

Title of Committee: Executive
Date of meeting: 17 November 2020

Title: Newbold Comyn: Final Masterplan and Funding for Cycling Facilities

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Portfolio Holder: Cllr Moira-Ann Grainger, Neighbourhood Services

Public report

Wards of the District directly affected: Clarendon, Crown, Newbold

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	Yes
Key Decision:	Yes
Included within the Forward Plan:	Yes
Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken:	Yes
Consultation & Community Engagement:	Third public consultation completed 30 June 2020
Final Decision:	Yes
Accessibility checked	Yes

Officer/Councillor Approval

Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	28/10/2020	Chris Elliot
Head of Service	28/10/2020	Julie Lewis
CMT	28/10/2020	Chris Elliot, Andrew Jones, Bill Hunt, Dave Barber
Section 151 Officer	28/10/2020	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	28/10/2020	Andrew Jones
Finance	28/10/2020	Mike Snow
Portfolio Holder(s)	28/10/2020	Cllr Moira-Ann Grainger

1. Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to present members with a proposed final masterplan for Newbold Comyn for agreement and to seek approval for funding to enable the progression of a bid to British Cycling for the capital funds for the costs of the cycling facilities contained within the plan. The report also updates members of the estimated total project costs.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That the Executive notes the results of the public consultation on the draft masterplan carried out earlier this Spring as set out in appendix A.
- 2.2. That the Executive agrees the proposed masterplan at appendix B for the re-development of Newbold Comyn, noting the results of the recent market testing exercise.
- 2.3. That the Executive notes the current estimated costs to deliver the masterplan. An initial budget required to implement the masterplan in phases will be proposed alongside costs for other priority corporate projects to be set out in the Council's February budget report.
- 2.4. That the Executive notes that a stage 1 application to British Cycling for funding towards the cycling facilities contained within the masterplan has been successful. The Council has been shortlisted to make a stage 2 application, which if successful may result in an award of the maximum funding of 50% (c£425k) towards the capital costs.
- 2.5. That the Executive agrees to provide written confirmation to British Cycling at the point of submitting a stage 2 application for funding (January 2021) that the Council will meet any shortfall for the capital project of up to 50% of costs, currently estimated at c£425k, if the application is successful. Those costs (and those at 2.6) are met from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) amounts received by this Council with the Section 123 List being amended to reflect this and the profile of CIL funding to be determined by the Section 151 Officer.
- 2.6. That subject to 2.5, the Executive approves £55k to undertake the detailed design of the cycling facilities, required for the stage 2 application for British Cycling funding and that these costs are to be met from CIL amounts received by the Council, with the Section 123 List being amended to reflect this and the profile of CIL funding to be determined by the Section 151 Officer.
- 2.7. That subject to 2.5 and 2.6 above, the Executive delegates authority to Deputy Chief Executive (AJ) and Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Neighbourhood and Finance Portfolio Holders, to progress the bid application and its financing, and seek planning and any other consents (e.g. listed building and building control) necessary to implement the cycle trails and conversion of the golf shop.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

3.1 Recommendation 2.1- the Executive notes the results of public consultation: Following the closure of the 18-hole golf course in 2017, the Council has been considering the future of Newbold Comyn. Work has been undertaken, through consultation and engagement with stakeholders, to identify a mix of facilities which meets local needs, increases resident engagement/usage with the site and importantly, attempts to secure a long-term financially sustainable solution. This work has resulted in the creation of draft masterplan which includes both free-to-access and paid for facilities.

3.2 Between March and June 2020 the Council undertook its third public consultation on the proposals for the Comyn. A total of 2215 responses were received from the on-line survey. Email responses were also obtained from various stakeholder groups including the political parties.

3.3 In summary, the feedback from the online consultation showed strong support for the masterplan as consulted upon. When asked to rate overall support for proposals where 5 is support and 1 is do not support, 70% of respondents indicated that they supported the proposed mix of facilities and their location as follows;

	5	4	3	2	1
Considering all of the facilities together, do you support the proposed mix of facilities and their location? (5 = support and 1 = do not support)	42.3%	27.7%	15.4%	7%	7.6%

3.4 Individually, all of the proposed facilities within the masterplan received strong levels of support with only a minority of respondents stating that they would not use or support the facilities. A summary of the consultation feedback can be found at Appendix A.

3.5 Whilst the responses to the online questions showed high levels of support, a number of questions and concerns were flagged in the survey comments and also through the consultation with stakeholder groups.

3.6 These concerns centred on;

- 1) The inclusion of the commercial elements of the masterplan (in particular the activity centre) and their impacts both in terms of the potential to turn Newbold Comyn into a destination venue and also the resultant increased traffic and requirement for more parking spaces. Some consultees felt that the draft masterplan proposal was contrary to the objectives of Council's Climate Emergence Action Programme (CEAP).

- 2) A desire to see improved site linkages with cycle and pedestrian routes beyond the site.
- 3.7 Discussions with the Member Steering Group at its meeting on 28th July 2020 reached a conclusion that the Comyn should not be developed as a destination venue and that future development should be aimed primarily at residents living within the District.
- 3.8 Responding to the concerns about the commercial facilities and parking requirements, a number of revisions have been made to the proposed masterplan, as set out in 3.14 below.
- 3.9 Further work will need to be undertaken as part of the next phase of work to understand the impact in terms of an appropriate number of parking spaces. This will involve undertaking a full traffic and parking assessment and consultation with Warwickshire County Council transport planning team. The feedback about the wider linkages to the site will also be addressed by officers, including the Council's Climate Change Programme Director, as the project progresses.
- 3.10 **Recommendation 2.2 – Agreeing the proposed masterplan noting the results of the market testing exercise:** In addition to this spring's consultation, a soft market testing exercise was also conducted by the Council's consultants SLC between July and September. The purpose of this work was to understand the appetite operators have in managing the facilities proposed in the masterplan. The results of this work are summarised in a report including in Appendices C and C.1.
- 3.11 The findings show a disappointing response, reflecting the current situation regarding Covid-19 which has impacted the leisure operator market nationally. Of the 34 separate operators contacted, responses were received from 5. There was interest from one operator in whole site management. However, it is felt that this option would be fettering future options for the Council given the current economic uncertainties and the potential benefits to the Council in using a mixed management model for the site. The remaining respondents expressed an interest in the operation of the artificial turf pitch but there was no interest in activity centre, golfing facilities or visitor centre.
- 3.12 Accepting that the on-line consultation responses showed strong support for all of the facilities, the market testing results along with some of the concerns fed back from stakeholder groups, have prompted a number of revisions to the masterplan. In addition, it should also be noted that since the masterplan was designed, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the economy, including the sports and leisure markets and this changing context has also been taken into account.
- 3.13 The lack of current appetite from operators to manage the activity centre and golfing facilities has meant that these specific activities have been removed from the masterplan. The absence of operator interest certainly challenges the long term sustainability of these facilities. However, in

recognition of the consultation feedback and the project's objectives to provide facilities which visitors find attractive and increase engagement with the site, it is proposed that the areas previously allocated for the activity centre and golf are retained for alternative activities to be identified at a later date.

3.14 The proposed final masterplan is shown at Appendix B. For reference the original masterplan (as consulted upon during Spring 2020) is also included at Appendix D. The proposed amendments are summarised below:

- a) Removal of high ropes/climbing activity centre (no. 4 on masterplan). The area will be "zoned" and retained for outdoor activity – the type and nature to be reviewed by spring 2022, approximately 18 months' time. This amendment has been made due to the current lack of sufficient operator interest in operating the proposed facility at Newbold Comyn. It also responds to consultation feedback which expressed a desire that the Newbold Comyn should not become a destination venue.
- b) Removal of proposed zip wires (no. 5 on masterplan). The area will be "zoned" and retained for outdoor activity – the type and nature to be reviewed by spring 2022, approximately 18 months' time. The reason for this amendment is as per 3.14a above.
- c) Removal of adventure golf (no. 6 on masterplan). The area will be "zoned" and retained for outdoor activity – the type and nature to be reviewed by spring 2022, approximately 18 months' time. The reason for this amendment is due to the current lack of sufficient operator interest.
- d) Removal of 9-hole pitch and putt (no. 2 on masterplan). The area will be "zoned" and retained for outdoor activity – the type and nature to be reviewed by spring 2022, approximately 18 months' time. The reason for this amendment is as per 3.14c above.
- e) Inclusion of a learn to ride area to enable young children to learn to ride and develop cycling skills. Two options for the location of this facility are being explored as shown at no. 6 and adjacent to no. 3 on the masterplan. The reason for this inclusion responds to British Cycling feedback that a purpose built learn to ride area will complement the other cycling facilities proposed for the site, allowing beginners to progress onto the trails. The location of both options will ensure that new facility will be convenient for access to toilets and refreshments.
- f) The barns (behind Newbold Comyn Arms) to be considered as a potential alternative location for visitor centre if it proves unviable to progress with the proposed location for the visitor centre (adjacent to area 8). There is also the potential for remaining barn space to be let to local enterprises for commercial rent. The reason for the inclusion of this additional option is to enable the Council to explore potential benefits and impacts of an alternative location for the visitor centre,

including the mitigation of planning risks, re-use of a listed building and income generation through the commercial letting of space to local businesses. Reference will also be made to work of the council-wide Strategic Asset Review in determining the suitability and viability of the barns for this purpose.

- g) Parking spaces (P4) - area to be retained for additional parking as required. The amount of parking spaces to be determined by the emerging masterplan and full traffic and parking assessment in consultation with Warwickshire County Council transport planners, to be undertaken in next phase of work.
- h) Landscaping to new nature reserve – a number of revisions to the landscaping are included, with the purpose of maximising biodiversity through the creation of additional grassland areas, pond and ditch improvements and tree planting, achieved through direct planting and natural regeneration.

3.15 The removal of the activity centre and golf facilities addresses the concerns raised about the commercialisation of the site. However, it should be noted that this will also remove an income stream which may have contributed to covering the Council's costs of maintaining the Newbold Comyn.

3.16 The masterplan will represent a key policy document setting out the Council's aspirations for the site. It should also be recognised that the masterplan sets out the outline design for Newbold Comyn and that significant further work will be required to progress the detailed design for each facility in preparation for future planning permission(s).

3.17 Agreeing the masterplan will be important as this will enable the Council to progress in a phased manner on a number of key elements (e.g. development of the cycle trails, nature reserve and football facilities) as funding becomes available.

3.18 Recommendation 2.3 - Estimated masterplan development costs. The total estimated cost to deliver the masterplan based on the high level design is between £8,441,622 and £10,276,904. A cost breakdown is set out in the table below.

Facility	Scenario A: Original masterplan (as consulted in Spring 2020)	Scenario B: Proposed final masterplan (excluding activity centre and golf offer)
Built Facilities		
Visitor Centre / Football Pavilion	£2,710,200	£2,710,200
Repurposed former golf shop	£200,000	£200,000
Outdoor Facilities		
External Works and Landscaping	£950,000	£950,000
3G Artificial Turf Pitch	£850,000	£850,000

Facility	Scenario A: Original masterplan (as consulted in Spring 2020)	Scenario B: Proposed final masterplan (excluding activity centre and golf offer)
Cycle Trails / Pedestrian Routes	£504,600	£504,600
Outdoor Activity Centre (High Ropes, climbing, zip wires)	£630,000	-
Adventure Golf course	£250,000	-
Reinstatement of Pitch and Putt	£275,000	-
Adventure Play Area (and refurbished Toddler Play Area)	£330,000	£330,000
Relocated Grass Pitches	£15,000	£15,000
Woodland Craft kiosk	£30,000	£30,000
Sub total	£6,744,800	£5,589,800
Contingency (10%)	£675,000	£559,000
Professional fees (16%) and surveys	£1,283,000	£984,368
Furniture, Fittings and Equipment	£22,800	£22,800
Inflation to construction midpoint (Q2 2023)	£1,551,304	£1,285,654
Total development cost	£10,276,904	£8,441,622

- 3.19 It should be noted that these costs are estimated and will change as the design is developed. The design is currently at RIBA 1 stage and would need to be progressed to RIBA 4 before greater cost certainty could be achieved. Scenario A provides an estimated cost for the total project including the now discounted activity centre and golf offer. For comparison Scenario B shows the total cost excluding those elements. Should suitable facilities be identified at a future date to replace the activity centre and golf this will inflate the total budget required and therefore Scenario A is provided to indicate a potential budget cost.
- 3.20 The cost breakdown excludes a budget for the creation of the nature reserve. The Council is aware of a number of grant opportunities and dialogue is ongoing with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust about the future creation and management of the proposed new reserve. The Trust would also have access to grant funding.
- 3.21 The cost break down excludes a budget allowance for the additional option of refurbishing the barns to enable the buildings to be used for a visitor centre and/or business lets. Previous feasibility work has indicated that this could cost in the region of c£2mill.
- 3.22 Additional work has been undertaken by SLC to explore the external grant funding opportunities available to the Council. This study included in appendix E indicates that there is potential for the Council to secure between £1.24mill and £2.9mill capital funding. Clearly, the Council's ability to obtain this funding will be dependent on many factors, including capacity within the Neighbourhood Services team to pursue grants. Should the Council be successful this would reduce the amount of capital required to deliver the

masterplan to between £6.98mill and £5.3mill based on scenario B facilities being delivered.

3.24 The implementation of the masterplan will be undertaken in phases. Approval for an initial budget will be considered as part of next February's budget report to Council, in order that the Newbold Comyn budget requirements can be submitted alongside other corporate priorities. Subject to approval, the budget could take the form of a Council Reserve designated for the phased implementation of the masterplan.

3.25 Following on from confirmation of a budget in February for project delivery, further work from officers would be required to identify a phased implementation timetable based on availability of internal and external funding.

3.26 Recommendation 2.4 - That Executive notes that a stage 1 application to British Cycling for funding towards the cycling facilities has been successful. The masterplan includes the provision of cycling facilities, including 3 cycling trails (family trail, a skills orientated based trail and a cross country trail), a learn to ride area and a bike hire and maintenance facility located in the former golf shop. The trails and learn to ride area will be free to use.

3.27 The current estimated cost based on high level designs to construct these facilities is c£850k. This excludes an additional estimated c£55k fees for design development to produce detailed designs, commission surveys and obtain planning permissions.

3.28 The Council has been successful in its stage 1 funding application to British Cycling for Places to Ride (PTR) funding for the cycle facilities. The Council has been invited to submit a stage 2 application, which if successful may result in the Council being awarded 50% of the capital costs for the construction of the facilities, currently estimated at £425k.

3.29 Recommendation 2.5: That Executive agrees to provide written confirmation that it will fund up to 50% of match funding as part of a stage 2 application: As part of the full application for the cycling facilities (deadline 15 January 2021), the Council will be required to commit to provide the remaining 50% funding through written confirmation, to ensure that the project is deliverable.

3.30 In addition, the Council will also need to;

- Complete the detailed design for all facilities; trails, learn to ride area and bike hire building
- Submit planning applications and listed building consent (if required)
- Obtain pre-tender estimates
- Devise a cycling development plan, based on further consultation to design and run a programme of activities including coaching, recreational sessions and events.

3.31 The Neighbourhood Services Programme Team will undertake the work to develop the stage 2 bid and subject to the outcome manage the construction of the facilities. However, there is no current officer capacity to undertake the work to devise and over-see the cycling development programme. (The cycling development programme is a British Cycling requirement as part of the funding scheme.) The Council therefore needs to identify a viable solution to deliver this work. A number of options are currently being explored. These include;

- Partnership working with local cycle clubs. There are further opportunities to link this work with the operation of the proposed bike hire facility.
- Partnership working with Everyone Active to engage sports development resource
- Recruitment of an intern, marketing opportunity through links with local universities, colleges and sporting bodies.

3.32 The masterplan funding strategy report provided by SLC has identified the potential to secure additional external funding for the cycle facilities;

- Sport England Community Asset Fund – up to £50k
- FCC Community Foundation Action Fund – up to £100k
- HS2 The Community and Environmental Fund - up to £75k

Further work is required to assess the likelihood of success with applications to these funds.

3.33 The pressing deadline for the application will require officers within the Neighbourhood Programme team to prioritise this project.

3.34 The budget required to meet the grant match funding will be met from CIL amounts received by the Council with the Section 123 List being amended to include Newbold Comyn with up to £425k allocated in 2020/21 in consultation with the Section 151 Officer.

3.35 Recommendation 1.6: Approve £55k for design of cycling facilities:

The design development costs are not included in the British Cycling, Places to Ride grant scheme. This report therefore recommends funding of £55k from CIL amounts to progress the current high level designs for the trails and refurbishment of the golf shop to detailed plans, submit planning applications and provide tender estimates. This process would also involve the undertaking of a number of surveys. The Section 123 List will be amended to include Newbold Comyn with a further £55k allocated in 2020/21 in consultation with the Section 151 Officer.

3.36 Recommendation 1.7: Delegation of authority to progress the bid application and seek planning consents.

As stated above in 3.31 there is considerable work to do to progress the cycling scheme in readiness for the stage 2 application for the funding. It is recommended that authority is delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive, (AJ) as project sponsor, and S151

Officer, in consultation with the Neighbourhood Services and Finance Portfolio Holders, to oversee the work of the project team to achieve this.

- 3.37** It is understood that planning permissions will be required for the cycle trails and the learn to ride area. Whilst the works to the former golf shop are intended to minimise alterations to this grade II listed building, there is a reasonable possibility that planning permission and other consents (e.g. listed building and building control) will also be required.

4. Policy Framework

4.1. Fit for the Future (FFF)

- 4.2 "The Council's FFF Strategy is designed to deliver the Vision for the District of making it a Great Place to Live, Work and Visit. To that end amongst other things the FFF Strategy contains several Key projects. This report shows the way forward for implementing a significant part of one of the Council's Key projects."

4.3 FFF Strands

4.4 External impacts of proposal(s)

People - Health, Homes, Communities - Newbold Comyn is currently free to access providing opportunities for improved health and wellbeing outcomes with specific reference to physical and mental well-being. The study will not impact on this commitment.

Services - Green, Clean, Safe - The Council is committed to maintaining Newbold Comyn and preserving public access ensuring the area is well looked after. The study will not impact on this commitment. The proposed new built facilities which form part of the masterplan (such as the visitor centre, changing rooms etc.) will be developed in line with the Council's Climate Emergency Action programme. The design process for these will seek to achieve net zero carbon in operation and will explore practical steps to reduce embodied carbon in the construction materials and process. Furthermore, inclusion of cycling facilities, and in particular the learn to ride area, will assist people to become more confident with cycling and to use cycling more frequently as a means of transport.

Money- Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment - The proposals within the Masterplan could provide additional local jobs. It would positively impact on the economy by attracting visitors.

4.5 Internal impacts of the proposal(s)

People - Effective Staff – The project management to implement the masterplan is will be overseen by the Neighbourhood Services Programme Team. However, some additional resource will be required to undertake the work to manage the cycling development programme. See 3.31 above.

Services - Maintain or Improve Services - Proposal recognises customer needs and will improved service provision in line with these.

Money - Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term - Proposal ensures that the Council gets best value from the asset, and income maximised, set against customer needs and deficit in Budgetary Framework.

4.6 Supporting Strategies

- 4.7. Each strand of the FFF Strategy has several supporting strategies. The impact of the recommendations within this report seek to protect the Council's financial position while protecting a valuable public asset in the long term.
- 4.8. In addition, any proposals that emerge from the process will need to comply with Section 13, paragraphs 133 – 147: Protecting Green Belt Land of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 4.9. Proposals will also need to support the aspirations of the Green Spaces Strategy for Warwick District 2012 – 2026, in particular recommendations B (Improve), C (Connect), D (Involve) E (Resource), F (Sustain) and G (Conserve).
- 4.10 The recently adopted Business Strategy 2020 -2023 refers to providing outstanding public amenities at Newbold Comyn as a priority initiative to which the recommendations in this report would contribute.

4.11 Changes to Existing Policies

- 4.12 The Council's updated Playing Pitch Strategy was approved by the Executive in July 2019. The football element of the updated Strategy and the FA Local Football Facilities Plan identifies a need to improve the condition of the existing grass pitches, refurbishment of the pavilion/changing rooms, and to recommends the establishment of a full size 3G pitch and Multi Use Games Area at Newbold Comyn to address the issues of over play of grass pitches.

4.13 Impact Assessments

- 4.14 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) of the masterplan is shown at appendix F. It should be noted that this is a high-level assessment and the impact assessment will be revised as the detailed design is developed for each facility within the masterplan.

5 Budgetary Framework

- 5.1. The match funding of up to c£425k (50%) of the capital works in relation to the cycling facilities will be funded from CIL amounts received by the Council. It may be possible to reduce the amount of match funding needed, if additional third party grant applications are successful as stated in 3.31 above.

- 5.2. The budget required for the design development of the cycling facilities is £55k. The funding will facilitate the design development and planning applications for the cycle trails and learn to ride area, refurbishment of the former golf shop. The costs will also be funded from CIL amounts received by the Council.
- 5.3. The budget implications for a phased implementation of the wider project will be considered within the February 2021 Budget Report.

6 Risks

- 6.1 Agreeing the masterplan ahead of a budget being identified to secure the delivery of the plan could raise unrealistic public and stakeholder expectations of the Council's ability to implement the proposals. This risk will need to be managed through a robust communication strategy about the budget position and likely timeframes.
- 6.2 As the PTR programme is coming to an end, there is a requirement that all facilities are completed by March 2022. Developing the cycle trails ahead of the completion of the detailed design of the nature reserve, could result in overall design of the former golf course being more influenced by the cycle trails rather than the new nature reserve. Use of habitat survey data and close working with the Green Spaces team, Warwickshire County Council Ecology and WWT will be required during the design phase to mitigate this risk.
- 6.3 The deadline for the second stage application to British Cycling is January 2021. There is considerable work to be undertaken to achieve this deadline, including procurement of a cycle trail designer, completion of detailed design and submission of planning application along with commissioning of required surveys. To mitigate this risk, it may be necessary to increase the officer resourcing of this project to address the workload requirements.
- 6.4 Feedback from British Cycling is that Newbold Comyn is an exciting site in terms of its scope to include cycling trails which would have the potential to attract many cyclists. The work of the Project Board to date, in consultation with the cross party members, has established that the site should predominately be aimed at local people. The design of the cycling facilities therefore will need to be carefully managed to ensure that the final proposed cycling facilities do not create a destination facility.
- 6.5 The Covid-19 pandemic on wider economy impacts the viability of masterplan and the cycle facilities, meaning that it is unaffordable to maintain facilities. Close scrutiny of the Council's position will be required in relation to funding proposals for the Comyn as part of the February budget report.
- 6.6 There is a risk that costs for the work undertaken to date for the whole scheme and also specifically for the cycling facilities will be lost, if it is subsequently decided not to progress with the phases for the redevelopment. The risk will be mitigated by the phased approach and robust project governance.

7 Alternative Option(s) considered.

- 7.1. There is the option to delay agreeing the masterplan until budget decisions can be made. However, it is felt important to get timely agreement on the masterplan and the facilities contained within it, in order that individual elements can be progressed in a phased manner as funding opportunities become available, e.g. the cycling and football facilities.
- 7.2. There is the option to terminate the progression of the application for British Cycling funding for the cycling facilities. However, the opportunity to access 50% external funding (c£425k) is positive and will significantly improve the viability of delivering cycling facilities in the Comyn which the consultation shows is well supported by the community.