

Report to Leader

Subject: **Ambition Arnold**

Date:

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Wards Affected

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Purpose

To seek approval to establish a £200,000 budget funded by a contribution from the NNDR Pool Reserve to undertake a masterplan for Arnold town centre and associated feasibility works.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision.

Recommendation(s)

That the Leader of the Council:

- i) Approves the establishment of a £200,000 budget from a contribution from the NNDR Pool Reserve to support the development of a town centre regeneration masterplan and feasibility works in Arnold.

1. Background

- 1.1 In 2022 the Council approved and submitted the Ambition Arnold proposal to the Levelling Up Fund (LUF Round 2). This proposal was based on a focused high level conceptual masterplan of the Arnold town centre north area. Due to the limited time and resources available the Council was unable to commission a comprehensive masterplan for the town and this work remains outstanding.

- 1.2 The Council's Ambition Arnold LUF application included the views of both local retailers and shoppers that remain relevant in respect to the north of the town:
- Number of dilapidated buildings,
 - High levels of voids,
 - Poor public realm and access,
 - Anti-social behaviour and
 - Council facilities approaching end of life and requiring replacement.
- 1.3 In view of the above, earlier in 2023 the Council acquired land and buildings to the north of the town as part of a land assembly to address the physical decline of the area and support future regeneration. However, the Council understands that in order to underpin the regeneration of the north of the town a wider strategic masterplan plan is required to provide a framework that includes relationships and opportunities for the wider Arnold town centre area to maximise impact.
- 1.4 To support its regeneration ambitions the Council is looking to commission works to ensure that a scheme is developed that is economically and commercially viable and deliverable subject to funding being identified. The Council recognises that a strategic plan for the Arnold town centre can provide a framework for future development and leveraging funding and investment.

Strategic Context

- 1.5 The importance of the Borough's town and local centres is captured in the Gedling Plan particularly in respect to their contribution to the local economy and employment. These retail centres provide opportunities or business growth and also job creation. The Gedling Plan outlines the Council's commitment to providing vibrant town and local centres that attract shoppers, visitors and leisure users throughout the day. These retail centres form part of the Council's Place Making agenda and a focal point for communities.

Recent developments

- 1.6 In 2022 the Council completed the award-winning Arnold Market Place (AMP). The Council was successful in securing grant funding which was used to transform the former Arnold town market area providing retail units for start-up business that are fully tenanted. The Council has also invested in a new Changing Places Toilet that is due to open later this month. However, the Council is aware that to ensure the long-term economic viability and sustainability of the town, development will need to be focused and underpinned by a wider strategic plan to draw investment and leverage in external funding opportunities.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 It is proposed that the Council establishes a regeneration budget in order to procure a comprehensive masterplan for the wider Arnold town centre. The masterplan will provide a strategic framework for future development. The masterplan exercise is also intended to include consideration of economic viability and deliverability and will be critical to providing a sound basis for sourcing external funding and contributions.
- 2.2 It is proposed that the exercise also includes works to support a future submission to a funding body, to provide the catalyst for the implementation and delivery of the masterplan. The focus of this work will be on the leisure and cultural facilities that are approaching “end of life” in the town. This feasibility will include RIBA 2 plans and costings related to the site and provide assurance on deliverability of a scheme to support funding applications and external investment.
- 2.3 The Council has undertaken soft market testing and has identified that a budget of £200,000 will be required to complete a master planning exercise and feasibility works, including surveys and independent technical advisors, as required.
- 2.4 It is proposed that the Council procures services through compliant frameworks to undertake the works referred to above.

3. Alternative Options

3.1 Do Nothing

The Council has the option not to proceed with the commissioning of an Arnold town centre strategic masterplan and associated feasibility works. Such a decision would weaken the Council’s ability to submit a coherent and viable funding application and attract investment in a coordinated manner to the town. The Council would also limit its influence to address the long-term decline of the north of town by developing a masterplan to underpin future development.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 Gedling Borough Council are members of an NNDR Pool together with the County and District Councils. Any share of the surplus that the pool distribute to Gedling is held in the NNDR Pool Reserve and can be used for regeneration purposes in the Borough. The requirement for a revenue budget of £200,000 to support the masterplan for Arnold Town Centre would be appropriate use of the NNDR Pool Reserve.
- 4.2 Currently there are sufficient funds in the NNDR Pool Reserve to support the creation of a £200,000 budget for the Arnold Town Centre Masterplan.
- 4.3 Feasibility studies usually meet the criteria of revenue and as such cannot be capitalised. If a capital project does receive approval as part of or resulting from

this masterplan the budget will still be a revenue element of that project, although some elements may meet the criteria to be capitalised as part of the overall cost of the project.

- 4.4 The Arnold Town Centre Masterplan is expected to be a large project which will require a significant capital budget. Currently no funding has been identified for such a project and whilst this report sets out the Council's intentions to seek external funding, this is not guaranteed. Should this proposal be approved, the £200,000 budget will be spent "at risk" as the Council's ability to raise a capital budget sufficient enough to progress such an ambitious scheme is limited, unless the Council can successfully attract external funding through the levelling up agenda or other sources. Therefore, it should be noted that if a capital scheme does not come forward the £200,000 will fall to be an abortive cost to the Council and will be presented as such in the accounts. However, some mitigation to this is the fact that this work would still be relevant for a number of years, and even though funding may not be identified in the short term, it will still be of use to attract funding in the medium term.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The recent acquisition of land to the north of Arnold was on the basis that the land would be developed in the future. In order to determine appropriate forms of development, further survey work and master planning work would be required.
- 5.2 Any procurement of services should be undertaken in accordance with the Council's procurement rules.

6. Equalities Implications

- 6.1 The Arnold Town Centre Masterplan will consider issues of accessibility and inclusion. The masterplan will aim to produce viable plans that can provide development to engender a sense of place, pride, ownership and cohesion.

7. Carbon Reduction/Sustainability Implications

- 7.1 The masterplan will be developed in the context the Council's commitment to Net Zero in 2030. The masterplan will have a focus on improving the quality of public realm to provide green spaces and natural shading; cycling and pedestrian routes; consider the public transport network and EV charging facilities.

8. Appendices

- 8.1 None

9. Background Papers

9.1 None identified.

10. Reasons for Recommendations

10.1 The Leader is asked to approve the establishment of a budget to progress a comprehensive masterplan and feasibility work for Arnold town centre. The masterplan is needed to ensure that there is a strategic plan to safeguard the long-term viability of the town; to protect and grow the economy; support employment within the Borough and to ensure that Arnold is a key destination within the Borough and County.

Statutory Officer Approval

Approved by:

Date:

Deputy Chief Financial Officer

Approved by:

Date:

Monitoring Officer