

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 14 June 2018

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community & Resources

PORTFOLIO: Physical Environment

SUBJECT: Astmoor Regeneration Programme

WARD(S) Halton Castle

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To set out the approach to the development and implementation of a regeneration programme for Astmoor Industrial Estate; and, seek approval to undertake public consultation activity.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) **Members approve the two stages of public consultation to be undertaken which will inform a future Masterplan and Delivery Strategy for Astmoor, as outlined in section 3.10 of the report;**
- 2) **The proposed approach to a regeneration programme for Astmoor, as set out in the Annual Delivery Plan (Appendix A), is noted;**
- 3) **Members acknowledge the potential benefits from investing Council resources to deliver a five year regeneration programme for Astmoor, as outlined in section 3.17 of the report; and**
- 4) **Following feedback from the consultation process a further report would be presented to Executive Board to seek formal adoption of a Masterplan and Delivery Strategy for Astmoor.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Background

In March 2017, Executive Board approved the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Plan *Plus* as a way of prioritising resources in respect of the Council's physical and economic regeneration activity. Focussed on eight 'Regeneration Impact Areas', the Plan sets out a

cohesive package of development opportunities and identifies the key infrastructure and enabling projects needed to complement and support the borough's economic growth.

- 3.2 The Plan identifies the former new town industrial estate of Astmoor as one of the eight Regeneration Impact Areas. An Astmoor Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) has been produced (Appendix A) which will steer the development and implementation of a comprehensive regeneration programme for the area. The plan is structured as follows:

3.3 ***Strategic context (section 2)***

A strong case for Council intervention to regenerate Astmoor is made. Analysis has established that compared to the wider employment offer in East Runcorn (such as neighbouring Manor Park) Astmoor has underperformed for a number of years. This is largely due to a concentration of smaller dated commercial premises, compounded by a poor quality public realm and layout. Astmoor struggles to meet modern business needs.

Underperformance of commercial property on Astmoor makes investment by existing landlords or a new developer more viable, as there is a greater opportunity for return on investment. It is acknowledged that Astmoor is home to a number of successful businesses, which are mainly concentrated in the larger more modern premises.

- 3.4 Astmoor has undergone physical change in recent years, with the construction of the Mersey Gateway Crossing, which crosses the estate on elevated piers. Construction was enabled through the acquisition and clearance of a central area, with businesses relocated. Approximately seven hectares of residual project land is due to be handed back to the Council in 2018-19. This presents a significant asset for the Council, although land underneath and near the structure will be subject to restrictions of use.

The prominence and accessibility of Astmoor to the strategic road network has been raised significantly by the Mersey Gateway Crossing, improving its attractiveness and providing a further incentive for investment.

- 3.5 Astmoor already benefits from an active and engaged business community being a Business Improvement District (BID) since 2008, BID status was renewed for a further five years in 2018 by a vote of businesses and landlords. Progression of a regeneration programme was paused to await the outcome of this vote.

BID activity is guided by a Business Plan, with improving digital connectivity identified as a priority for businesses. The BID is managed by the Halton Chamber of Commerce and presents strong foundations for stakeholder engagement and delivering business led

regeneration.

- 3.6 Figure 1 of the ADP provides a boundary for Astmoor Regeneration Impact Area. The majority of area sits within Halton Castle Ward within a small parcel on the western edge within Mersey Ward.

3.7 ***Vison and Objectives (section 3)***

A draft vision and objectives to guide the regeneration Astmoor are presented:

Vision: “To transform Astmoor Industrial Estate; to create a modern, business park environment to enable it to prosper to meet existing business needs and create new employment development opportunities. Astmoor will provide an attractive and distinctive location within the Liverpool City Region where business and nature thrive together”

Objectives:

1. A connected Estate
2. Meeting the demands of modern business
3. Improve the image and profile of Astmoor
4. A safe and attractive environment
5. Business led and inclusive growth
6. Exemplar green business location

It is envisaged that the draft vision and objectives will be refined as a Masterplan is developed, but in the meantime it will provide an appropriate starting point for initial consultation with the business community.

3.8 ***Summary of Masterplan and Delivery Strategy (section 4)***

To guide regeneration activity, including engaging with potential investors and funders, a Masterplan and delivery Strategy will be produced. It is envisaged that implementation will take five years. Through work already undertaken via the Mersey Gateway Timebank and subsequently by Officers, it is proposed that a Masterplan and Delivery Strategy will have the following cohesive regeneration programme strands:

- Development and Investment Opportunities - approximately 22 hectares presented across three broad areas:
 - Central Redevelopment Area, including hand back land;
 - Eastern Employment Renewal Area; and
 - Western Employment Renewal Area;
- Place-making, Connectivity and Movement Strategy - to help stimulate private sector investment and new development. Projects will be focussed on remodelling the Estate to

address its dated 1960's design and layout; and, emphasising the environmental assets of Astmoor and its prominence to the Mersey Gateway Crossing;

- Inclusive Growth Initiative – A dedicated resource to encourage and promote benefits of an integrated and inclusive approach between growth, job creation and providing local training, work experience, work placements, skills and apprenticeship opportunities. Benefits of local supply chain at both construction and operational phases will also be promoted. There will be a focus on securing opportunities for residents within the three neighbouring Wards of Halton Castle, Mersey and Windmill Hill;
- 'The Nature of Business' Unique Selling Point (USP) - Integrating an ecological and environmental strategy which recognises Astmoor's natural setting. As a unique selling point where: nature and commerce co-exist in a mutually beneficial relationship: businesses and their employees benefit from a more ecological, wildlife friendly setting; and, industries can 'learn' from nature to adopt systems and techniques which reduce waste, improve efficiencies and productivity. This is an innovative concept which is likely to generate external interest and open funding opportunities.

Though the production of the Masterplan the four programme strands will be developed further to create a portfolio of individual development sites to be complemented by supporting physical, social, economic and environmental projects.

3.9 **Progress and Year 1 head (section 6)**

Work to date, has focussed on laying the foundations for the development of a regeneration programme, and has included:

- Baseline intelligence gathering and analysis;
- Supporting the successful BID renewal ballot;
- Developing masterplan elements;
- Review of residual project hand back land;
- £1.2million LCR funding secured for a 'quick win' Astmoor Busway / cycleway enhancement;
- Initial informal discussions with some existing and new businesses to relocate on Astmoor and landlords looking to invest; and
- Engagement with Astmoor BID Executive Board and Halton Chamber of Commerce.

The year ahead (April 2018 - March 2019) includes the following proposed key actions:

Action	When
Commencement of quick-win Astmoor Busway / Cycleway enhancement Scheme	July 2018
Initial stakeholder consultation exercise undertaken which will be focussed on the business community	August - September 2018
Hand back land review process completed	December 2018
Formal public consultation on the Draft Masterplan	December 2018 - Jan 2019
Further Executive Board Report to seek approvals to formally commence implementation.	By March 2019

3.10 As identified in the ADP, paragraph 6.4, to help realise the objective of business led and inclusive growth, a two-stage process of engagement to developing a Masterplan and Delivery Strategy is proposed:

- Stage 1 - Initial consultation targeted at key stakeholders including the Astmoor business community, BID (and by extension Halton Chamber), landlords, landowners and commercial developers. This stage will be focussed on developing a shared vision for the transformation of Astmoor and identifying - issues, challenges and opportunities;
- Stage 2 - More formal consultation on a draft Masterplan and include those stakeholders at stage 1, as well as: Public bodies (such as Liverpool City-Region Local Enterprise Partnership, Natural England and Environment Agency); and, general public, targeted at neighbouring residential communities.

Figure 7 of the ADP places the year ahead within a broader five year Programme roadmap. This roadmap will be refined following the Masterplan process.

3.11 ***Funding Profile (section 7)***

The ADP identifies four main elements of the Programme that may require funding:

1. Programme Management
2. Development Site Fees
3. Placemaking, Connectivity & Movement Projects
4. Inclusive Growth Initiative

3.12 As stated in paragraph 7.2 of the ADP, the Core Officer delivery team will be provided by existing staff resources.

Paragraph 7.3 identifies existing departmental resources will be utilised to support the masterplan refinement process and support the initial stakeholder engagement and subsequent formal masterplan consultation exercises.

Paragraph 7.8 identifies that presently two strands of the Programme have yet to develop - the 'Nature of business and Inclusive Growth Initiative.

Paragraph 7.9 - 7.10 identifies that as part of developing the Masterplan and Delivery Strategy, a detailed funding, spend and income profile will be produced. To take account of alternative and external funding opportunities, the funding, spend and income profile will be reviewed annually, with any Capital Allocation requested in stages, to enable Council capital expenditure to be minimised and rolled forward.

3.13 ***Key Milestone and Risks (Section 8)***

Figure 8 of ADP, sets out the key milestones to lay the foundations for a successful regeneration programme for Astmoor. The first Milestone to secure a successful renewal ballot for the BID has been achieved with remaining milestones for 2018-19 mirroring the Key actions summarised in the table within paragraph 3.9 above.

3.14 Figure 9 of the ADP, provides a risk register for the first year of year of the regeneration programme, identifying:

- No agreement reached with Mersey Gateway Crossings Board and Project Company in respect of use of hand back land underneath the Bridge structures which crosses Astmoor (see paragraph 5.2 below);
- Lack of securing a Capital Programme Allocation.

3.15 ***Governance, Management and People (section 9 & 10)***

The proposed organisational structure, roles and responsibilities:

- A core delivery team of a dedicated Regeneration Officer and Business and Investment Officer to champion and drive forward the programme, supported by a virtual programme team drawn from across the Council;
- Subject to the agreement of the Halton Chamber and BID Executive Board, utilising the existing BID Steering Group to provide a forum to engage with the key stakeholder of the business community and landlords;
- It is proposed that ongoing overview and scrutiny will be provided by the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board's Regeneration Working Party. With agreement of Chair, Ward Members for Halton Castle, Mersey and Windmill Hill could be invited to attend when the Astmoor Programme is being considered.

3.16 Figure 10 of the ADP, provides a proposed organisational structure for the governance and management of the regeneration programme.

3.17 **Key Performance Indicators (section 11)**

It is estimated that by the year five (2023), a regeneration programme for Astmoor will seek to deliver:

- An uplift in business rate receipts of £2 Million per year
- 1 Million Sqft. of additional commercial floor space
- 2,000 new jobs and safeguarding many more
- £2.52 Million capital land receipt

These will provide the basis for measuring success and represent a significant opportunity for return of investment of Council resources to deliver the programme.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Astmoor is identified a physical and economic regeneration priority for the Council within the MGRPP.

4.2 Astmoor is identified as an Employment Renewal Area within the Draft Delivery and Allocations Local Plan. The proposed regeneration programme will support implementation of the Local Plan. In particular it supports delivery of Halton's Spatial Strategy to promote the beneficial and efficient use of existing employment land and prioritise the re-use of brownfield sites.

5.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 As stated in paragraphs 3.11 - 3.12 once the Masterplan and Delivery Strategy has been completed, in order to take forward the Astmoor Programme a Council Capital Allocation will be required. Any request for a Capital Programme Allocation would be presented in phases. The first phase is likely to be in early 2019 alongside seeking formal approval to commence implementation of the regeneration of Astmoor. This initial tranche would focus on bringing forward the first development sites market and key placemaking projects.

Whilst a Capital Allocation is not a pre-requisite to commence the implementation of the Programme, it would help provide a degree of certainty to delivery to help build confidence with potential investors and developers, and also helps to lever in match funding opportunities.

5.2 There has been a protracted and on-going dialogue between the Council and MGCB / Merseylink regards acceptable use under the approach structures to the new bridge and any building easements

close to these structures. Concluding these discussions is a critical to determining future development potential (and therefore financial value) of hand back land, particularly in Astmoor.

It is the Council view that land underneath these structures, whilst not suitable for buildings, could be used for (properly managed) ancillary car parking to new development on adjacent sites. This could increase the developable areas of adjoining parcels and avoid land underneath the structure becoming a sterile void, not in active use and a magnet for ASB. Any agreement on use must ensure that land underneath the structures does not detract from wider regeneration aspiration for Astmoor.

- 5.3 To enable the creation of a prominent development site with frontage onto Astmoor Road, would require the relocation of The Bridge School. In the longer term it is not felt that School use is in keeping with the vision to create a dedicated modern business park environment. Relocation would require a separate decision of the Council.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

Regenerating Astmoor will provide for the jobs of future, for local children and young to access.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

Through 'inclusive growth', securing local employment, training, work placement and apprenticeships opportunities will form an important part of this regeneration programme and the Halton Employment Partnership will be a key partner in its delivery.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Improving economic prosperity is a key factor in improving health and well-being.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

One of the proposed objectives to guide regeneration of Astmoor is to create a safe and attractive environment for business.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

This Programme seeks to secure the regeneration of one Halton's largest dedicated employment areas and promote a modern business park environment.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

- 7.1 The Annual Delivery Plan contains a risk register for developing and implementing a regeneration programme for Astmoor. This is summarised in paragraph 3.14 above.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 It is proposed that the regeneration of Astmoor will include an inclusive growth initiative to seek to ensure local people and particularly those within Halton Castle, Windmill Hill and Mersey Wards share in the benefits of growth and job creation. All three Wards are within the top 10% most deprived within England.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Mersey Gateway Regeneration Plan <i>Plus</i>	http://runcorn-widnes.com/docs/mgplan.pdf	Wesley Rourke