

Arun District Council

REPORT TO:	Planning Policy Committee - 7 December 2022
SUBJECT:	Littlehampton Economic Growth Area (LEGA)
LEAD OFFICER:	Neil Crowther, Group Head of Planning
LEAD MEMBER:	Councillor Richard Bower
WARDS:	Beach, Brookfield, Courtwick with Toddington and River
CORPORATE PRIORITY / POLICY CONTEXT / CORPORATE VISION: The recommendations supports:- <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improving the wellbeing of Arun;• Delivering the right homes in the right places.	
DIRECTORATE POLICY CONTEXT: The proposals will help to enhance the quality of the natural and built environment, protect the district's natural and heritage assets and to promote economic growth in a sustainable manner, striking a balance between the need for development and the protection of scarce resources and to facilitate the delivery of the West Bank strategic allocation in the Local Plan.	
FINANCIAL SUMMARY: Full Council on 15th September 2021 resolved that: (1) Should any application for funding for this project submitted to the UK Community Renewal Fund be unsuccessful, then a supplementary budget of up to £50,000 to fund the cost of recommendations (1) and (2) approved by the Planning Policy Committee on 1 June 2021, be agreed as the Council's contribution to the cost of the project. This equates to a Council Tax equivalent of £0.80 for a Band D property; and (2) The Council accept financial contributions from third parties to support the delivery of recommendations (1) and (2) approved by the Planning Policy Committee on 1 June 2021.	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. This report seeks Planning Policy Committee's agreement that the proposed Littlehampton Economic Growth Area (LEGA) Study update should exclude work on the West Bank Strategic Allocation elements of the Study and focus the study brief on the riverside opportunities and the area between Climping beach and the West Bank. The study would, therefore, aim to complement what might happen on the West Bank through the existing LEGA study and Strategic Allocation in the adopted Arun Local Plan 2018.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Planning Policy Committee resolves that:-

- 2.1. The LEGA Study update brief focusses on the riverside opportunities and the area between Climping Beach and the West Bank Strategic Allocation.

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 3.1. This report updates the Committee on the progress of the LEGA Study update following officer's scoping of the study brief. Officers' advice is that the study brief is amended to exclude the West Bank element which is an existing Strategic Allocation in the adopted Arun Local Plan supported by an existing LEGA evidence study. The purpose of undertaking the study update is to consider the West Bank's relationship to adjacent land uses outside of but adjacent to the Strategic Allocation; i.e., within the Riverside/Climping areas to see if there are potential opportunities that exist which would complement and support the delivery of the West Bank. In particular, to consider whether there are opportunities to enable the West Bank to come forward more quickly and more viably, and whether there is material evidence to suggest the configuration of the West Bank could be improved.

4. DETAIL

- 4.1. The progression of delivering the West Bank Strategic Allocation as a single development opportunity has currently stalled. Two major site promoters were invited by the landowners to bid for the opportunity to promote the site for development. These site promoters undertook detailed due diligence work, but this established that ground conditions were poor which consequently increased the likely construction costs associated with flood defence and land raising. This coupled with the extent of the infrastructure required to deliver a satisfactory scheme, impacted adversely on the overall financial viability of the proposal. The site promoters decided not to enter into any formal agreement and withdrew because the financial risks were considered substantial. It is also worth noting, that external funding has also been sought in the past to assist with the delivery of the infrastructure, but these bids were unsuccessful.
- 4.2. The current approach to delivery treats the allocation as a single development, constructed in essence, in one go. An alternative approach being explored in the proposed LEGA update study is to seek to deliver the development as a series of discrete phases which can work independently but also contribute to the delivery of a detailed integrated masterplan within the defined strategic allocation.
- 4.3. The physical extent of the Strategic Allocation is set out in the Local Plan. However, there may be good reasons why it would be appropriate to consider adjacent land opportunities that exist along the western side of the river and between the strategic allocation and the sea at Climping Beach. This work may or may not offer material circumstances to consider any potential departure from the development plan in order to unlock the delivery of the West Bank.

4.4. Since this would be outside the Local Plan allocation (the exact extent of the area to be agreed as part of the study) the Council would need to consider and consult upon any positive delivery narrative identified within the study as evidence, in order for these potential additional areas to complement and sit alongside the supplementary planning guidance proposed for the strategic allocation. The scope of the area of study (set out and considered in the Report to Planning Policy Committee on 1 June 2021) as shown on Appendix 1 included the following:-

- Firstly, the potential extent of the required flood defences along the river extends further south than the allocated area and therefore the opportunity should be taken to look to extend the extent of the potential development area further south
- Secondly, the recent breach of sea defences at Clymping Beach (2020) requires a strategic solution. The landowners and others have promoted some interesting solutions which warrant further considerations alongside the West Bank work as the allocation will need to be protected from any threat from the sea

4.5. Full Council on 15th September 2021 resolved the following:

- 1) Should any application for funding for this project submitted to the UK Community Renewal Fund be unsuccessful, then a supplementary budget of up to £50,000 to fund the cost of recommendations (1) and (2) approved by the Planning Policy Committee on 1 June 2021, be agreed as the Council's contribution to the cost of the project. This equates to a Council Tax equivalent of £0.80 for a Band D property; and;
- 2) The Council accept financial contributions from third parties to support the delivery of recommendations (1) and (2) approved by the Planning Policy Committee on 1 June 2021.

4.6. The principal landowners remain committed to the delivery of the LEGA strategic site. This has led to investigations into developer options which could include opportunities for parcels of the site to be developed at different rates within an agreed masterplan.

4.7. Whilst there are currently no agreements with developers yet, given that the rationale for undertaking the LEGA study was to explore other delivery options, and a need to manage current and ongoing developer interest in the West Bank, it is proposed that the brief for the study removes any such work on the West Bank elements on the basis that it might prove unnecessary and therefore not a good use of public money.

5. CONSULTATION

5.1. The West Bank strategic allocation is part of a strategic policy in the Local Plan and as such the principle of the allocation has undertaken several public consultation processes as required.

6. OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

6.1. The options are

1.The Council proceeds with commissioning a study with a brief which excludes the West Bank Strategic Allocation and focuses on the riverside opportunities and the area between Climping beach and the West Bank in order to complement what might happen on the West Bank. **OR**

2. The Council commissions a detailed masterplan for the West Bank Strategic Allocation including indicative phasing and a comprehensive viability appraisal together with a complementary evidence study for areas adjoining the allocation to the south including along the riverside and towards Climping Beach.

7. COMMENTS BY THE GROUP HEAD OF CORPORATE SUPPORT/SECTION 151 OFFICER

7.1. The £50,000 supplementary budget approved on 15 September 2021 has been carried forward to 2022/23 in an earmarked reserve to secure it. Funding is therefore available up to £50,000, to be withdrawn from this reserve as required. Any spend about this level will have to be funded from other sources.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1. The risk is that if this proposal is not successful then the outcome in the short term will be even further pressure to allow development on unallocated sites to deliver the proposed 1,000 homes. In the medium to long term without successful intervention, the outcome is likely to require the de-allocation of the strategic allocation in either this Plan or any updated Local Plan.

9. COMMENTS OF THE GROUP HEAD OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE & MONITORING OFFICER

9.1. There are Governance and legal implications. The allocation of land is legal plan making function with due process. The council will, therefore, need to ensure that it follows appropriate processes in undertaking this evidence work and how it may become material evidence to inform decision making.

10. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

10.1. There are no human resources implications.

11. HEALTH & SAFETY IMPACT

11.1. No direct health and safety impacts have been identified in relation to the proposals.

12. PROPERTY & ESTATES IMPACT

12.1. There are implications for Council property as the Council is one of the landowners in the West Bank consortium.

13. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) / SOCIAL VALUE

13.1. The proposals may help to improve access to housing through plan making for all sections of the community, having a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

14. CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT/SOCIAL VALUE

14.1. There are possible implications for Climate Change and environmental impact, particularly in regards to flooding.

15. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

15.1. There are no direct adverse implications for crime and disorder.

16. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT

16.1. There are no direct adverse implications for human rights.

17. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION / DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS

17.1. There are no implications.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: *n/a*