

Agenda Item 7

Executive Member	Charles Yarwood – Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Assets & Investments		
Strategic Management Team Lead Officer	Nick Gray – Deputy Chief Executive		
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Date	October 31 st 2017		
Ward (s) affected	Dorking North and South	Key Decision	Yes
Subject	The Potential Regeneration and Development Opportunities of The Pippbrook Site and Reigate Road Car Park, Dorking		
<p>Recommendations.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Executive authorises the Chief Executive in consultation with the Executive Member for Assets & Investments, the Executive Member for Economic Development & Transform Leatherhead and the Dorking Members to; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Draw up a brief for a consultant to carry out a Draft Master Plan for the future of the Pippbrook Site and Reigate Road Car Park. b) Procure and retain a property/planning consultant to draw up the master plan for the sites. The plan will include a viability assessment of proposed uses, planning strategy advice and different options available to delivering the project. c) Agree a budget for the consultant of up to £55,000. 2 That the Draft Master Plan is brought back to the Members of the Executive for further consideration following consultation with the Pippbrook Working Party and the Dorking Members. 			
<p>Executive Summary</p> <p>The Pippbrook site and the Reigate Road car park offer a significant opportunity for the Council to make a positive and lasting impact on the economic activity of the east end of Dorking town centre.</p> <p>Proposals for the future of the site would need to complement the existing uses of Dorking Halls, the Leisure Centre and the Council offices.</p> <p>The objective behind initiating a Master Plan is to deliver jobs, encourage economic activity, create new homes, improve car parking and put Pippbrook House back into use.</p> <p>The Master Plan is to include proposals that are financially viable and deliverable.</p> <p>The Master Plan will be used to inform the development of the new Local Plan.</p>			

Environment

A highly attractive area with housing that meets local need

- Preparation of a Master Plan provides the opportunity to examine the scope to provide new homes as well as leisure and commercial uses.
- Any development proposals will be required to enhance the Pippbrook Campus and the entrance to the town.

Prosperity

A vibrant local economy with thriving towns and villages

- Preparation of a Master Plan provides a way to examine the opportunities to invest in the Pippbrook site and Reigate Road car park to support the town's culture and economic wellbeing, particularly around the east end of the High Street.
- It will address infrastructure needs, in particular parking provision balancing the needs of residents and local businesses at Reigate Road car park and ensure the link through to the station is maintained and enhanced.
- Preparation of a Master Plan provides an opportunity to address the challenges of putting Pippbrook House back into good repair and use.
- The existing leisure uses on the site will be maintained and there is potential for additional facilities to be added.

The Executive has the authority to determine the Recommendations

1. Background

- 1.1 The Pippbrook Site and Reigate Road car park are situated at the east end of Dorking High Street close to the junction of the A24 and Reigate Road. The attached plan shows the two sites outlined in red. This pivotal site forms a gateway to the town centre and provides a regeneration development opportunity that would benefit the east end of the High Street and Dorking town centre.
- 1.2 The Council recently spent £4.5 million on the refurbishment of the Council offices and subsequently the Police and Surrey County Council consolidated their presence on the site. Further commercial uses can be considered for the site bringing economic activity to Dorking, creating local jobs and economic spin off in shops and restaurants.
- 1.3 The area of the Pippbrook site for which it is proposed to prepare a Master Plan is illustrated on the attached plan and extends to some 3.85 acres (1.56 hectares). It excludes the main tennis courts, the bowls rink and the Council offices. The Reigate Road site comprises 3.06 acres (1.23 hectares) and includes the majority of The Huts and the sloping bank to the south. The two areas are well connected and provide an opportunity to consider future complementary uses. The current planning policy for both sites is contained in the Dorking Town Area Action Plan 2012. Policy DT10 states;

“The Reigate Road area shown on the Proposals Map is identified for civic, entertainment, cultural, recreational and community purposes. Development of any part of the site for other uses will not normally be permitted, unless there is no reasonable prospect of that part of the site being used for the purposes specified in this policy.”

1.4 Preparation of a Master Plan provides the opportunity to inform an assessment of the suitability of this policy approach in the future as part of the preparation of the new Local Plan.

1.5 It is proposed therefore that a property/planning consultant is commissioned to consider the two sites and compile a Master Plan taking into account the following;

Issues to be considered in the Master Plan

- The requirements of the existing uses on and around the site including Pippbrook Offices, local houses, the main tennis courts, the Bowls Club and pavilion, Dorking Halls and the Sports Centre.
- Opportunity to create local jobs.
- The potential of supporting local businesses and attracting new visitors to the town with the possible economic spin off in local restaurants and shops.
- Providing good quality housing including affordable housing.
- It will be a pre requisite that any development would require the refurbishment of Pippbrook House and putting it back into viable use.
- The front of the Pippbrook site facing onto Reigate Road is the “gateway” to the town. Any new development will be required to enhance the character and appearance of the area.
- The Master Plan will include a car parking strategy to take into account existing uses and users on the two sites, the proposed future uses and in addition have due regard for the town’s current car parking challenges.
- A viability assessment of the different uses will be provided. The opportunity for applying for funding from the Coast to Capital LEP and other possible grants that may be available post Brexit are to be explored.
- Maintaining and improving the site as the pedestrian “link” to the railway stations.
- Any development will need to maintain the heritage and market town character of Dorking.
- Have due regard to the current planning policy but consider alternative uses that could be promoted during the preparation of the new Local Plan.
- The deliverability of the proposed development and the different options available to MVDC will need to be explained.

1.6 It is proposed that a draft Master Plan is considered by the Pippbrook Working Group and the Local Members for Dorking. It would then be revised and reported back to the Scrutiny Committee and Executive. At this stage the Executive would be asked to approve the Master Plan and agree that it is used to inform the development of future planning policy for Dorking town centre through the preparation of the new Local Plan.

2. Financial Implications

The proposed additional expenditure of £55,000 required for the consultant is a “spend to save” initiative with the prospect of significant income generation and capital receipts in future years. The £55,000 is likely to be incurred in the current financial year and will need to be funded from the Council’s revenue account in 2017/18. The most recent budget monitoring report (to the 26th September Executive Committee) indicates a projected overspend on revenue of around £0.5m for

2017/18, so there is little prospect that the cost can be absorbed by other savings. The cost will therefore be a charge against the Council's revenue reserves this year, which currently stand at £2.2m. The s151 Officer's recommended figure for a prudent level of revenue reserve is £1.3m.

3. Legal Implications

The appointment of a consultant to prepare a Master Plan for the Pippbrook Site and Reigate Road car park will need to be procured, in accordance with the Council's contract standing orders (CSOs), through an open tender advertised on Contracts Finder and the SE Shared Services e-Sourcing Portal, unless a suitable framework is identified.

Separately, a report on title of the site will be required to inform the appointed consultant of potential constraints.

4. Options

4.1 The Executive has the following options;

1. As set out in the recommendations of this report.
2. Do nothing.
3. Sell the following;
 - i). The front of the Pippbrook site facing onto the High Street and part of the Reigate Road site to accommodate misplaced car parking.
 - ii). Pippbrook House and part of the Reigate Road site to accommodate additional car parking.

Front of Pippbrook Site

4.2 MVDC has been in discussion for some time with a hotel operator for the front portion of the Pippbrook Site. To date a commercial deal has been agreed in outline however various challenges remain including:

- Planning limitations.
- Value engineering is needed to lower the cost of construction. The site slopes and is therefore expensive to develop.
- Cost of re providing car parking to the rear of Reigate Road.
- MVDC assuming developer risk.

Pippbrook House

4.3 Pippbrook House is a major challenge. The cost of putting the building back into basic repair has been revised to £1,620,000 (2017 Grove Milican). Following advice given to MVDC by Savills the only use that would generate a positive value is residential which is not supported by the current Local Plan. To refurbish this building for offices will cost in the region of £5,000,000 to £5,800,000 (including car parking spaces re provision). It's potential to generate income does not justify this cost (even with possible grant funding).

4.4 In July 2014 the Council agreed to dispose of Pippbrook House. The sale of any enabling site was permitted only for operational support of the main building. In it's current condition, with the limitations of planning policy and the Council instruction of no financial enabling development assisting its sale this building is effectively unsaleable. If the situation remains as it is, the building will remain

empty and in poor repair.

- 4.5 The public consultation carried out in 2014 regarding the Pippbrook Site resulted in an over whelming majority of respondents (81%) supporting MVDC using the site to generate income for the purpose of refurbishing Pippbrook, and/or Pippbrook Offices and/or generally taking the most favourable course of action to limit the financial burden upon the tax payers. Only 19% of respondents favoured no enabling development on the site.
- 4.6 In conclusion, the future of the site needs to be considered comprehensively. A Master Plan will help inform the Council of a way forward and assist in becoming a tool that can be used in the drafting of the new Local Plan. This in the short term can give a clear, deliverable pathway to the Council encouraging economic regeneration, housing, better car parking and get Pippbrook House back into use.

5. Corporate Implications

Monitoring Officer commentary

I confirm that all relevant legal implications have been taken into account.

S151 Officer commentary

The s151 officer confirms that all relevant financial risks and implications have been taken into account.

Risk Implications

The procurement process will need to be tightly managed to ensure that the Master Plan is ready in time to inform the development of the Local Plan.

Equalities Implications

There are no specific equalities implications as a direct consequence of this report.

Employment Issues

There are no employment implications in relation to preparation of the Master Plan or the procurement of a property consultant

Sustainability Issues

Normal sustainable standards will be imposed during the planning process.

Consultation

The Pippbrook Working Party and the local Members of Dorking will be consulted with as stated in the report.

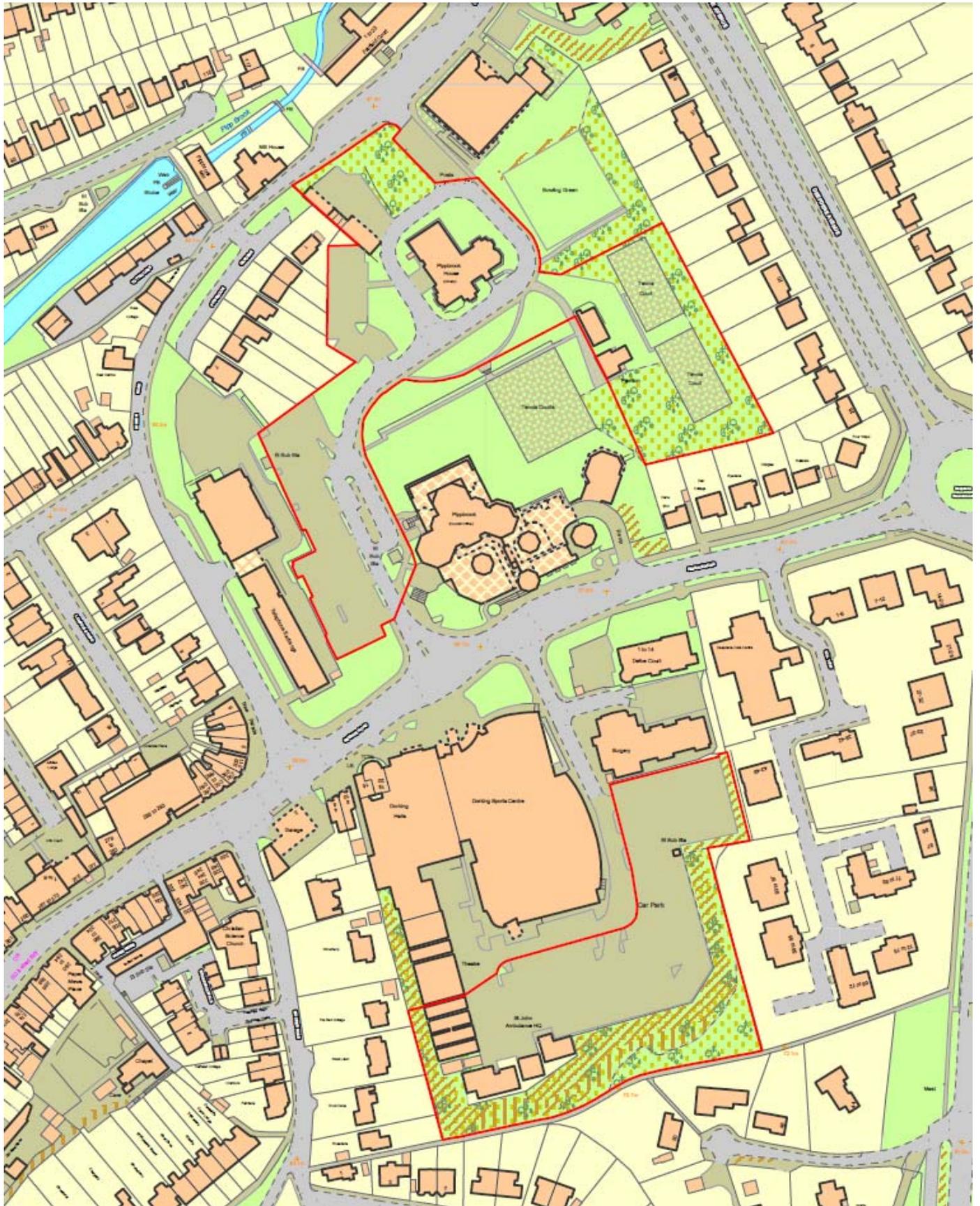
Communications

This will be considered by the Communications team as per the usual protocol regarding a press release accompanying Executive Reports.

Background Papers

No back ground papers are attached to this report.

The Pippbrook Site and Reigate Road Car Park



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