

Report

8

Report to:	Community and Enterprise Resources Committee 8 August 2017
Report by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

Subject:	Redevelopment of the Former Blairbeth Golf Course Site
----------	---

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ Advise the Committee of a proposal to redevelop the former Blairbeth Golf Course into a multi-use site, including an urban park and potential housing development areas.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the development of an urban park at Blairbeth Golf Course be approved in principle, subject to approval by the Housing and Technical Resources Committee to provide funding from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programme;
- (2) that, subject to approval by the Housing and Technical Resources Committee to provide funding from the HRA capital programme, it be noted that the award of £346,622 from Scottish Natural Heritage towards the development of the Blairbeth Urban Park be accepted;
- (3) that, subject to the outcome of the Local Development Plan (LDP) consultation process, 3 areas of land within the former golf course be released for residential development, as shown on the plan attached as Appendix 1.

3. Background

3.1. The site of the former Blairbeth Golf Course is held in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and was leased to Blairbeth Golf Club, a private club which had been in existence for over 100 years. Like many sports clubs, Blairbeth Golf Club has been under financial pressure in recent years and during 2015 it became financially unviable and was closed by its members.

3.2. The Golf Club site has now reverted back to the Council along with all associated costs for managing the site. Initially, the primary concern was the potential ongoing costs of theft, vandalism, antisocial behaviour and car dumping. Actions were taken to block the access road to traffic and demolish the club buildings, minimising the risk of ongoing antisocial behaviour. The Council does not have a budget to meet the ongoing costs associated with the maintenance of the area as those were previously covered by the tenant through the lease agreement.

- 3.3. It is likely that if the Council does not identify a long term plan for the site, there will be a continual increase in complaints and antisocial activity. The HRA will be required to cover the increasing costs of ad-hoc fence repairs, site clearance and patrols. To date, the HRA has spent circa £87,000 on the demolition of the golf buildings, repairs to fences and in managing complaints and antisocial behaviour.

4. Current Position

- 4.1. Planning and Economic Development Services commissioned a Development Framework Report to look at potential uses for the site that would bring the area back into use.
- 4.2. The development of this Framework Report was seen as the first stage in facilitating the regeneration of the immediate area which is identified in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) areas as being amongst the most deprived in Scotland and requiring regeneration.

The resulting Development Framework Report identified a range of uses for the site that are developed further below.

Urban Park

- 4.3. The report outlined the option of developing part of the site as a low maintenance urban park, similar to Redlees Quarry in Blantyre, which would provide a link for the local communities to the wider Cathkin Braes Park and, subject to demand, could potentially include an area to provide allotments for the local community.
- 4.4. The proposal will enhance the biodiversity of the site, introducing indigenous habitat including wildflower meadows, wetland and intermediate woodland linkages. The creation of new habitats will improve ecosystem services and attract and enable the movement of a more varied wildlife.
- 4.5. The new urban park will include opportunities to walk, exercise, cycle, allow field trips for schools, and provide planting to support improved biodiversity.
- 4.6. A maintenance plan has been drawn up which proposes involvement in conservation work by local volunteers who will be trained by park rangers. The maintenance regime will have a minimum intervention approach, encouraging the new habitats to develop and strengthen themselves, providing safe havens for wildlife against the threat of climate change. Improvements will be monitored through surveys carried out by the Ranger Service including the establishment of a Friends of Blairbeth Park Group and local school groups. The park will also include flood risk prevention measures with the aim that the risk ratings will be lowered for areas downstream as a direct consequence of this operation. There is currently no budget allocation for the management or maintenance of the former golf course. Although the park has been developed to minimise future maintenance, it is estimated that circa £9,000 p.a. will be required to be met by the Council.
- 4.7. Due to its proximity of the site to the new Cathkin Relief Road, the urban park created will support the City Deal outcomes of offsetting potential loss of greenspace due to construction.
- 4.8. An application for funding to Scottish Natural Heritage to support the creation of the urban park was submitted by the Service and confirmation has been received of an award of £346,622, against an overall estimated project cost of £871,555. The Service has discussed the proposal with Housing and Technical Resources who are

in agreement, in principle, regarding the inclusion of the balance of funding being provided by their capital programme, subject to approval of the Housing and Technical Resources Committee, as the land sits within the HRA.

Housing

- 4.9. The Development Framework Report also identified three areas of the former golf course that have the potential to become housing development sites as identified in Appendix 1, however these are not currently designated for this use in the current Local Development Plan (LDP).
- 4.10. Subject to adoption in the new LDP, the Council will have opportunities to develop housing including the sale of the sites, development of new social housing or a combination of both. The report identifies 3 sites approximately 10.1 hectares of land, to build up to 160 new private or social houses.
- 4.11. The three sites identified for new housing development have an estimated gross value of £4.8million based upon 160 units at circa £30,000 per unit. Given similar sites elsewhere, it is recommended to assume an allowance of 33% for abnormals which will be verified by detailed site investigations. It is, therefore, estimated that the disposal of these sites could provide the HRA with a capital receipt in the region of £3.2 million over the next 3 to 8 years.
- 4.12. In addition to the capital receipt, any future housing development will be required to provide community infrastructure funding to enhance and maintain the new park through a section 75 legal agreement.
- 4.13. The development framework proposals for the urban park are compliant with the current local plan and, subject to appropriate approvals referred to in this report, can now be proposed. It is proposed that the park will form the centrepiece of a wider master planning exercise reflecting the outcomes of the LDP process and maximising the opportunity to bring additional regeneration initiatives to the area.

5. Employee Implications

- 5.1. There are no employee implications in relation to this proposal.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. The estimated cost of developing part of the site as an urban park has been estimated at £871,555. The Council has been successful in an application to Scottish Natural Heritage for the development of the park and has been awarded £348,622.
- 6.2. Subject to approval at the Housing and Technical Resources Committee on 9 August 2017, the balance of the funds (£522,933) will be provided by the HRA capital programme. The disposal of the housing sites will provide the HRA with a capital receipt at a future date.
- 6.3. Maintenance costs for the new park are estimated at £9,000 p.a. and will be met within existing Council budgets.
- 6.4. Any section 75 legal agreements which result from housing development will provide support funding for the maintenance and enhancement of the park.

7. Other Implications

- 7.1. The site could be left in its current condition and the re-zoning of the three potential residential sites pursued independently from the urban park. This would however leave the longer term responsibility for the maintenance of the area with the HRA

account, potentially increase local objection to the loss of green-space to residential development through the LDP process and would adversely affect the marketability of the sites should they become available. Residential developers are unlikely to wish to build next to an abandoned golf course. The costs of maintenance and remedial actions to offset vandalism/damage will continue to be met by the Council.

- 7.2. There is a risk that the proposed housing sites are not confirmed as development opportunities through the LDP process, however, Planning Services are willing to consider the promotion of some of the land for development as a suitable housing site in advance of the conclusion of the LDP process.

8. Employee Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 8.1. Community consultation will be required to finalise the scope and nature of the park and changes to the Local Plan.
- 8.2. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required.

Michael McGlynn
Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

1 August 2017

Link(s) to Council Objectives/Values

- Improve the quality of the physical environment.
- Support the local economy by promoting the right conditions for growth, improving skills and employability.
- Partnership working, community leadership and engagement.

Previous References

None

List of Background Papers

- Blairbeth Development Framework Report
- SNH GIAPP funding application and supporting papers

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

Iain Ross, Project Manager, Planning and Economic Development Services
Ext: 4227 Tel: 01698 454227
E-mail: iain.ross@southlanarkshire.gov.uk