

Report to CABINET

Alexandra Park Depot Site

Portfolio Holder:

Councillor Sean Fielding, Cabinet member for Economy and Enterprise

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Date: 28th January 2019

Reason for Decision

To seek approval for funding for the Alexandra Park Depot Site Project.

Executive Summary

This report presents a summary of the detailed work carried out to date in bringing forward the Alexandra Park Depot Site Project to ensure effective service delivery and support the Council's ambition to make Oldham a green and growing place. This investment, and the delivery of an eco-centre, marks the first step for Oldham's innovative Northern Roots project which will work with local communities to investigate ways that we can celebrate, protect and enhance our green spaces for the benefit of local people, the local economy and the planet.

Northern Roots will initially focus on the 160 acre Snipe Clough site adjacent to Alexandra Park investigating ways to enhance the sustainability and biodiversity of the site, to offer even greater opportunities for recreation and leisure for local people, and to use the space for growing and green enterprise projects.

Finally, the report makes recommendations for capital funding for the project.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet approves the recommendations as set out in the report in the confidential part of this agenda.

Alexandra Park Depot Project

1 Background

- 1.1 Alexandra Park is a 25Ha Grade 2* listed park that was created in 1865 to provide employment and alleviate gross deprivation arising from the cotton famine in the 19th century. The park is situated in the inner urban area of the town and serves the wards with some of the greatest social need in the borough.
 - 1.2 Over the last 15 years Environmental Services has consolidated the majority of its working at Alexandra Park. There is no other Council site suitable or large enough within the borough to accommodate the services wide range of storage requirements, over 100 vehicles and operational buildings needed. As such, Alexandra Park is the main depot for Environmental Services providing a base for approx. 205 staff including 30 office based staff.
 - 1.3 As well as being the main service depot for the borough as a whole, it is also the focal point for environmental programmes and excellence. The depot and park are already host to a wide variety of environmental activities, several of which secure funding through public health. These include: the Community Growing Hub; biomass manufacturing and storage; staff training as part of an agreement with Oldham College and Get Oldham Working; production of floral containers for civic functions/Bloom and Grow; and the production of bedding plants (130,000 summer bedding, 111,000 bulbs and spring bedding).
 - 1.4 The existing depot is coming to the end of its working life, with the glasshouses, frames and Gardener's Lodge all now in need of significant investment to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.
 - 1.5 The redevelopment of the depot site, the rationalisation of the many structures and replacement of older poor condition structures with fit for the future, energy efficient and sustainable facilities, will assist the economic position of the service. On-going maintenance liabilities will be reduced, and opportunities provided for external trade. The high standards that will be achieved by this redevelopment will make it an exemplar for sustainable development.
 - 1.6 The new depot site will not only meet the needs of the above, it will also allow for flexibility and sustainability and for the facility to become a centre of excellence where the following will be included:
 - Green wall technology for the new office and stores accommodation to complement the surroundings of the Grade2* listed park and minimise the impact on local residents.
 - State of the art glasshouses (Multispan) that allow for maximum growing capacity and the flexibility to change from hot to cool to enable the hardening off process to be achieved without the major movement of plants.
 - Biomass heating sitting alongside a more conventional heating system, the latter of which may be required from time to time as a back-up.
 - Retention of the Gardener's Lodge (built in1865) to ensure that this complements the park whilst providing a creative future that will ultimately benefit the park and its users.
 - Solar power to provide light for the glasshouses, offices and yard areas.
 - Water harvesting with a filtration system that will allow for the recycling of water for use in the glasshouses and provide water for bowsters used across the borough.pport education, onsite training initiatives and the continuing development of the Council's
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progressive relationship with Oldham College in respect of the delivery of environmental qualifications.

- Provision of a growing hub that will be publically accessible.
- The refurbishment of the listed Messenger Glasshouse, stables and frames located on site.
- The ultimate aim of a cost neutral service for the entire project.

- 1.7 This investment and the delivery of this eco-centre marks the first step for Oldham's innovative Northern Roots project which will work with local communities to investigate ways that we can celebrate, protect and enhance our green spaces for the benefit of local people, the local economy and the planet.
- 1.8 Northern Roots will initially focus on the 160 acre Snipe Clough site adjacent to Alexandra Park investigating ways to enhance the sustainability and biodiversity of the site, to offer even greater opportunities for recreation and leisure for local people, and to use the space for growing and green enterprise projects.
- 1.9 The creation of the Alexandra Park depot site as an eco-centre offers the opportunity to realise significant financial/non-financial benefits that are outlined below.

Increased economic activity – The project will provide opportunities for external trade and will provide the capacity for potential commercial sales of plants to other neighbouring local authorities who no longer grow their own. The conversion of the lodge building will also provide income generating opportunities.

Civic pride and sense of identity/Place Vitality – This exemplar project for sustainable development will contribute to Oldham's reputation as a destination for tourism, education and environmental enterprise. It will provide an anchor site for any future developments at Snipe Clough.

Social interaction – The provision of a publicly accessible community growing hub will benefit the communities in and around Alexandra Park.

Education and Learning - Provide a base for education with Oldham College and other educational establishments and will enhance the provision of training opportunities for residents to assist in improving their life chances in line with corporate objectives.

Risk Removal - Removing risk from unsafe building conditions and non-compliance with health and safety legislation.

Energy Efficiency - The new depot is an opportunity to provide fit for purpose energy efficient modern buildings capable of generating a significant quantity of their own power and water requirements...

Service Efficiency - The new depot will enable Environmental Services to further streamline and rationalise services and save money, by operating in a more efficient manner whilst continuing to maintain and enhance the greenspaces of the borough.

2 **Current Position**

- 2.1 A series of ground investigations and structural surveys (including a drainage/sewer survey) have been undertaken and concept design options have been developed. A heritage report has been completed and this report indicates that the Gardener's Lodge building has significant heritage value and should be retained.
- 2.2 A series of options have also been considered as summarised below:
- Option 1 Retain the existing facilities and carry out any necessary repairs.
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- Option 2 New glass houses, stores, workshop and offices. Gardener's Lodge to be demolished.
 - Option 3 Retain the Gardener's Lodge as office and build an extension. Retain the Messenger Shed and create a new biomass store.
 - Option 3a Move the biomass store next to glass houses and relocate all offices into the new office building. Stores relocated to the western side of the complex. Gardener's Lodge extended and used for functions. Public and works areas clearly separated.
 - Option 4 Retain existing biomass store and messenger sheds. The lodge retained as offices.

2.3 Following consultation with staff at Alexandra Park, and taking into account the heritage value of the Gardener's Lodge, the layout of facilities, traffic flow and the need to separate the public from the park's works functions, the preferred option is Option 3A.

2.4 In order to progress the concept design, a multidisciplinary design team will be commissioned following a procurement exercise. The procurement exercise will request tenderers to submit proposals for developing the design through all RIBA Stages with full costs broken down for each stage. The initial appointment will be to develop the design up to RIBA Stage 3 with a decision being made at its conclusion around progressing through the remaining RIBA Stages, or alternatively, breaking from the agreement.

2.5 Subject to final consideration, the following disciplines will be sought: architect, heritage consultant, structural engineer, environmental & building services engineer, mechanical and electrical engineer, fire engineer, landscape architect, cost consultant, sustainability consultant, ecologist and planning consultant, BIM consultant and project manager. It is expected that the design team will be initially appointed in February 2019 (i.e. to complete the RIBA Stage 3 designs).

3 Strategic Alternatives

3.1 Alternative 1 – Do nothing.

3.2 **Alternative 2 – carry out piecemeal projects** to bring the existing depot up to standard. This option does not offer opportunities for expansion, increased income generation or service change, nor does it reduce the running costs of the site. Although an option, this would only result in the existing facilities being refurbished and will not offer the benefits mentioned above. It would also limit the service's ability to provide seasonal plant material whilst work is being undertaken. It is unlikely, that there would be any significant savings in ongoing running costs as a result of this approach.

3.3 **Alternative 3 – Create a new depot area.** Following their appointment via Unity Partnership, Kier has carried out a feasibility study for this and confirm that it is possible to develop a phased major redevelopment of the depot. This will allow the service to continue operating, but importantly introduce fit for purpose energy efficient facilities enabling service reconciliation and rationalisation and expansion of activities. There will also give the service the ability to generate a significant quantity of its own power and water requirements with the introduction of solar panels, biomass boilers and water harvesting. The depot will act be Phase 1 of the Northern Roots project. This alternative allows for the biomass store, which is currently located at Alexandra Park, to remain on site and thereby avoiding the Council paying back funding specifically allocated to the project. As such, this is the preferred option.

3.4 **Alternative 4 – Relocate Environmental Service operations to other site(s) around the borough.** Doing this would reverse the efficiency savings already achieved and developmental potential resulting from a purposeful withdrawal from other key sites across the town. There is no other single site within the borough which is capable of accommodating the service, its vehicles and facilities. To decentralise would require major

investment in providing mess, storage and vehicle secure sites across the town, and this is not deemed practicable. It is also not good practice to have managers who directly manage staff to be co-located at other sites leaving their staff unsupervised and without clear work instructions etc.

4 Preferred alternative

4.1 Alternative 3. The preferred alternative is Alternative 3 – i.e. construct a new depot area. Delivering this alternative will not only enable service rationalisation, it will also create an exemplar of how a modern sustainable urban park can be run for the benefit of the wider community and be a Phase 1 of the Northern Roots project supporting Oldham's ambitions to become a green and growing place for the benefit of its residents, the town and the environment.

5 Consultation

5.1 Consultation has been carried out with staff from Environmental Services, and those departments below that have supplied comments (as set out in Part B of this report). Ward councillors and other stakeholders will be consulted at relevant points in the project's design.

6 Financial Implications

6.1 As set out in the report in the confidential part of this agenda.

7 Legal Services Comments

7.1 As set out in the report in the confidential part of this agenda.

8. Co-operative Agenda

8.1 As a co-operative Council, the Council is committed to supporting local community organisations and charities to ensure they are able to make the most of the parks and green spaces within their communities. This project will form an important part of that commitment.

9 Human Resources Comments

9.1 As set out in the report in the confidential part of this agenda.

10 Risk Assessments

10.1 A risk register has been developed identify potential risks, risks owners, and any mitigation steps; this will be monitored and updated throughout the project.

11 IT Implications

11.1 As set out in the report in the confidential part of this agenda.

12 Property Implications

12.1 As set out in the report in the confidential part of this agenda.

13 Procurement Implications

13.1 As set out in the report in the confidential part of this agenda.

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- 14 **Environmental and Health & Safety Implications**
- 14.1 As set out in the report in the confidential part of this agenda.
- 15 **Equality, community cohesion and crime implications**
- 15.1 As set out in the report in the confidential part of this agenda.
- 16 **Equality Impact Assessment Completed?**
- 16.1 No.
- 17 **Key Decision**
- 17.1 Yes.
- 18 **Key Decision Reference**
- 18.1 ECEN-18-18.
- 19 **Background Papers**
- 19.1 None.
- 20 **Appendices**
- 20.1 As set out in the report in the confidential part of this agenda.
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