

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 31 July 2012

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Anne Grigg
(Asset Management and Economic Development)

SUPPLEMENTARY DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT FUND (DDF) ESTIMATE – ST JOHN’S ROAD, EPPING DEVELOPMENT BRIEF

Recommending:

That a supplementary DDF estimate of £115,000 be approved to cover expenditure from outside the Local Plan budget:

(a) to reinstate the sum of £105,000 to the Local Plan budget; and

(b) to provide £10,000 to cover further expenditure to produce the Development Brief for the Council;

1. The Cabinet in March 2008 agreed that the production of a Design and Development Brief for the St John’s Road, Epping area, (an approach that had been previously successfully undertaken for the Loughton Broadway), would be the most appropriate way of establishing a clear vision for the area and would be the most appropriate way of bringing forward development options. The final brief will guide future planning considerations for the site, as part of the Evidence Base for the Local Plan and as such once adopted will be a material planning consideration.

2. In order to undertake the practical work necessary to develop the Brief, recognising that the work of the Council’s Forward Planning Team was fully committed to the Gypsy and Traveller Directive and the Local Plan, it was decided to jointly appoint with Essex County Council (ECC), specialist external consultancy support. It was estimated at this point that the level of expenditure that would be required would be £50,000, with the County Council agreeing to contribute up to a maximum of £25,000. As a result of a competitive exercise, appropriate consultants were appointed by Portfolio Holder decision, on 11 September 2008.

3. Whilst it was clear that the project needed to be adequately funded, at a time of restrictions upon public expenditure, it was decided that existing budget provision already allocated to the development of the Local Plan should be used rather than a supplementary budget request. Whilst this approach was sensible at the time, the new National Development Framework has subsequently been implemented by Central Government. There is a separate report on the Local Plan budget on this agenda to discuss in detail the budgetary implications of the accelerated timetable for the preparation of the Local Plan now required.

4. Expenditure has been incurred over a number of financial years on the production of the St John’s Road Design and Development Brief, and the total expenditure/commitments have reached £130,000. In order to assist Members, a table detailing the expenditure incurred which we have considered is outlined below:

Date	Description of works	Value	By whom
June 2008	Original budget.	£50,000	Initial works by Urban Practitioners, C B Richard Ellis (CBRE) and Buchanans.
September 2009	Additional expenditure to develop options.	£6,700	Allies Morrison (AM) and CBRE.
July 2010	Additional expenditure on Epping as part of work on Town Centres study.	£3,000	Roger Tym.
November 2010	Additional expenditure on viability of options and highway work.	£14,300	AM, CBRE and Buchanans.
June 2011	Additional expenditure on traffic.	£33,000	Intermodal. Traffic counts. Traffic Model. Safety Audit.
November 2011	Additional expenditure on highways, valuation and preparing and undertaking consultation and the analysis of the consultation.	£20,000	CBRE & AM.
As at May 2012	Outstanding commitments	£3,000	
	TOTAL	£130,000	

5. We have been advised that expenditure has risen above the £50,000 estimated for a number of reasons:

- Four options were developed, and the possible scale of the retail components meant that it was prudent to consider this in the report which was prepared by Roger Tym as part of the Local Plan evidence base.
- A possible leisure option involved some additional consideration of the requirements which could be included with such an option, to include the cost of purchasing land at this site and what might be undertaken on the existing site so as to offset those costs of any new relocated provision.
- All of the possible options raised some quite complex changes to traffic impacts, which needed to be thoroughly considered. In addition, original traffic studies were not considered to be sufficiently up to date, nor had they been undertaken when the schools were in use, so they needed to be repeated. A safety audit was also required.
- Finally, the extent and depth of the consultation, and the resources allocated to ensure that all residents had the opportunity to contribute was greater than had originally been envisaged.

6. The time taken over the project has been a concern for ECC, because it had assumed a capital receipt would have been generated earlier to offset the costs of the new primary school which was relocated nearby. Similarly, securing the empty buildings at the site has also caused ECC additional expenditure, and it has taken a position that it is not prepared to fund any additional work necessary on the Design and Development Brief.

7. In order to complete the Design and Development Brief, there is likely to be some further expenditure incurred, primarily because the consultation period was extended and there have been a greater number and detail of responses to analyse. We estimate that a further £10,000 should complete the work to a point where the Council can be asked to agree a brief. However, if any more work is required on land assembly, working up further details of specific proposals or on managing traffic flows in the High Street differently, then that will require further funding. In that case we have decided that this will be quantified and subject to a further report.

9. To date, the funding has been taken from the Local Plan budget, which is now under pressure. Therefore, a supplementary estimate is being sought to cover the expenditure incurred since December 2008, and to cover the reasonable further expenditure envisaged to complete the project.

10. We recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.