

Agenda item 7

For decision - Land at Little Keyford Lane

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Summary

This report seeks approval for the appointment of an Architect/Agent to be engaged to assess the viability for a self-build affordable housing development on land at Little Keyford Lane and authority to submit an outline planning application.

It also seeks approval to set up a Working Group to work with the Architect/Agent and to agree the members of the Working Group.

Background

At the Council meeting on 12 August 2015 it was agreed that delegated authority be granted to the EDRM in consultation with Mel Usher, the project sponsor, to negotiate an option to purchase the site, subject to planning consent.

The option has now been signed and requires FTC to submit an outline planning application for the development of an affordable housing development, for local people to build their own homes. The option runs until 31 January 2018.

The Site

The site is currently pasture field extending to 1.82 acres (0.74 hectares) and is accessed off Little Keyford Lane. The site has the capacity to accommodate up to 25 plots, but the final figure will depend the outcome of the site assessments and surveys.

The development will be a mix of dwelling types and sizes reflecting identified local need, it will be energy efficient and designed to have minimal impact on the character of the area and local landscape setting.



What we have done so far

- An Ecology and Biodiversity Assessment and a reptile survey is currently underway
- People who live around the site have been approached for their views
- A press release has been issued and there is an article on the website

Next Steps

- To set up a Working Group comprising of staff, Cllrs and interested parties. The Working Group will agree a brief for the appointment of an Agent/Architect and continue to work with the Agent/Architect throughout the process.
- The agreed brief will be suitably advertised and quotations will be invited. The Agent/Architect will require a proven track record of self-build/affordable housing developments.
- The Agent/Architect, working with the Working Group, will as part of the application process be responsible for designing a scheme, viability assessments, surveys, negotiations and consultations.

Proposed members of the Working Group

Cllr Mel Usher

Cllr Pippa Goldfinger

Cllr Peter Macfadyen

Cllr Colin Cobb

Peter Wheelhouse, Economic development & Regeneration Manager

Jane Llewellyn, Planning & Development Officer

Tim Cutting, Frome Co-Housing

Graham Burgess

Considerations for the Working Group

In addition to the brief, the working Group will need to consider:

- Who will be eligible to buy a plot?
- The price that will be paid for the land? (any valuation will be subject to the scale of development that is consented)
- How will the site remain affordable in perpetuity?
- Do we need to set up a new Community Land Trust and what will their role be?
- How will the development be managed, and self-builders suggested?
- How do we ensure that development of individual plots proceed quickly following their disposal?

Funding and available budget

Grant funding is available through Locality and initial discussions with them indicate that this scheme will be eligible for funding.

- Community Building Pre-Feasibility Grant & Community Buildings support Grant up to £10,000
- Community Buildings project support grant up to £40,000
- £10,000 in the prosperity budget for 2016/17, for a self-build housing project.

Timescales

End of August 2016 - Working Group meeting
September 2016 - Appointment of Agent/Architect
October 2016 - Apply for grant funding
Early 2017 - Submit Planning application

Benefits

With reference to the benefits of this project and ethical decision making, this project will support:

- Local people who wish to build their own homes
- Help to meet an identified need for affordable housing
- We will have reference to the ethical decision making matrix when recruiting and employing an Agent/Architect
- We will take account of protected trees and wildlife in bringing forward a scheme
- We will endeavour to minimise the impact on people living close to the site
- The design codes that will be developed will ensure that new homes are energy efficient

Recommendations

1. Agree the proposed members of the Steering Group
2. Appoint an Agent/Architect to carry out initial feasibility and viability assessments and to submit an outline planning application