
CENTRAL PARK MASTERPLAN

**Responsible Cabinet Member -
Councillor Chris McEwan, Economy and Regeneration Portfolio Councillor**

**Responsible Director -
Ian Williams, Director of Economic Growth**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. This report seeks Cabinet endorsement of the refreshed Central Park Masterplan which provides the development framework for the scheme.

Summary

2. Central Park continues to be one of the priority economic growth projects for Darlington and the Tees Valley. Its location and the presence of the existing site occupiers make it well suited to attract further inward investment to the Borough and wider Tees Valley.
3. Good progress continues to be made with 180 new homes being completed alongside the initial infrastructure works at Central Park South. In addition, two further commercial developments (namely Teesside University's National Horizons Centre and CPI Healthcare Futures Centre) have secured detailed planning consent, with aspirations to commence development by the end of 2017/18.
4. In order for Central Park to fulfil its full economic and commercial potential, the Council and Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) have refreshed the masterplan to increase the space available for employment uses. This refreshed masterplan reflects the Council's ambitions for the site and is presented in **Appendix 1** for Cabinet consideration and endorsement.
5. The key change between the new masterplan as set out in Appendix 1 and the existing masterplan adopted in 2012 is the removal of land for c150 new homes at Central Park South in favour of creating additional development plots for commercial development.

Recommendation

6. It is recommended that Cabinet endorses the refreshed Central Park Masterplan as set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

Reasons

7. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
- (a) To maximise the economic growth potential of Central Park;
 - (b) In the interests of achieving efficient and effective use of land.

Ian Williams, Director of Economic Growth

Background Papers

- i. Hundens Depot relocation Council Report dated 21/03/2013
- ii. Central Park – Next Steps and Update Cabinet report dated 11/10/2016

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S17 Crime and Disorder	Crime and disorder have been considered during the development of the masterplan. The masterplan encourages individual development to consider measure to reduce and prevent crime during their design stages.
Health and Well Being	Health and wellbeing have been considered during the development of the masterplan. Active travel and 'play along the way' are encouraged to promote health and well-being.
Carbon Impact	The masterplan encourages the development of energy efficient design and buildings and seeks to promote active travel and trips by public transport.
Diversity	The masterplan seeks to deliver a scheme which will benefit all users and diversity will be considered further as part of the design process as developments come forward.
Wards Affected	Stephenson, Bank Top, All
Groups Affected	None.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not constitute a change to the Council's budgetary or policy framework.
Key Decision	Yes
Urgent Decision	No
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The continuing development of Central Park will help achieve the Growing the Economy condition of the strategy and help deliver a place designed to thrive as well as more businesses and more jobs.
Efficiency	The adoption of the masterplan will improve the site's potential and help stimulate further investment.
Corporate Parenting	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

8. The Council and HCA are working in partnership to bring forward the mixed use development at Central Park. The scheme continues to be an economic growth priority for the Tees Valley and represents a tremendous opportunity to revitalise this site near Darlington town centre, bringing investment and jobs which will benefit both Darlington and the Tees Valley.
9. Substantial progress has been made to date in partnership with HCA and TVCA with 180 new homes delivered by Keepmoat, the completion of the initial infrastructure works at Central Park South and the continued success of Business Central and National Biologics Manufacturing Centre (NBMC) on site. More development is planned to commence later this financial year with Teesside University's National Horizons Centre and CPI's Healthcare Futures Centre.
10. The Council and its partners recognise the potential of the southern portion of Central Park as a prime location for future employment and commercial uses. This potential is also reflected in its designation as a national Enterprise Zone (EZ) and its role in Tees Valley's suite of EZ sites.
11. The existing masterplan, adopted in 2012 ear marked a significant portion of land at Central Park for residential development, with commercial development focussed around the Yarm Road area of Central Park. Under this masterplan, once the two buildings described above have been delivered, only two commercial plots remain available, with the remainder of land being ear marked for residential or car parking uses.
12. Following the development of NBMC and Business Central in 2014, feedback from stakeholders within the site was that a residential development separating the Education Campus from these commercial uses was not favourable to collaborative working and could potentially deter future inward investment and development at the site.
13. The refreshed masterplan has re-allocated an area of around 2 hectares identified as being suitable for residential development at Central Park South, in favour of creating an additional 5-6 development plots for employment or commercial uses.
14. This reduction in residential uses has been reflected in the Local Plan evidence base to ensure that this change in the Central Park masterplan is reflected and accommodated for in the forthcoming Local Plan.
15. The key guiding principles of the scheme, including the delivery of a mixed use development centred around high quality public realm and open space still feature prominently within the refreshed masterplan.
16. The revised masterplan is set out in Appendix 1, which will accompany the forthcoming planning application for the site and influence and shape discussions with potential developers seeking to take forward scheme on the site. It is likely that there may be some non-material amendments to the masterplan as attached in

order to refine the text to improve consistency and rectify any typing or grammatical errors etc.

Financial Implications

17. Land values generated from commercial development are generally lower than those attributed to residential development. The poor site conditions at Central Park, mean that abnormal costs associated with development on site are high, which in turn decreases the net value of the site. These abnormal costs will be similar whether the site is developed for commercial or residential development.
18. The Collaboration Agreement between the Council and HCA sets out how the net land receipts generated from sales at Central Park must be spent. The current priority for land receipts is to complete the acquisition of third party interests to enable the scheme to be developed. Good progress in respect of this has been made and the Council is working towards agreeing the terms for the resolution of the remaining third party interests which are both leasehold agreements to statutory undertakers.
19. The implications following on from the proposed changes to the masterplan recommended as part of this report have already been highlighted and agreed in the paper to Cabinet of 21 March 2013.
20. The proposed change, has also enabled the site to be designated as an Enterprise Zone and as such, the Council and TVCA can retain 100% of business rates generated from the site. The Council has allocated it's share of business rates towards the development of Central Park, in order to prepare the site for development and to remove one of the abnormal costs. In undertaking these works, the net land receipt generated at Central Park should be greater in the long run.

Legal Implications

21. Central Park is governed by a Collaboration Agreement with Homes and Communities Agency. Once the masterplan is in an agreed format, the Collaboration Agreement will need to be updated accordingly to reflect the new scheme. At its meeting on 11 October 2016 Cabinet delegated authority to the Director of Economic Growth to vary the Collaboration Agreement with the HCA to reflect the new masterplan and associated outputs. Negotiations are on-going.

Estates and Property Advice

22. The updating of the masterplan and refreshed planning consent will provide greater certainty to potential developers on site.

Consultation

23. On-site stakeholders meet regularly where plans and proposals are discussed for their input. In addition, a pre-application planning consultation was undertaken for residents and businesses within the Borough.

Outcome of Consultation

24. Feedback has been received from stakeholders and interested parties. In general the proposed form of the masterplan was welcomed. The main concern for residents on site is the traffic and impact on the local highway network, with split opinions on whether a bus gate is required or not. Highway modelling is underway and will inform any decision on whether there is a need for a bus gate and the impact of delivering a vehicular connection through the site.
25. Key feedback from on-site stakeholders related to the proposed green corridor through the site and whether there is a need for it. The green corridor is an aspirational feature but it is not intended that it will constrain potential development opportunities. To make this more clear, the masterplan has been updated to illustrate what it could look like should schemes requiring a larger foot print be required. The northern portion has been relocated to align with the connection with the education campus being delivered by Teesside University; this provides the University with greater certainty over the proposed layout of their scheme.

Equalities considerations

26. The Central Park Masterplan is a broad and inclusive visioning document which will shape and influence developments as they come forward. Equalities considerations will be considered in more detail as the scheme is developed and in the design and delivery of the respective developments and schemes as they come forward.