

**CABINET
22 JUNE 2022**

**LAND AT BLACKWELL
PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND PARKLAND RESTORATION**

**Responsible Cabinet Member –
Councillor Scott Durham, Resources Portfolio**

Responsible Director – Ian Williams, Chief Executive

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to gain Cabinet approval for the disposal of 5.2 Hectares (13 acres) of land on the former Blackwell golf course. The land is shown as the hatched area on the plan at **Appendix 1** and marked 403 and has been allocated as housing development land in the recently adopted Local Plan.
2. The report also seeks approval for the funding of feasibility work to develop plans for a parkland restoration scheme (shown shaded grey on the plan in Appendix 1) and to engage the services of Esh Homes Limited to develop appropriate plans and designs for a residential planning application for site 403.

Summary

3. The Council is planning to restore the historic parkland on land surrounding the Blackwell Grange Hotel, as shown shaded grey on the plan. Council owned land of circa 5.2 Ha (13 acres) has been earmarked for residential development in the recently adopted Local Plan, as shown hatched on the plan and marked 403. The sale of this land is required to fund the restoration of the parkland.
4. The intention is for Esh Homes Ltd, the Council's joint venture partner to develop the Council owned land and proposals will be brought to Cabinet in due course. To facilitate this development there are several surveys and pieces of feasibility work that will be required to be carried out on the land. The feasibility works and parkland restoration proposals will be jointly procured by Esh Homes Limited and the Council in compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
5. Any development would be of the highest quality and consultations would take place with the local community and other interested stakeholders on the proposals through the planning process. It is currently proposed that one planning application would be submitted to include the residential development and parkland restoration scheme.

6. At this stage it is anticipated that vehicular access to any future residential development will be gained from Carmel Road South. This will mean the demolition of a dilapidated former greenkeepers stone building. The building is not listed and remains unused due to the state of disrepair. There are no services to the building, and it is proposed that once demolished the stonework will be re-used within the parkland restoration scheme.
7. The estimated feasibility costs are identified in Part III (**Appendix 2**) of the report.

Recommendations

8. It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - (a) Declares the land shown hatched on the plan at Appendix 1, marked as 403, surplus to the Council's requirements and is sold to the Council's joint venture partner with terms being reported back to Cabinet for consideration.
 - (b) Approves the costs identified in Part III of the report and authorises the release of funding necessary to appoint Esh Homes Ltd and for the Council to undertake the feasibility and landscape work required to submit a planning application, together with demolition of the former greenkeepers building. The costs to be funded from the Council's Investment Fund and will be paid back on receipt of a capital receipt from the proceeds of the sale.
 - (c) The Assistant Director – Law and Governance be authorised to execute the necessary documents to facilitate future development.

Reasons

9. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons: -
 - (a) To provide a site capable of contributing to the delivery of new housing to satisfy the Borough's housing need and to provide for restoration of the parkland area.
 - (b) To achieve a capital receipt for the Council and increased Council Tax receipts from new homes.

Ian Williams
Chief Executive

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

S17 Crime and Disorder	The report has no implications for crime and disorder
Health and Well Being	The report has no implications for health and well being
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	There is potential for any new Building to be easily accessible by sustainable transport modes which will help ensure the carbon footprint of the development is acceptable.
Diversity	No implications
Wards Affected	Park West Ward
Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	The resolutions in this report will not make changes to the Budget and Policy framework.
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
Council Plan	This will help support facilitating development and economic growth for Darlington
Efficiency	The workload resulting from the recommendations in this report assumes resources at existing levels.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

10. ESH Homes Ltd and the Council will undertake the necessary survey work in order that a site layout plan for the residential development on the 5.2 Ha (13 acres) together with a parkland restoration scheme on the land shown shaded grey in Appendix 1 can be compiled.
11. The sale of this land is required to fund the restoration of the historic parkland and its future maintenance. Access to the residential development requires the dilapidated former greenkeepers' stone building is demolished. It is not a listed building and has not been used as such for many years as all services have been removed due to the structure of the building. However, it is proposed that the stone that makes up the building is reused within the scheme.
12. The Parkland proposals will aim to retain the openness and green infrastructure functions so their relationship and importance to the character of Darlington is protected and enhanced.
13. To protect existing habitats and ecosystems the development must show a biodiversity net gain, so that the development leaves the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was before any development takes place.
14. Scheme proposals for the residential development and parkland restoration scheme will be brought back to Cabinet for consideration.

Finance Implications

15. It is proposed that the feasibility works to be undertaken by Esh Homes Limited and the Council as set out in Part III report are to be funded from the Council's Investment Fund and repaid from future capital receipts as the site is developed.

Procurement Implications

16. All procurement activity will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.