 2024/25 capital Programme to cover the funding for this work. Whilst the Council may have to forward fund all costs relating to this work, landowners will each pay their fair share with the mechanism of recovery to be agreed through a new collaboration agreement (MoU), with any funding support recovered with a commercial rate of interest and secured by either a suitable guarantor or by a charge on the landowners land with rights to recover.
- 6.2 As part of the procurement process, time-based rates were also submitted. This will be for any additional work that may be required in support of this masterplanning commission that is not covered by the original brief. Any such work will require further Director sign off prior to being agreed should it be required, and again be covered in terms of cost recovery by the new collaboration agreement.
- 6.3 The Council has recently been awarded a total of £100k Planning Skills Delivery Fund money. £30k of this grant funding is earmarked for 'masterplanning and urban design expertise', with the intention that it should support masterplanning work and internal officer learning and the retention of knowledge in-house to use on future design of schemes. The Council will use this to fund part of the Council's share of the masterplanning exercise, and to facilitate staff upskilling throughout the process.

There is currently no budget included in the Capital Programme for the work outlined in this report. In view of this, it is proposed that a virement of £1m is made from the capital estimate for the Medipark Scheme, which is not expected to progress in the medium term, to providing the funding necessary to progress this project. As indicated above, the Council will recover some of the costs incurred by way of a collaboration agreement with the other landowners.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The procurement of masterplanning services is in accordance with the Council's Procurement Policy, procurement best practice, and all relevant legal requirements including public contract regulations 2015 and 2020 amendments (post EU exit) and other appropriate legislation. The Council has achieved best consideration by choosing to procure services through an open and competitive tender process.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no additional resource implications, this will be covered by the Growth and Development teams, using support made available through the recently awarded Planning Skills Delivery Fund.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. (*insert EIA link here*)

Option 3 In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. (*insert EIA attachment*)

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 An inclusive and effective approach to communication and engagement was clearly set out as a requirement in the brief for masterplanning services. Public consultations will take place as part of the masterplanning and will be expected to continue through the outline planning application process too.

10.2 Regular stakeholder engagement will also be undertaken as this is a key and imperative part in order to deliver the masterplan successfully.

10.3 Regular communications will also be kept up with all the other landowners and their agents too, to keep them involved and informed at all key stages of the process.

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

VERSION:	1.0
CONTACT OFFICER:	Simon Jones, Growth Programme Director, Growth & Development
DATE:	February 2024
BACKGROUND PAPER:	1. North East Blackburn Strategic Housing Site allocation plan