

### Agenda item 3

#### For decision – Influencing plans for Selwood Garden Village and other future housing development in Frome

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##### Summary

At Council in May, Cllrs heard that with the emergence of major housing development proposals such as those for Selwood Garden Village and Saxonvale, it is important to take soundings from the community and develop guidance that can influence the plans for new housing that emerge. It was agreed that some work would be done on a brief for this work. In view of their expertise in planning and architecture, the University of the West of England have been approached to explore how they can help.

A brief has been developed that envisages undertaking a study within the Mount area, a community close to the site of the proposed Garden Village. The purpose will be to understand what local people value in terms of the built environment, spaces and amenities. The project would also involve comparisons with best practice new build housing developments in the UK and Europe. The work would conclude with a public exhibition and report setting out a series of development principles intended to guide future housing development in the town including Selwood Garden Village should a proposal emerge. For a contribution of £3k, the University is prepared to deliver this project.

Cllrs are asked to support this proposal and the appointment of University of West of England to lead the project.

##### Background

At the Council meeting in May, Cllrs heard that MDC has received a submission by Grassroots Planning Limited on behalf of a consortium of landowners who propose to develop land to the south of the town between the existing built-up area and the A361 Frome by-pass. They propose a new 'garden village' comprising circa 1800 – 2200 new homes, employment land and other infrastructure. This proposed development is termed by the consortium as Selwood Garden Village. Cllrs are also aware that there are other major housing developments proposed in the town e.g. Saxonvale.

At the meeting in May there was some debate about how FTC should best respond to these proposals. There was agreement that we needed to take account of future needs of the town and engage the local community in this exercise. The Planning & Development Manager was asked to develop a brief for this project.

## The priority – developing a set of guiding development principles

Following further discussion with Cllrs, the feeling was that the priority must be to develop a set of principles that can guide future housing development in the town especially at the proposed Selwood Garden Village and at Saxonvale. We need to take account of best practice not only in Frome but also elsewhere in the UK and Europe. The University of the West of England (UWE) who are specialists in this area have offered their support. They are proposing to bring not only the support of UWE and a cohort of Master of Architecture students but also their combined experience in evaluating public spaces and use and engaging communities. Through their practice and project experience they also bring a range of tools and processes. For a contribution of £3k, UWE will offer consultancy time worth £10k. It is proposed that the research would start in October and be completed in mid-November with a final report and public exhibition being delivered in mid-December.

The approach is to study the built environment and daily life in a community that is close to the site of the proposed Garden Village. The Mount area borders the area that is proposed for development. It is worth studying because of its mix of Victorian and modern housing with a well-established community group in the Mount, Marston & Keyford Community Group that can help in engaging the community and gathering people's perceptions of the built environment, spaces and amenities in the area. It is also an opportunity to consider how people move around and the implications for connections with the proposed Garden Village.

## The brief

The outline of the brief is as follows:

### Background research (October)

- Desktop study of existing sources
- Identification of gaps in data
- Preparation of a workshop plan
- Stakeholder meetings – meetings with key stakeholders in the study area to set the agenda for the study and establish a network of community contacts that can help with the engagement of local people

### Workshop – ‘What does this part of Frome look like? (October/November)

- To understand what the people in the study area value about it
- An open event to bring together stakeholders, businesses, professionals, UWE students and the wider public in the study area to explore collective knowledge and values around:
  - how do we live?
  - how do we work?
  - how do we play?

#### Place/Life Studies (October/November)

- Two days of urban life studies in the study area
- The focus would be on an assessment of public spaces including built form, street and pavement character and quality and a mapping of amenities. There would also be a study of activity and pedestrian movement
- Will involve qualitative and quantitative methods such as direct observation, counting, mapping, tracing movement, photography and analytical drawing
- The survey would aim to create a benchmark for the public realm, illuminate assets to build on and reveal potential challenge areas that impair urban quality and inhibit public life

#### Report & exhibition (mid-December)

- A public exhibition of the outcomes of the study to invite a further phase of feedback and input on the place/life studies
- A final report to draw together the findings into a series of principles to inform the development of guidance for new housing development in the town. The report will include comparisons to best practice new housing developments in the UK and Europe.

The timetable for this may change from the time of writing this report and the meeting, if so an update will be given at the meeting.

#### Conclusions

For a relatively small financial contribution, this project presents an opportunity to secure a significant resource commitment by the University of the West of England and take advantage of their considerable planning/architectural expertise and experience to benefit the town. It will engage stakeholders and the wider public in assessing what they value in terms of the built form, spaces and amenities in a community on the edge of the proposed Selwood Garden Village. The outcomes of this and a study of housing development best practice in the UK and Europe will help FTC to develop some valuable development principles that can influence the planning of Selwood Garden Village and other future housing development.

#### Recommendations

1. Agree to the brief for the research project and the appointment of UWE to lead it
2. Agree to a contribution of £3k to be drawn from the Saxonvale EMR