

To: City Executive Board

Date: 14 January 2016

Report of: Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: Oxpens Revised Delivery Strategy

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present recommendations and observations of the Scrutiny Committee on the Oxpens Revised Delivery Strategy decision

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Craig Simmons

Executive lead members:

- Councillor Bob Price, Board Member for Corporate Strategy & Economic Development,
- Councillor Ed Turner, Board Member for Finance, Asset Management & Public Health,
- Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Board Member for Planning & Regulatory.

Recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the four recommendations set out in the body of this report and notes the observations set out in paragraph 5.

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee pre-scrutinised the Oxpens Revised Delivery Strategy decision at its meeting on 12 January 2016. The Committee would like to thank Cllr Alex Hollingsworth, David Edwards, Nigel Kennedy and Lindsay Cane for attending the meeting, answering questions and enabling thorough and detailed consideration of this item. The majority of the discussion took place in private session in accordance with Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act.

Summary of recommendations

2. The Scrutiny Committee considered a presentation by the Executive Director for Regeneration and Housing and asked a range of questions, including around risks, financing, financial scenarios, land ownership and links with other developments.

3. The Committee also questioned the rationale for collaborating with Nuffield College. On the basis of advice set out in confidential appendix 4 and evidence provided by officers at the meeting, the Committee strongly suggested that the Council should issue a Voluntary Ex Ante Transparency Notice (VEAT) in regards to the proposed collaboration with Nuffield College.

Recommendation 1 – That a VEAT notice should be issued by the Council in regards to the proposed collaboration with Nuffield College.

4. In response to a question about the deliverability of the Council's 50% affordable housing policy (Policy HP3 of the Sites and Housing Plan), the Committee heard that all figures provided in the confidential appendices were based on this policy and that there was a very firm intent to deliver this at Oxpens. Furthermore, the adopted Oxpens Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provided a clear policy for the site and would be hard-wired into the proposed partnership arrangement. The Committee heard that there were no plans to amend the SPD as part of the Local Plan review. The Committee reaffirmed its support for the affordable housing policy and suggested that every effort should be made to maximise affordable housing and ensure that 50% of dwellings on the Oxpens site are provided as affordable homes.

Recommendation 2 – That the Council should make every effort within its negotiating power to deliver its 50% affordable housing policy at Oxpens.

5. The Scrutiny Committee expressed its support for the 7 recommendations that City Executive Board will be asked to resolve and made the following observations:
 - i. That there are 3 main elements to recommendation 2; the establishment of a delivery partnership, the acquisition of land owned by London and Continental Railways, and the transfer of land owned by the City Council. These elements could have been 'unpacked' more clearly in the recommendations.
 - ii. That the partnership business plan and the selection of a private sector partner would be subject to future CEB decisions and scrutiny. These decisions were expected to be taken after 3-6 and 8-9 months respectively.
 - iii. That recommendation 6 relates specifically to the land at Oxpens that is currently owned by London and Continental Railways.
 - iv. That recommendation 7 relates to 3 joint venture company directors to be appointed by the Council. A further 3 would be appointed by Nuffield College.
6. To make the transfer of the Council's land into the joint venture clear and explicit, rather wrapped up in the general recommendations, it was suggested that the City Executive Board should resolve to authorise this disposal, in addition to resolving the 7 recommendations set out in the report.

Recommendation 3 – That the City Executive Board resolves to authorise the disposal of the City Council's land holdings at Oxpens to the new joint venture company on the terms set out in the report, and delegate authority to the Executive Director, Regeneration and Housing to agree the detailed arrangements of this disposal.

Further consideration

7. The Scrutiny Committee agreed to exercise its right to pre-scrutinise any future City Executive Board decisions relating to the Oxpens development, including decisions on the partnership business plan and the selection of a private sector partner, which would both be of critical importance to the success of the scheme. In doing so, the Committee would give full consideration to any changes made to the Oxpens SPD as part of the Local Plan review.
8. In addition, the Scrutiny Committee may wish to pre-scrutinise any key executive decisions relating to the Oxpens development that are delegated to officers. Should this happen, these key decisions would appear in the Council's Forward Plan without a decision date. The Committee asks the City Executive Board to instruct officers to notify the Committee before any such decisions are taken so that pre-decision scrutiny can be arranged (either through the Committee or a Panel).

Recommendation 4 – That Council Officers should be instructed to facilitate pre-decision scrutiny of any likely key executive decisions delegated to officers that relate to the Oxpens development, including by notifying the Committee in good time before any such decisions are taken.

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List of background papers: None
Version number: 1.0

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