

## **North Somerset Council Decision**

**Decision of:** Cllr. Mark Canniford, Executive Member for Placemaking & Economy

**With advice from:** The Director of Place and Director of Corporate Services (151 Officer)



This is an urgent decision and the public notice procedure has been followed.

**Decision No: 21/22 DP 94**

**Subject: Application for Brownfield Land Release Funding (capital)**

**Key Decision: YES**

**Reason:**

Value of bid exceeds £500,000

**Background:**

This application for funding will support delivery of the Corporate Plan objective of creating a Thriving and Sustainable Place, specifically the delivery of “a broad range of new homes to meet our growing need, with an emphasis on quality and affordability”.

In April 2021, government announced £75m Brownfield Land Release Funding to assist local authorities to bring forward brownfield public sector land for housing. The closing date for applications is 2<sup>nd</sup> June.

Bids must be submitted via the West of England Combined Authority and must meet the following gateway criteria:

- Land must be in council ownership.
- Funding must be used for capital works on council owned land.
- Funding and deliverability of proposed works must enable the release of the land for housing by the end of March 2024: this entails entering into a Joint Venture, transferring to a Development Company or disposing of the site by that date – it does not require a start on site of the housing.
- Evidence of market failure requiring support. This can include market failure in terms of not delivering a specific type of product such as MMC or sustainability specifications.

The evaluation of bids that pass these criteria are judged against value for money (40%), strategic case (30%), deliverability (20%), innovation (5%) and fit with public sector equality duty (5%). Full details are available at <https://www.local.gov.uk/fund-details>.

This report requests authority to submit a bid for £1.075m in relation to the council's Walliscote Place site, which is an agreed high-priority location in Weston Town Centre. The funding would pay for the removal of an underground fuel tank and groundworks (surcharging/piling) required due to poor ground conditions and to mitigate against flood risk. The site is allocated for 70 homes but is seen to have the potential to deliver as many as 100.

There is existing developer interest in this site, but viability is poor due to relatively low sales values against the costs, particularly the additional abnormal costs described above.

It is intended that the council will launch a procurement process for a development partner in September 2021, potentially as part of a portfolio package of sites in NSC ownership. BLRF funding announcements are expected in August 2021, and, if successful, NSC would be able to include the grant in the offer to developers bidding to work with NSC (subject to compliance with funding terms). However this procurement and the acceptance of grant will remain subject to further formal decision making. No expenditure of grant funding will take place until an agreed business case and route to delivery have been approved.

### **Decision:**

- To authorise the submission of a bid via WECA to the Brownfield Land Release Fund to support delivery of housing on council-owned land at Walliscote Place, Weston-super-Mare, to a total value of £1,075,000.

### **Reasons:**

To support the Corporate Plan objective of creating a Thriving and Sustainable Place, in particular “the delivery of a broad range of new home to meet our growing need, with an emphasis on quality and affordability”.

### **Options considered:**

- Not to submit a bid for funding: this would reduce the prospect of being able to deliver housing on this site and/or would increase the need for investment by NSC or a third party. The site has been stalled for a number of years and is unlikely to come forward without additional support.
- To submit bids in relation to other sites: officers have reviewed other options, however no other sites have been identified that meet the gateway criteria at the present time.

### **Financial implications:**

If successful, this bid would generate £1,075,000 capital grant funding. No match-funding is required.

The cost of submitting the bid is officer time only.

### **Legal powers and implications:**

Capital funding bids in the range of £1 – 5m require an Executive Member Decision.

Submission of the bid itself does not have further legal implications.

### **Climate change and environmental implications:**

Submission of the bid does not in itself have climate change or environmental implications.

Subsequent project delivery, if approved, would need to take into account climate change and environmental implications. Grant funding would assist delivery of a higher specification of sustainability than would otherwise be the case. An initial target for this development is a reduction of 80% against BREL 2013 baseline standards, a level which has been achieved on other sites in Weston.

### **Consultation:**

Due to the relatively short timescale for preparing a bid, consultation has been limited. However local ward members will be notified of the submissions and invited to discuss the future of the sites. The site has formed parts of wider consultation on the Weston Placemaking Strategy and on the council's Development Programme.

Consultation on subsequent project delivery, if successful in securing funding, would be expected to include engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, including a statutory consultation process in relation to any planning applications.

### **Risk management:**

The risks of submitting a bid are fairly minimal as it will be possible to withdraw prior to accepting funding if required. This would entail some reputational damage, but that is not felt likely to be significant in this case, given the relatively low funding levels.

### **Equality implications:**

Have you undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment? No

An EIA has not been undertaken at this stage, but is likely to be required in relation to the business cases and delivery of the subsequent projects.

### **Corporate implications:**

This bid would support the Corporate Plan objective of creating a Thriving and Sustainable Place, in particular "the delivery of a broad range of new homes to meet our growing need, with an emphasis on quality and affordability".

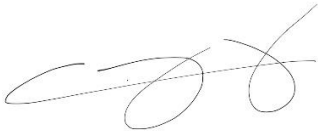
Subsequent project delivery would be subject to further business cases and decision-making, but would be likely to involve a range of teams and services including Major Projects and Planning.

### **Background papers:**

Brownfield Land Release Fund website: <https://www.local.gov.uk/open-brownfield-land-release-fund>

**Signatories:**

**Decision maker(s):**


Signed:  Executive Member for Placemaking and Economy

Date: 2 June 2021

**With advice from:**

Signed:  Director of Place

Date: 2 June 2021.

Signed:  Director of Corporate Services (151 Officer)

Date: 2 June 2021.