

6 November 2018		ITEM: 5
Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Briefing: Purfleet Centre Update		
Wards and communities affected: West Thurrock and South Stifford		Key Decision: Non-key
Report of: Rebecca Ellsmore, Programmes and Projects Manager		
Accountable Assistant Director: Detlev Munster, Assistant Director Property, Regeneration and Development		
Accountable Director: Steve Cox, Corporate Director, Place		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report updates Members on the current status of the Purfleet Centre project and highlights key workstreams that are currently being progressed. Areas covered include a review of the current status of the outline planning application, responses to key objections, the potential to bring additional funding into the project and progress on key infrastructure elements that will be delivered via the scheme.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 The Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members are asked to comment on the approach being taken to progressing the highlighted workstreams.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1. The Purfleet Centre project is a Corporate Priority Project which has the potential to significantly contribute to the Council's housing need, and to transform Purfleet into a destination of choice go greatly benefit existing residents and become a place of choice to live.
- 2.2. Given the strategic nature of the project it is appropriate to keep Members updated on progress despite no formal approvals being required at this particular stage. A number of key workstreams are progressing and are reviewed in the remainder of the report.
- 2.3. Members' attention is also drawn to the fact that the project recently achieved success at the Brownfield Briefing Awards securing the award for Best Public

Participation Project. This reflects the very real role that the local community have played in influencing the proposals.

3. Workstreams

3.1. Outline Planning Application

PCRL submitted an outline planning application for the whole masterplan area in December 2017. The long period of time that the application has been in determination reflects the complexity of the scheme but good progress is being made on responding to consultation responses, drafting the conditions schedule and negotiating the s.106 agreement.

- 3.2. All parties are working towards a determination at the November planning committee. A key driver of whether or not this is achievable will be the Environment Agency's response to ongoing discussions with regards to a potential future Thames Barrier (see below) and Highways England (HE) response to the submitted transport modelling.

3.3. Proposals to accommodate a future Thames Barrier

The Environment Agency (EA) have objected to the outline planning application as they wish to safeguard some of the site to facilitate the construction and operation of a future Thames Barrier which may need to be located in the Long Reach section of river as part of the Thames Estuary 2100 plan (TE2100 Plan). The Port of London Authority and the Mayor of London have submitted similar objections in support of the TE2100 plan.

- 3.4. The TE2100 plan envisages that a second Thames Barrier will need to be operational by 2070 to protect London from increased flood risk as a result of climate change. The decision on the location of the new barrier is likely to be taken in 2050, a 10 year period is then allowed for design and land assembly (to 2060) with a further 10 year period for construction (to 2070).

- 3.5. The objection relates to 2 hectares of land within the Purfleet Centre redline boundary which the EA are seeking to safeguard from residential development to reduce the potential requirement to compulsorily purchase residential properties to facilitate the delivery of the barrier at a future date. As highlighted above it is not yet confirmed that the location of the barrier will be Purfleet and this land may never be required. The two hectares in question are on the riverfront adjacent to the existing residential community at Harrisons Wharf.

- 3.6. The Council, working with the EA, PLA and PCRL commissioned navigation simulation modelling to explore whether the barrier could be located to the west of the Purfleet Centre boundary therefore removing the need to safeguard land from within the redline. This has proved not to be possible due to navigational challenges associated with the alignment of the river.

- 3.7. In parallel, the Council and PCRL have been exploring the impact on the scheme should this land not be developed for residential use and whether there are any legal mechanisms which could allow the EA to remove their objection whilst allowing the current planning application to be determined. The 2 hectares in question was initially proposed to accommodate 450 residential units. Via a combination of a request to the EA to slightly amend the requested boundary and an increase in density on other areas of the masterplan area (whilst remaining within the parameters of the existing application) PCRL feel that c. 220 residential units can be recovered resulting in a net loss to the scheme of c. 230 units.
- 3.8. Given the conclusions of the navigational modelling, safeguarding the site in some way is the only option available to give the EA the necessary reassurance to allow them to remove their objection therefore allowing the current planning consent to be determined without the need for a referral to the secretary of state (which would be the process should the EA maintain their objection). To this end discussion has been opened with the EA to agree terms under section 30 of the Anglian Water Authority Act 1977 (s.30 agreement) with a view to putting a restriction on development of this area. Terms are not yet agreed but the main principles are to secure a solution that allows the remaining 54 hectares to be developed as planned and interim uses to be accommodated on the safeguarded 2 hectares thereby allowing the site to be available to the EA at a later date if required. All parties have committed to working towards achieving this in a timely manner to enable the application to proceed to Planning Committee in November.
- 3.9. **Highways England**
- HE have submitted a late consultation response asking for further detail on the transport modelling that has been undertaken. PCRL's consultants are in discussions with HE to provide the required clarification. A verbal update on this can be provided by officers at the meeting.
- 3.10. **Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)**
- The Government's HIF scheme is designed to support infrastructure costs that can unlock housing development. The Purfleet Centre project has a high infrastructure cost burden required to address existing deficiencies as well as to provide infrastructure to accommodate the significant population growth. As such it is ideally placed to benefit from this Fund and the project was shortlisted for the co-development phase of HIF in April 2018. Officers and PCRL are working together to develop a business plan to be submitted to the HIF team in early December.
- 3.11. The HIF business case will request £75m of funding which can be used to support costs such as land assembly, remediation, the replacement of the level crossing with a pedestrian and vehicle bridge, improvements to the river wall and the Integrated Medical Centre. Any funding secured will come to the Council as grant funding and critically, if it is recovered from the scheme via

future sales receipts, can be retained locally for use on other projects. This is a great opportunity to use public sector funding to ensure the delivery of a key project and to potentially secure funding for other priorities in the future.

- 3.12. The injection of HIF funding into the project could also go some way to mitigating the impact of safeguarding 2 hectares of the site for the EA.

3.13. **Land Assembly**

The Council now owns approximately 60% of the site area and the vast majority of the site needed for the first phase of development. It is anticipated that a Compulsory Purchase Order will be required at some point to secure the remaining areas and ensure that the title is clean and does not restrict the development in any way.

3.14. **Infrastructure Delivery**

A key element of the masterplan is the creation of a new, mixed use town centre and high street creating accommodation for retail, food and beverage, leisure, community and health uses in a high quality urban environment. The scheme deliberately delivers this area early on in the development programme to secure the benefits of the placemaking impact, establish Purfleet as a vibrant community and ensure that existing residents benefit from the new development from the outset. Should planning consent and HIF funding be secured as envisaged the town centre could be delivered by 2023.

- 3.15. Another key infrastructure element is the proposed replacement of the level crossing with a pedestrian and vehicle bridge with raised land levels on either side (to prevent the creation of a fly over). This will come at a significant infrastructure cost but will be of real benefit to Purfleet connecting the two sides of the community and removing a bottle neck in the local transport network.

- 3.16. PCRL are committed to supporting the vision of the Integrated Medical Centres programme and have allocated a site within the development to deliver the proposed Purfleet IMC. The Council is awaiting a defined accommodation brief from health partners which PCRL stand ready to use to design the facility. Whilst PCRL will contribute to the IMC via the section 106 agreement further funding will be required to complete the funding package.

3.17. **Primary School**

A three acre site has been allocated in the masterplan for the delivery of the Primary School. The funding for the school is allocated in the Council's capital programme as agreed under the terms of the Development Agreement.

3.18. **Film and TV studios**

There is growing interest in the film and TV studios with two potential partners being in negotiation with PCRL. Should planning consent be secured these discussions will be able to move onto the next stage.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1. Purfleet Centre is a complicated project which has been a long time in development. A number of workstreams are being progressed but proceeding to Planning Committee will be a big step forward in moving towards the delivery stage of the project.
- 4.2. The project has reacted positively to the requirements of the EA and the potential future Thames Barrier. Whilst the safeguarding of the area does not secure the optimum solution in development terms for those two hectares the Council and PCRL accept the strategically important nature of a second Thames Barrier and are satisfied that the two schemes are not mutually exclusive.
- 4.3. Should the project secure funding from the Housing Infrastructure Fund there is the potential for some of this funding to be recouped from development receipts and retained locally for use in other regeneration projects. This could further extend the benefits derived from this scheme.
- 4.4. It is important that the project complies with its current aspiration of delivering much of the infrastructure elements early in the programme. Officers will monitor this via the agreed Development Agreement and associated Delivery Strategy.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

This is a priority project for the Council and Officers are therefore keen to seek feedback from Members on the project direction at regular intervals.

6. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee have been updated on the progress of the project at regular intervals, most recently in January 2018. Updates will continue as the project progresses.

7. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

Purfleet Centre is referenced in the Council's Economic Development and Regeneration Strategies and the Local Development Framework. The proposals will make a significant contribution to achieving the Council's vision for Purfleet and will be of great benefit to new and existing residents.

8. Implications

8.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Mark Terry**
Senior Financial Accountant

The project will have a clear financial impact to the Council, the mechanism for calculating the financial benefit is set out in the signed Development Agreement. As this report contains no decisions there are no specific implications to review at this stage. Full implications will be updated when the next decisions are required.

8.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Caroline Robins**
Locum Solicitor

Eversheds Sutherland have been retained to provide detailed legal advice on this project whilst internal legal services continue to provide advice on governance and related issues. As above this report contains no decisions therefore there are no specific implications to review at this stage. Full implications will be updated when the next decisions are required.

8.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Price**
Team Manager – Community Development and Equalities

Implementation of the project will be informed by statutory equality legislation and community equality impact assessments at the appropriate stages. As above, this report contains no decisions therefore there are no specific implications to review at this stage. Full implications will be updated when the next decisions are required.

8.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None.

5. Background papers used in preparing the report

None.

6. Appendices to the report

None.

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