

**Reports of the Cabinet Member for
Enterprise, Development and Regeneration**

Cabinet – 17 March 2015

VETCH MASTERPLAN REVIEW

Purpose:	To seek endorsement of the Vetch Field Masterplan Review and approval to refer the Revised Masterplan to Planning Committee for adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance
Policy Framework:	City and County of Swansea Unitary Development Plan Adopted 2008 CCS Asset Management Plan One Swansea Plan 2013 Corporate Improvement Plan 2013-17 CCS Sustainable Development Policy
Reason for Decision:	The adopted Masterplan will provide Supplementary Planning Guidance to inform future development and use of the site and to inform site marketing.
Consultation:	Legal, Finance, Planning, Corporate Building and Property Services, Community Recreation, Housing
Recommendation:	It is recommended that Cabinet: - 1) Endorses the Revised Masterplan resulting from the Vetch Field Masterplan Review and agrees that it be referred to the Planning Committee for adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Draft Vetch Masterplan Review was approved by Cabinet on 11th February 2014 as the basis for a public consultation exercise prior to a report back seeking adoption of the final Revised Masterplan as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG).
- 1.2 The Consultation Draft outlined revised draft proposals to the adopted Masterplan which limited the development to the northern area of the site in order to retain some of the existing green space and the popular 'Vetch Veg' community garden.
- 1.3 The stadium buildings were demolished in 2011 and a landscaping scheme was undertaken as a temporary measure whilst proposals to develop the site were identified and realised. As a result the current use of the site was designed to minimise wasted costs and was engineered assuming that development would be forthcoming in the short term. The current situation cannot continue indefinitely without significant capital investment being undertaken to address the issues below:
 - The existing bund on the site of the former North Bank adjacent to Madoc Street acts as a shield for antisocial behaviour and ideally needs to be removed. Underneath this bund is demolition spoil that was left on site and covered to be reused as appropriate in the development. Furthermore only a minimal amount of topsoil cover was incorporated into the grassed area over the bund due to the anticipated life of the site. In the medium term hazardous chemicals from contaminated material under this layer may leach into the top soil, therefore further cover to these hazardous areas will be needed until the site is developed
 - The remaining gates and boundary walls will require attention/demolition due to disrepair or to enhance visibility, security and amenity.
 - The water supply to the 'Vetch Veg' community garden is via a temporary insulated hose from the mains, and to be sustainable requires the installation of an underground system.
 - Some of the footpath areas have started to lift and will require replacement in the short term
- 1.4 Should the site be retained as a park, it has been estimated that, between £270k and £400k would have to be spent, depending upon the level of improvements carried out. No budget is currently identified to meet this requirement and external grant opportunities are limited and, in any event, would require an element of CCS match funding
- 1.5 If the site is developed in accordance with the Revised Masterplan proposals then this cost is unlikely to apply as the works would either be unnecessary due to the development, or alternatively any cost is likely to be borne by a developer.

2.0 The Public Consultation process

2.1 A community consultation exercise was held from 30th June to 11th August 2014 (in excess of the 6 week standard period for draft SPG consultation) and included:-

- Press release and publicity in July 2014
- A manned exhibition at the Sandfields' Community Fayre on 9th August, 2014
- Notices were displayed at the Vetch site on the 'Vetch Veg' notice board during July 2014
- A display was sited in Central Library between 30th June and 11th August 2014
- A presentation was given by officers to the Sandfields' Community Association on 4th August 2014.
- The CCS website displayed information and the ability to comment on-line between 30th June and 11th August 2014.

2.2 A total number of 112 comment forms and 3 e-mails were received by the end of the consultation process in August 2014.

3.0 Community response to the draft amended masterplan

3.1 Approximately half of respondents stated via the comment forms that they were happy or fairly happy with the revised Masterplan proposals.

3.2 There was support from almost 95% and 87% of respondents respectively for Masterplan proposals to retain the 'Vetch Veg' Community Garden and for the provision of more green space. Of those who were not happy with the full Masterplan proposals, concerns generally related to excluding or restricting residential development and maximising greening at the site

3.3 Whilst about a third of respondents were unhappy with the proposed public routes throughout the site, this was largely due to concerns about traffic on the proposed access road to the front of the proposed houses on the Vetch site. However, the Revised Masterplan advocates Home Zone principles for any new streets in the area which should address these concerns.

3.4 In conclusion, the majority of respondents were supportive of large elements of the draft Masterplan Review and half of respondents were fully supportive. The detailed responses received via the comment forms are attached in Appendix 1.

4.0 Responses from Organisations

Swansea Civic Society

- 4.1 Swansea Civic Society challenged the justification for the proposed reduction in residential units from the 120 in the Original Masterplan to 50 in the context of the aspirations of the Local Development Plan process and concluded that the revised proposals “represent half a scheme, are too idealistic for the realities of the current and longer term economic climate”.

5.0 Housing Land Requirement

- 5.1 CCS is required to maintain a 5 year housing land supply at all times. The current supply has dropped to 2.9 years and there is a need to bring forward additional housing land in all areas as a matter of urgency
- 5.2 The Local Housing Market Assessment shows a need to supply 3100 homes within the Central Area (which includes the Vetch site) by 2025, of which 58% could be affordable units. The Vetch is an existing allocation and provides a significant contribution to this supply and if the level of units is reduced then provision will have to be made elsewhere and there are limited opportunities for this within the Central area.

6.0 Response to Consultation Feedback

- 6.1 Half of respondents were happy or fairly happy with the proposals and nearly all respondents supported retention of Vetch Veg and the greening proposals.
- 6.2 To maintain the existing uses at the site would require significant unidentified capital investment and also a revenue budget.
- 6.3 The loss of new housing units at the site would have serious implications for the ability to maintain a 5 year land supply for the area and is not a viable option.
- 6.4 Open space needs for the area are a consideration and it is acknowledged through an Open Space Assessment carried out to inform the LDP process that provision in Castle Ward is deficient. However, the Sandfields does have the best provision within the ward specifically for children and teenagers, albeit provision is significantly less than within adjoining wards. Retention of Vetch Veg and the greening proposed will help address this and provides for a broad spectrum of residents.
- 6.5 In conclusion, no material changes are proposed to the Vetchfield Masterplan Review proposals following the consultation process and accordingly the Revised Masterplan document (which can be accessed via the following link <http://staffnet/index.cfm?articleid=59193>) is recommended for adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

7.0 Equality and Engagement Implications

An EIA screening has been carried out and it is considered that a full EIA report is not needed in this instance. At this stage only a framework for the development of the site is being proposed and this has been the subject of a consultation exercise from which no equality issues have arisen. Any future development of the site must comply with statutory requirements and will follow the submission of a planning application which will be subject to public consultation.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 The current estimated capital receipt for the site is £700k. The Sports Council of Wales (SCW) has a charge on the Vetch property/land together with 2 other sites which will require CCS to pay over any capital receipt up to the value of £2.9m received for these sites.

8.2 Also, CCS is obliged to repay a Welsh Government (WG) grant of approximately £550k for the demolition of the Vetch. However, it is likely that after the SCW has been repaid there will be nothing remaining from any capital receipt to repay WG). The repayment terms for both grants are contradictory as they require all capital receipts to be paid to both parties. In order to rectify this anomaly, WG has asked that CCS formally request permission for any proposed disposals to, detailing the proposed financial terms and request that any capital receipt be foregone by WG in lieu of the SCW charge. Should permission not be given on this basis then as there are no other allocated funds available to pay WG, proposed sales will not proceed.

8.3 As stated earlier, in paragraph 1.5 the current Capital Programme has not allocated any budget towards any possible Capital scheme arising from this Masterplan review. CCS will therefore have to rely on seeking grant and contributions from external funders to meet any capital costs.

8.4 There is no current Revenue budget for ongoing maintenance works and the works referred to in paragraph 1.4.

9.0 Legal Implications

9.1 The Revised Masterplan is proposed to be referred to the Planning Committee as per the Scheme of Delegation (or, if deemed necessary, to Council) for adoption as SPG to policies EV1, EV2, EV3, EV4, HC1(62), HC2, HC3, HC23, HC24, AS2 of the adopted City and County of Swansea Unitary Development Plan and future policies that will be drafted as part of the emerging Local Development Plan.

9.2 The terms of the Revised Masterplan will then form a material planning consideration in the determination of any planning application which may be made.

9.3 SPG should be reviewed regularly to ensure that it reflects current development plan policies.

10. Conclusion

10.1 The Revised Masterplan proposals are broadly supported although there was an element of respondents who wanted no development at the site. Leaving the site as it is will not be an option as improvements will be necessary for which no funding has currently been allocated.

10.2 The level of housing proposed in the Revised Masterplan will go some way to meeting CCS's statutory obligations and furthermore the adoption of the Revised Masterplan as planning guidance will not prevent a further review in the future should development plan policies require consideration as to whether further residential development is needed.

10.3 The Revised Masterplan proposals if adopted will provide developers with more certainty about the acceptability of development proposals and will therefore allow appropriate parts of the site to be marketed at the earliest opportunity.

Background Papers: None.

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Proposed Indicative Layout
Appendix 2 - Detailed Consultation Responses

Appendix 1 – Proposed Indicative Layout



The key features of the indicative layout are:-

- 0.7ha Public Open Space comprising (as numbered and annotated on the layout drawing):
 1. Vetch Veg area fully retained
 2. Potential additional growing area for the Vetch Veg in the short term with capability to site a future community centre subject to funding becoming available.
 3. Wild flower meadow on centre circle
 4. Community orchard and informal open space and potential for natural play. (Whilst this area is currently grassed, much of the foundations of the former football stand remain, so it may be necessary to explore the growing of orchard trees in planters rather than into the ground).
 5. Informal open space
- 40 new homes arranged as short terraces
- A care home or flats on the corner of Madoc Place and William Street which could incorporate shared community facilities.
- Direct natural surveillance of the open space from the new homes
- Direct and well connected street network which is well overlooked. This could be a HomeZone type design as proposed by the Original Masterplan.
- One car parking space per home and significant space for street planting
- The potential to still reinstate gardens which have been reduced to the construction of the football stands, and to integrate developable spaces adjoining the Vetch Field as proposed by the Original Masterplan.