



COUNCILLOR PHIL DAVIES

CABINET
MONDAY, 17th DECEMBER, 2018
NEW FERRY REGENERATION
STRATEGIC ACQUISITIONS

Councillor Phil Davies, Leader of the Council - Growth, said:

“Our commitment to the people of New Ferry has been resolute since day one. We have worked tirelessly to support the community to recover from the explosion which devastated the town, and we have consistently lobbied Government for direct financial support – sadly to no avail.

“We are now taking steps to rebuild New Ferry, so we can create a thriving residential and retail centre which residents can be proud of.

“Over the past few months, the council has been working with Homes England – and its appointed consultants – to make progress on a residential masterplan for the area, one which will provide a key trigger for the wider regeneration of New Ferry.

“This latest proposal to bring key land and properties under the Council’s control will see us invest nearly £1.3m in addition to the £400,000 we have already spent on recovery efforts. We are also working with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to unlock £500,000 in regional funding to help us bring forward our plans at pace. We will also continue to do all we can to make sure the Government meets its responsibilities to the people of New Ferry, and will continue to lobby for financial support.

“Despite the complications of land and properties across the sites being owned by various companies and people, I am delighted we have been able to find a way to deliver a comprehensive regeneration plan for New Ferry. With Port Sunlight on its doorstep, this can be a place where people want to visit, where businesses will want to locate, and where people will want to live.”

REPORT SUMMARY

In March 2017 an explosion in New Ferry, devastated the heart of the retail centre, destroying businesses and homes and impacted significantly on the local community. Since that time, the Council and its partners have been fully supporting the recovery of the area and are now looking at positive steps to bring new developments forward.

This is being done in the context of the Regeneration Plan which was consulted on in September 2017 and seeks to protect local businesses and bring a mix of new residential and community uses into the area to create a sustainable future for New Ferry.

Government funding support has been requested but given recent correspondence from the Secretary of State significant regeneration funding is very unlikely to be received. The Council is grateful for the support from Homes England and their funding is being used to undertake technical work which will be support future residential development in the area.

One of the key issues that has been identified is the high number of vacant properties and the condition of these is very poor. Many are beyond economic repair and if these properties can be acquired by the Council, this will enable sites to be assembled to attract in new developments. No-one else is going to fund these acquisitions and without proactive action by the Council, the properties will continue to present a disincentive to future investment in the area as well as creating a range of practical issues including fly-tipping and, anti-social behaviour. In a small number of these properties there are existing businesses and they will be assisted to relocate elsewhere in New Ferry to facilitate the new developments along with any residential tenants. There are some areas of land which will need to be acquired.

This report seeks agreement to allocate £1.3m from the Council's Strategic Acquisitions Programme, within the Capital Programme, to undertake acquisition and demolition of properties in New Ferry required to assemble sites for new development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) Members approve the allocation of a sum of £1.3 million from its Strategic Acquisitions Capital Programme to acquire a number of key sites in New Ferry to assemble sites for future development.
- (2) Despite numerous requests by the Council to Government for financial assistance to support the regeneration of New Ferry and assist the local community, Cabinet is deeply disappointed with the Government's unhelpful response to date but will continue to lobby Government for funding to ensure a fair deal for New Ferry.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 A number of the sites and properties in New Ferry are derelict and in a dilapidated state of repair, which in turn are detracting from the potential of the area in attracting new investment. The strategic acquisition of those sites and properties will enable site assembly for new developments in support of delivering the Regeneration Plan for New Ferry.
- 1.2 The strategic acquisition of various sites in New Ferry is necessary to deliver sufficient housing numbers to make a development opportunity both attractive to and commercially viable for any future development. These sites are shown in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 1.3 The redevelopment of these sites will support the delivery of good quality housing provision and contribute to the authority's house building targets. This will enable social value opportunities in procuring local developers, local labour and supply chains and it will maximise opportunities for social rent, affordable rent and market sales. This in turn will make New Ferry a more desirable area and the influx of new residents has the potential to impact on increased footfall and spend in the local centre.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 New Ferry's retail core currently has the highest vacancy rate of all the borough's shopping centres, with over 30% of premises remaining empty and or derelict.
- 2.2 Failure to tackle the regeneration of New Ferry through a programme of strategic acquisitions, will ultimately lead to more business closures and the further decline of the centre,
- 2.3 Given the dilapidated condition and low demand for these properties, their acquisition and subsequent demolition to support the centre's regeneration aspirations is therefore deemed the only course of action.
- 2.4 Doing nothing will just lead to further decline in the centre creating a range of challenges for the local community and businesses.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The explosion in New Ferry had a devastating effect on people's lives and businesses. Over 40 businesses reported damage; 15 of these reported serious damage and eight were forced to cease trading with immediate effect; 32 households suffered significant damage with 68 people being displaced in temporary accommodation.
- 3.2 The Council undertook a New Ferry Regeneration Delivery Plan, consulted on in November 2017 and finalized in December 2017 as a way of positively responding to the issues in New Ferry and looking with local people and businesses to create a sustainable future for the area.

- 3.3 One of the most important actions in taking this delivery plan forward, is to secure resources to deal with unsightly property and land, and to assemble this for future development purposes. This will help to create the right environment for investment. A number of property owners have already approached the Council asking if they would be willing to purchase their property or land.
- 3.4 In parallel with the acquisition process, the Council will be talking to housing developers about the various opportunities within New Ferry.
- 3.5 This is only one aspect of the regeneration process and is alongside the work being undertaken by the local community and businesses.
- 3.6 The community are establishing a Community Land Trust and the Town Team are looking to support local businesses.
- 3.7 The Liverpool City Region Mayoral Fund for town centres has allocated £500,000 to New Ferry to support the retail centre subject to further guidance and an application process.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 £1.3m is required from the Strategic Acquisitions Programme, within the Capital Programme, to fund the acquisitions, business relocations and site clearance works.
- 4.2 Acquiring strategic sites in New Ferry will result in assembled sites that will be more commercially viable when redeveloped. This should in turn lead to an enhanced capital receipt from the future sale of these sites.
- 4.3 New residential properties will result in increased Council tax income.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council will seek to acquire the sites by negotiation but there may be a requirement for the use of Compulsory Purchase Order powers to be used. If this is required, a further report will be brought back to Cabinet seeking authorization to use the relevant powers.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING & ASSETS

- 6.1 This regeneration project will be delivered by the Council's Regeneration Delivery Team in conjunction with Asset Management and Legal Services using existing resources.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 All risks associated with the proposal will be identified and managed in line with the Corporate Risk Management Procedure as part of the project delivery process. A summary of the risks identified will be the subject of a future report.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 The development of the New Ferry Regeneration Delivery Plan (RDP) was subject to a public consultation in September 2017. Consultation with the Ward Members, community and businesses will be an on-going process.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None - there is no relevance to equality at this stage.

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REFERENCE MATERIAL

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
None	

Appendix 1 PROPOSED STRATEGIC ACQUISITIONS - NEW FERRY

	No. of properties
Block 1 104 - 124 New Chester Road, New Ferry	10
Block 2 68 - 72 Bebington Road, New Ferry (former Griffiths' Butchers)	1
Block 3 55 - 66 Bebington Road (cleared site of five former shops)	N/A
Block 4 48 - 54 Bebington Road	4
Block 5 Industrial unit (off Grove Street adjacent to small car park)	1

