



<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Grove Development Study – Update
<b>Date:</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> March 2014
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Gerry Millar, Director of Property and Projects
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Cathy Reynolds, Estates Manager

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
<b>1.1</b>	To provide Members with an update on the recently completed Grove Development Study and to agree next steps.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
2.1	Members will be aware that the Council’s former leisure facility at Grove was recently demolished with the cleared site (1.27 acres) remaining in the ownership of the Council. In addition the Council recently acquired the site of the former Grove Primary School which was declared surplus by BELB in 2013 following SP&R Committee agreement in November 2012. This is a 2.5 acres site on the opposite side of North Queen Street. A further 3.9 acres of adjacent land is owned by the NIHE which has also been declared surplus.
2.2	This therefore encompasses a sizeable site which presents a significant opportunity for development in an inner city area. The site is a strategically important gateway site on one of the main arterial routes into the city centre. The area falls within the Inner North Neighbourhood Renewal Area and its wards among those with the highest level of multiple deprivation in NI. The area has also been characterised by high levels of conflict and division. A number of previous planning assessments have been carried out on the sites.
2.3	Members are asked to note that a number of previous studies and frameworks have identified needs in the area and/or proposed a number of uses for the site. DSD’s previous draft Physical Regeneration Masterplan for York Road/Shore Road identified an opportunity to create a landmark mixed use building at the junction of York Road and North Queen Street at the site of the former leisure centre. Key needs and/or potential uses in the area which have been previously identified include economic development and creation of jobs and training opportunities through the provision for small business units.
2.4	The Council, in conjunction with DSD and NIHE, recognised the potential for this site to make a contribution to the social, economic and physical regeneration of the area. Last year DSD, working jointly with the Council and NIHE, commissioned consultants to undertake a development study. The aim of the study was to explore the development potential of the land in and around the site of the former Grove Leisure Centre and identify a potentially viable model for its development in a way that benefited both the local and wider communities. A map of the development study boundaries is attached at Appendix A. <b>Members are asked to note that whilst the Council supported the progression of the development study it was on the basis that the Council was not bound by the findings of the study and could progress development options as they materialised.</b>

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Key issues</b>
3.1	<p>A number of stakeholder consultation events were held to inform the development of the plan and a number of potential options for the future of the site were identified and appraised. The consultants have now delivered their report and the key recommendations emerging are outlined below for Members consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- short term, meanwhile uses on a portion of the NIHE land</li> <li>- longer term business start up/youth training units developed on the former Grove Primary School site and former leisure centre site</li> <li>- Midland Boxing Club to be relocated on a portion of the NIHE land</li> <li>- The transfer of a small portion of NIHE land to Alexander Presbyterian Church for car parking</li> <li>- An Environmental Improvement Scheme to include the closure of a portion of North Queen St</li> </ul>
3.3	<p>The consultants concluded that due to insufficient evidence of demand or need for an immediate large scale development the preferred option for the development of the site is to use part of the NIHE land to install ‘pods’ as a meanwhile use. They felt that this would test the market. The consultants did not however recommend any immediate uses for the Council’s lands and were of the view that if the meanwhile uses on the NIHE lands could provide sufficient evidence of demand for further developments, then the Council’s lands could potentially be developed into a youth training and business start up centre. They proposed that the Council could potentially market their lands by way of a Development Brief for the provision of an Innovation Centre/youth training facility or start up units.</p>
3.4	<p>It should be noted that <b>no budget has currently been allocated to the Grove Development Plan</b>. The recommendations outlined above are only emerging findings and have not been costed in detail.</p>
	<b>Other issues for consideration</b>
3.5	<p>The Council has also been approached by various other stakeholders who have ideas for the development of the former Grove site which demonstrates a level of potential interest in the site. These include the potential development of a ‘city farm’ and business incubation units. However these are only initial proposals with no funding attached.</p>
3.6	<p>Members are asked to note that there are also a number of Masterplans and Development Frameworks which are transferring across from DSD and any future decisions on the Grove study should be considered in the context of the overall Masterplans and frameworks.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Next steps</b>
4.1	<p>In addition to the emergent findings/recommendations from the Grove Masterplan, a range of other uses for this site have been proposed by other stakeholders. Members are asked to continue to authorise officers to progress decisions with interested parties with a view to bringing a further report back to Committee.</p>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
	<p>Members are asked note the contents of this report and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• agree that officers continue to facilitate discussions with interested parties over the future use of the Grove site with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course. This will need to be considered in the context of the range of asset, project, masterplans and frameworks which are transferring from DSD</li> </ul>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
	Appendix A – Map of Grove development study boundaries