

Meeting of the City Council

5 April 2017

Report title	Bilston Urban Village	
Referring body	Cabinet (Resources) Panel 7 - February 2017	
Councillor to present report	Councillor John Reynolds, City Economy	
Wards affected	Bilston East	
Cabinet Member with lead responsibility	Councillor John Reynolds, City Economy Councillor Andrew Johnson, Resources	
Accountable director	Dr Keren Jones, City Economy	
Originating service	City Development	
Accountable employee(s)	Kevin Moore	Regeneration Manager
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Report has been considered by	Strategic Executive Board	17 January 2017
	Cabinet (Resources) Panel	7 February 2017

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Council is recommended to:

Approve a grant not exceeding £206,000 to the Canals and River Trust for surface and biodiversity improvements of the canal towpath between Dudley Street and Highfields Road, Bilston to support the delivery of the Bilston Urban Village proposals.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 On 7 February 2017, the Council's Cabinet (Resources) Panel considered a report on the delivery of further development on Bilston Urban Village and approved that the proposed works to create and enhance public open space on the Urban Village site should be funded in part by the Council entering into a funding agreement for European Regional Development Funding and the allocation of section 106 monies held by the Council.
- 1.2 Furthermore, the Panel recommended that a grant not exceeding £206,000 should be made to the Canals and River Trust (CRT) for surface and biodiversity improvements of the canal towpath between Dudley Street and Highfields Road, Bilston.
- 1.3 This report seeks the approval of the proposed grant to the CRT which will be subject to the confirmation of ERDF funding for the proposals.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The development of Bilston Urban Village is a key component of the Council's strategy for the regeneration of Bilston Centre. The 100 acre brownfield site has been assembled over many years by the Council and the regional development agency Advantage West Midlands (AWM). Significant investment has already taken place to deliver the new South Wolverhampton and Bilston Academy and the Bert Williams Leisure Centre on the site, the creation of a commercial development plot fronting the Black Country Route and the direct pedestrian linkage of the site with the town centre. The creation of this "High Street Link" through the acquisition and demolition of dilapidated properties on the High Street is also designed to provide a further town centre development opportunity. The Urban Village site has the potential to provide approximately 480 new houses in a quality environment together with new employment areas and further leisure facilities. A key objective is the provision of improved pedestrian and public transport linkages with the town centre and established housing areas connecting the new communities with the existing and supporting the vitality of the high street.
- 2.2 Following the completion of significant infrastructure works undertaken by the Council to derisk and prepare the site for development, construction of 78 homes by Kier started in April 2016 on the first phase of private residential development. A further 27 acres has been released to the market and the Council will in position to announce a preferred developer for this second phase later in the spring.
- 2.3 To attract high quality development, the Council is proposing to let a contract for a package of works to enhance and create further public open spaces across the Urban Village site and a network of cycleways and footways, including improvements to the canal towpath.

3.0 Progress

- 3.1 The Council was successful in securing £1.3 million for improvements to the open spaces from the Local Growth Fund.

- 3.2 In addition to this investment, outline approval has been given for £681,000 of European Structural and Investment Funds under the Operational Programme Priority Axis 6 – Preserving and Protecting the Environment and Promoting Resource Efficiency and more particularly under Investment Priority 6d - Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services and green infrastructure. This grant allocation provides £506,000 capital resources for the scheme. The remaining £175,000 is revenue funding to support the works under the capital scheme. This revenue funding will cover existing salaries and new posts for a part time project manager, clerk of works and claims officer. Confirmation of the award following consideration of the full business case is expected shortly.
- 3.3 On 7 February 2017, Cabinet (Resources) Panel approved the use of unallocated s106 contributions totalling £156,000 received from other local development schemes for this project. A further £30,000 is secured by planning condition on the Kier Carder Crescent development and will become receivable on completion of the 39th unit expected in autumn 2017.
- 3.4 To enable further linkages to be made outside the site, it is proposed to improve the towpath of the Bradley Arm canal between Dudley Street and Highfields Road at an estimated cost of £206,000 and to provide grant funding for an amount not exceeding this figure to the Canal and River Trust (CRT) to enable them to carry out these works under their National Engineering Framework.

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 An allocation of £206,000 grant to the Canals and River Trust would enable them to extend the canal improvement works already approved as part of the Managing Short Trips programme and will be met from the £2.2 million budget for the Public Open Space Works. The provision of grant will be subject to confirmation of ERDF funding. Funding agreements will be put in place to ensure the grant is used for the purpose it has been allocated. [MF/24022017/V]

5.0 Legal implications

- 5.1 The Council will be required to enter into a funding agreement with the Canals and River Trust in respect of the £206,000. The Council's Legal Services will provide legal advice in relation to this transaction. [JA/2402017/F]

6.0 Equalities implications

- 6.1 An equalities analysis was undertaken in connection with the adoption of the Supplementary Planning Document adopted by the Council in 2013 which approved the land use framework for the Urban Village site.

7.0 Environmental implications

- 7.1 The Bilston Urban Village project is bringing about the regeneration and reuse of a 100 acre brownfield site which will provide mixed used development and significant areas of public open space.

8.0 Human resources implications

- 8.1 There are no human resources implications arising out of this decision.

9.0 Corporate landlord implications

- 9.1 The land being sold is held as a strategic regeneration asset and the proposed grant of £206,000 to the Canals and River Trust will support the delivery of the Bilston Urban Village proposals.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

- 10.1 Bilston Urban Village Supplementary Planning Document adopted 8 August 2013
Bilston Centre Regeneration Cabinet (Resources) Panel 29 July 2014
Bilston Centre Regeneration Local Growth Fund approvals Cabinet (Resources) Panel 3 March 2015
External Funding Update Cabinet (Resources) Panel 19 January 2016
Bilston Urban Village Cabinet (Resources) Panel 8 March 2016
Bilston Urban Village Cabinet (Resources) Panel 7 February 2017