

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 3 March 2022

Report of the Head of Strategic Development

Part I

Electoral Division affected:
Moss Side & Farington;

Corporate Priorities:
Supporting economic growth;

An Update on the Lancashire Central/Cuerden Site

(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:

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Brief Summary

This report provides a progress update including agreeing support to submit the proposed planning application for the Lancashire Central, Cuerden strategic employment site alongside the communications strategy for the project.

This is deemed to be a Key Decision and the provisions of Standing Order C19 have been complied with.

Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to:

- (i) Authorise the Executive Director for Growth, Environment Transport and Community Services, in consultation with the Director of Finance, Director of Corporate Services, and the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Growth, to submit a planning application, for the updated Lancashire Central scheme when completed in early April 2022.
- (ii) Approve the additional steps and actions set out in Appendix 'A'.

Detail

Overview

The Lancashire Central site, at Cuerden, South Ribble, is the county council's prime, mixed-use strategic employment site. Its development is closely aligned to the county council's corporate strategy and key priorities and plays an essential role in Lancashire's emerging long term strategic plan "Lancashire 2050" and in accelerating the "levelling up agenda". The multi-million-pound project has the potential to generate over 2,000 jobs from investment creating prime development employment space, employment space. The scheme has been subject to extensive re-visioning and re-programming since the withdrawal of IKEA in 2018. Despite multiple barriers including the global COVID-19 pandemic, significant effort has progressed and facilitated delivery to the current key milestones.

Planning Strategy

Cabinet is informed that the revised planning strategy for the site is for a more "employment focused" mix of uses given the change in the retail market and the stratospheric rise of good quality employment in those employment sectors supporting contemporary business park, warehousing, logistics and 'final mile' retail distribution, for which this site is well suited to accommodate given proximity to the M65, M6, M61 motorway networks. Employment in these sectors reflects a more advanced range of higher skill levels promoting an improved mix of jobs and competitive salaries compared to more historical 'low skill / low pay' work. This reinforces the ambition to boost employment growth and job opportunities for the project that can make a real difference in the lives and wellbeing for people in Lancashire. In turn, creating a quality place to work, live and visit, cascades to wider improvements in the health and wellbeing of the workforce and promotes other policy agendas such as reduced carbon, including through green space and suitably well-designed development in accordance with planning requirements.

Cabinet is informed that the application will be on the county council's own land and the county council will be undertaking the development via their development partner Maple Grove Developments. The application falls under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 (as amended). This means that the county council is mandated to determine the planning application.

The Planning Project Team is now fully assembled and is being supported by both the county council and Maple Grove Development's appointed specialist consultants. Significant works are currently underway to develop a planning application that reflects the planning strategy to deliver the site in a comprehensive manner.

The application will also be positioned as the crucial first phase to open up the wider site(s) for development and the planning strategy will be taken forward on the basis that it could link to development of the wider site(s) as and when they can be brought forward.

Initial pre-application meetings have taken place with the Planning Authority. Survey works are in process and draft concept designs have been completed alongside

transport modelling exercises which will assist in determining the design of both the on-site and off-site critical infrastructure.

In this regard, officers are engaged with the Highway Authority alongside National Highways Authority as the transport modelling is a critical path item for the project and as such is being closely scrutinised through existing county council programme governance.

Communications

A draft communications strategy for the overall project and a communications action plan for the planning submission have been drafted. These documents are in the process of being agreed by communications teams from the county council and Maple Grove Developments and will be shared wider in line with usual processes.

Consultations

Consultations for planning permission will follow the required planning processes.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

Financial and legal risk management implications are set out in Appendix 'A' and are deemed to be exempt as set out below.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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None		
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Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

Exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. Appendix 'A' contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). It is considered that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.