



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

B346

Cabinet 1 December 2010

Recommendations from St Edmundsbury Growth Area Partnership Board: 26 November 2010 (Dec10/13)

*Cabinet Member: Cllr Terry
Clements*

*Chairman of the Working Party:
Cllr Terry Clements*

1. Growth Area Major Development Projects: Progress (Report B325)

RECOMMENDED:-

That £2.5m of Growth Area Funding be made available in the form of two forward funding loans, structured as set out in Report B325, for infrastructure and associated activities to support the delivery of the Eastern Relief Road at Suffolk Business Park, Bury St Edmunds.

With the agreement of the Chairman the order of the agenda was varied to enable consideration to be given to Report B325 which provided an update on commitments of Growth Area Funding to key projects.

The Partnership Board received a presentation by Stephen Clark and Graham Humphrey of Churchmanor on forward funding issues relating to the future development of the Suffolk Business Park which included an outline of the proposed Eastern Relief Road. After answering questions they were thanked for attending and withdrew from the meeting.

At the last Board meeting on 7 July 2010 officers were asked to look again with the promoters of the scheme at the £750,000 pre-construction stage loan to investigate ways in which identified risks associated with repayment could be reduced.

The Business Park allocation and requirement for the Eastern Relief Road (ERR) to be constructed ahead of it had been enshrined in planning policy in the St Edmundsbury Local Plan 2016. However, if the Core Strategy were to be adopted by the Borough Council on 14 December 2010, the Business Park and the additional 500 units of housing at Moreton Hall would both require the Eastern Relief Road to be constructed ahead of the development being occupied. This would alter the risk position and the repayment of the pre-construction loan could be tied to commencement of construction of the relief road with greater certainty given that either of these significant schemes would generate the requirement for the ERR. There was a risk that neither of these schemes would proceed but officers considered this to be low.

2. Regional Growth Fund (Agenda item 6)

RECOMMENDED:-

That, in partnership with Churchmanor, investigations be carried out with a view to seeking Regional Growth Funding to enable the early construction of the Bury St Edmunds Eastern Relief Road and enabling the delivery of the Suffolk Business Park extension.

Guidance on a new Regional Growth Fund had recently been published by the Government, stating that this had the following main objectives:-

- (a) to encourage private sector enterprise by providing support for projects with significant potential for economic growth and create additional sustainable private sector employment; and
- (b) to support in particular those areas and communities that are currently dependent on the public sector make the transition to sustainable private sector led growth and prosperity.

The fund was open to applications from the private sector, and public/private partnerships. The first bidding round had opened on 28 October 2010 and would close on 21 January 2011. St Edmundsbury was now confirmed as part of the Greater Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), and the Council would be feeding potential projects through that process.

3. Growth Area Green Infrastructure Projects – Progress (Report B326)

RECOMMENDED:- That:-

- (1) ***in view of the likely objections to the order-making procedure involved in the creation of a bridleway for part of the proposed link between Nowton Park and Ickworth Park this project be not proceeded with at this time;***
- (2) ***officers be asked to bring a report to the next meeting of the Growth Area Partnership Board on 2 March 2011 on other Green Infrastructure projects in Bury St Edmunds and the rural area, including options for local green links, in particular the Lark Valley path and a footpath/cycleway link between Ickworth Park and Bury St Edmunds; these to be in the form of detailed proposals to enable a decision to be made at that time; and***
- (3) ***projects in Haverhill outlined in Section 4 of Report B326 be progressed under the auspices of the Haverhill Area Working Party as follows:-***
 - (i) ***Footpath Link through the Haverhill Golf Driving Range;***
 - (ii) ***Tree Planting within Wilsey open space;***
 - (iii) ***Railway Walk interpretation improvement; and***

(iv) proposals for the Former Clements Primary School Open Space (in conjunction with the St Clements Community Group).

The Partnership Board in discussing the report noted that potentially there was a total of £120,000 which could be approved for projects in Haverhill. There was a total allocation of £440,000 for green infrastructure projects and a view was taken that across the Borough projects in the rural area should also be identified, given that there would be some housing growth taking place there also. A Member suggested that the assistance of environmental voluntary organisations in implementing projects should be sought.

4. Potential funding Project – Millfields Way, Haverhill (Report B327)

RECOMMENDED:- That

- (1) land at Millfields Way be sold to Orbit Homes to develop an exemplar scheme of ten affordable homes to level 4 of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment Code for Sustainable Homes;***
- (2) £180,000 be made available from the Growth Area Fund to grant aid Orbit Homes to fund the deficit in order to proceed with the scheme; and***
- (3) £96,000 be released from Section 106 funds to subsidise the two wheelchair access units.***

Orbit Homes had provided a financial appraisal of the costs of the scheme. This assumed that grant assistance would be available from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and that Orbit Homes will part fund the scheme itself. It also included a market valuation for the Council owned land. A concern was expressed by a Member that approval of the grant for this scheme might create a precedent whereby other housing associations would seek funding for similar schemes. The Board was of the view that this case was an exception intended to provide an example to other developers of affordable housing built to a higher standard.

5. Conservation Area Partnership Scheme, Haverhill (Report B328)

RECOMMENDED:-

That, subject to English Heritage providing matched funding, a sum of £50,000 of Growth Area Fund be earmarked for a Conservation Area Partnership Scheme for the Hamlet Road, Haverhill Conservation Area and the officers prepare and submit a grant application to English Heritage.

The two conservation areas in Haverhill had been identified by English Heritage as being 'at risk' in 2009. English Heritage operated a 'Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas' project, which provided grants to local authorities of matched funding for specified improvements.

The local English Heritage Advisor had advised that an area in the Hamlet Road Conservation Area might be eligible for a Partnership Scheme grant of around £50,000 over three years from 2011.

The basis of seeking this assistance was that enhancement of buildings in the Conservation Area would lend support to the quality of life in the town which would be an essential aspect of delivering sustainable growth and a vibrant local economy.

6. Environmental Improvements to High Street, Haverhill (Report B329)

RECOMMENDED:-

That a sum of £750,000 of Growth Area Funding be allocated to the project for Environmental Improvements to the High Street, Haverhill and that approval of detailed design and community consultation and engagements be overseen by the Haverhill Area Working Party.

High Street, Haverhill had last undergone significant improvements in the early 1990s. There was a section between Market Square and Quaker's Lane which had received little attention at that time. The High Street as a whole, as well as its street furniture, lighting and planting beds, was now showing obvious signs of wear and tear and physical deterioration and it now needed to be enhanced to bring it up to the same standard as the other parts of the town centre. A high quality public realm was an important factor in attracting economic investment into the town and making it a pleasing place to shop and work. Haverhill would be seeing significant growth in its population over the next 20 years and a good quality retail offer and physical environment in the town centre were part of delivering sustainable growth in the town.

The Partnership Board received a presentation of conceptual illustrations of the form the improvements could take.