

**TIVERTON KEY SITES**

**Cabinet Member** Cllr Richard Chesterton  
**Responsible Officer** Head of Communities & Governance

**Reason for Report:**

To gain approval for the Tiverton Key Sites Project; to agree the Project Board, and to gain approval for the initiation of Stage 1.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

- That the Cabinet approves the business case for the Tiverton Key Sites Project.
- That the Cabinet agree the membership of the Project Board, which will be responsible for Stage 1 of the Tiverton Key Sites project, which is evaluating the development options for the sites and reporting back to Cabinet.

**Relationship to Corporate Plan:**

This project delivers against the priority in the current Corporate Plan (2010 – 2015) 'Developing the Local Economy'. The pledges within this priority are:

Pledge 7 – Improve Town Centres

Pledge 8 - Support local businesses and promote tourism opportunities

Pledge 9 – Support economic development throughout the District

**Financial Implications:**

The initial phase can be undertaken using in-house officer resources. If any key sites have a viable development option, this will require budget to bring them forwards. Further budget commitments will be subject to a decision to proceed from the Project Board.

**Legal Implications:**

These will be more fully assessed once the business case is approved.

**Risk Assessment:**

A detailed risk log will be developed as part of the project development process. Key risks are outlined within the report below at 2.0. If any key sites have a viable development option but budget is not committed, such sites are unlikely to be able to be brought forwards.

**1.0 Introduction**

1.1 MDDC owns, or has significant interests, in a number of sites in and around Tiverton Town Centre, which if developed in an appropriate manner, have potential to greatly benefit the local economy. These sites are shown on the plan in Appendix A and include:

- Town Hall/Rear of Town Hall – currently Town Hall, housing, and open site alongside riverfront
- Pannier Market – currently Pannier Market plus car parking
- William St. car park – currently car park

- Old Road Depot and Station Road site – currently used for housing, property and waste management functions
  - Phoenix Lane – currently primarily a pedestrian route to the town centre, plus Tourist Information Centre (TIC) and memorial garden<sup>1</sup>
- 1.2 The Tiverton Key Sites Project proposes to look at the future development opportunities for the sites bulleted at 1.1 above. In addition, part of the initial work will include discussions with Devon County Council and Tiverton Town Council to explore any opportunities to include DCC and TTC sites. Opportunities with other strategic landowners, both public and private sector, will also be explored.
- 1.3 There are a number of reasons why MDDC should be considering the future options for these sites, most importantly their potential to contribute to the economic prosperity of the town, but also the possibility of generating capital receipts and / or revenue for MDDC.
- 1.4 MDDC has a corporate priority to improve the economic prosperity of the district, and the development and growth of Tiverton plays an important role in this. This is evidenced by the Mid Devon Economic Development Strategy which prioritises the enhancement of the district town centres Tiverton. Improving the district’s economic prosperity is also reflected in MDDC’s current corporate plan, and is also embedded within the recently adopted Local Development Framework (LDF).
- 1.5 Within COR13 of the LDF there is a focus on Tiverton as the district centre and main economic driver, with plans for a housing extension of around 2,000 dwellings to be delivered by 2026. There is an emphasis on the increased self-sufficiency of Tiverton, in particular around the retail offer, access to services, and provision of employment. COR13 states:
- “The Council will guide high quality development and other investment to: Manage the town centre so that economic success and heritage reinforce each other, promoting new homes, shops, leisure, offices and other key town centre uses which contribute to vitality and viability, including an additional 3,900 square metres of comparison net retail floorspace by 2016 in accordance with the sequential and other PPS6 retail policy considerations.”*
- 1.6 Progress is being made with delivering the Eastern Housing Extension through a master-planning exercise. However, a parallel process is required to ensure that Tiverton town centre develops appropriately to provide economic growth for the town and ensure Tiverton becomes more self-sufficient. In the current economic climate, key developments are unlikely to occur spontaneously in response to market forces.
- 1.7 The sites listed at 1.1 could be developed to provide:
- New retail space which could deliver additional comparison goods floorspace and an improved retail offer

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<sup>1</sup> A number of other MDDC sites in the town centre have not been included within the initial scope of this project - the council offices, multi-storey car park, Beck’s Square and the bus station, plus sites at Westexe and Lowman Green.

- Space for leisure and/or tourism uses
- Office space
- Industrial units
- Residential provision including affordable and supported housing

There may also be secondary benefits from such development, enabling improved car parking, a coach park, an improved public realm and better pedestrian connectivity in and around the town. All of these would benefit the economic health of Tiverton and therefore Mid Devon District.

- 1.8 In order to get to the point at which a site can be developed, there are a number of key stages. These can be broken down broadly into the following phases:
- Evidence gathering to inform an outline vision and preferred development option for each site
  - Site evaluations with indicative development appraisals
  - Site specific masterplanning work, such as site development briefs, and ultimate delivery/disposal

A more detailed breakdown is given in the flow chart attached as Appendix B. The project can be halted at any one of these three stages if appropriate, reducing cost and risk to the Council.

- 1.9 Stage 1 involves an initial scoping of each of the town centre sites to show their potential for development. This will include top level evidence gathering and agreement of a vision for each site. As part of this exercise, a top-line market assessment will be sought from a commercial agent with public sector regeneration expertise. It is hoped such advice can be obtained at no cost.

## **2.0 Project Brief**

- 2.1 The project is ultimately aiming to establish realistic development options which are viable and therefore deliverable. If any of the sites are shown to be suitable for such development, a further site-specific development appraisal will need be done. This will form the basis of Stage 2 of the project.
- 2.2 In order to document this project a Business Case is attached as Appendix C, which outlines the rationale, the options, and the benefits of this project. A Project Initiation Document is also attached, as Appendix D, which contains more specific details about the scope of the project and the approach. A timetable is attached at Appendix E.
- 2.3 To date the project development activity has been undertaken by the Economic Regeneration Officer who has been on secondment from North Devon Council along with the Community Development and Regeneration Manager. An alternative project lead will be required from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012.
- 2.4 There is a range of additional officer support which will be needed for the effective delivery of the project – planning, legal, estates et al. It will be necessary for a corporate project delivery team to be established to take this project forward.

- 2.5 Although, it is hoped that Stage 1 of this project can be largely done in-house, if the Council chooses to proceed with Stage 2 of the project, substantial funding will need to be committed. This will be subject to a further decision by the Cabinet. Within Stage 1 it is suggested that the outsourced activity is limited to an initial market commentary from a commercial agent with public sector regeneration expertise to advise on likely demand for different uses of the key sites. This is a vital part of the evidence gathering phase.
- 2.6 In terms of managing this project it is suggested that a Project Board consisting of lead-members and senior managers is established. This would include:
- Leader of the Council
  - Cabinet Member for Economy and Planning
  - Cabinet Member for the Environment
  - Cabinet Member for Finance
  - Chief Executive
  - Head of Planning
  - Head of Communities and Governance

This board will be supported by a Project Team, who will attend the Project Board meetings. The Project Team will include the Head of Finance, Head of Legal & Democratic Services, Head of Housing & Property Services and other key officers from Community Development, Economic Regeneration and Planning.

- 2.7 A detailed Risk Log will be developed as part of the project planning process once the business case is agreed. However, the key risks of **not** undertaking this project are:
- The town centre receives no investment and the economic health of Tiverton deteriorates, particularly as other centres undertake regeneration/development initiatives to improve their retail/local economies.
  - Employers are not attracted to Tiverton and its environs as the town is not perceived to be attractive or vibrant as a location.
  - Key sites remain undeveloped within the town and connectivity issues are not addressed

The key risks of undertaking the project are:

- The delivery viability of the key sites is currently unknown, therefore the main risk is that there may be few viable options for the key sites, or few viable options that the community as a whole needs or wants, and therefore the overall aim of the project (to improve Tiverton's economic success) can not be met.
- There is a risk that although a viable development option may be identified on any site, further budget is not made available by MDDC to take this through to delivery.
- The public at large may not understand or support the project; therefore there is political risk.

- 2.8 In terms of timings, an outline timescale is appended to the Project Initiation Document, which is attached at Appendix D. The initial stage of the project should be able to be completed within 3 – 6 months. To reach actual delivery will depend upon the preferred solution, but is likely to take 2 years or more in total.

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