

ENVIRONMENT CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 29

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Consultation Plan for The Level Redevelopment

Date of Meeting: 30 July 2009

Report of: Director of Environment

Contact Officer: Name: Jan Jonker Tel: 29-4722

E-mail: jan.jonker@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Key Decision: No

Wards Affected: St Peters and North Laine

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The Level is an important historical park in the city centre which is well used by residents. It includes a children's play area, a skate park, an area used for ball games and expanses of green space used for recreation. However parts of the park are in a state of disrepair, the skate park will need to be removed or replaced in the next few years and some of the children's play facilities also need upgrading. Some of the general and historic features of the park including buildings, walls, and walk-ways are also in a poor condition and the park has a reputation for anti-social behaviour.
- 1.2 The Level is an important park for the city, with a significant catchment providing recreation and outside space in a very densely populated area. It is important to the heritage of the city and is a gateway close to the city centre. For these reasons it is considered to be a priority for redevelopment.
- 1.3 A limited amount of section 106 funding is available which is allocated specifically to The Level, namely £97,200 for the skate park, £137,175 for play and £22,204 for general improvements. While this funding will go some way to improving the park, it is insufficient to transform it to a flag ship park, and further funding will have to be secured.
- 1.4 In order to be able to plan improvements to the park, and seek additional funding applications, a master plan is required. This report seeks permission to carry out extensive public consultation to allow a master plan to be drawn up. Following consultation it is proposed that the master plan is presented to Cabinet for approval. Delivery of the master plan will be subject to securing funding and phased over a number of years accordingly.
- 1.5 Potential funding may be available through the Parks for People Heritage Lottery Funding. It has been confirmed by the Heritage Lottery fund that the park meets the criteria to be considered for funding. While there is no guarantee that a bid would be successful it is recommended that a strong application is made.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Environment endorses the consultation plan for The Level, set out in Section 4 of this report.
- 2.2 That the Cabinet Member for Environment endorses the preparation of a funding bid to the Parks for People Heritage Lottery Fund.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The Level is a well used open space, despite some of the issues surrounding ant social behaviour and the poor condition of certain aspects of the park.
- 3.2 In the past limited consultation has already taken place, in particular in relation to the redevelopment of the skate park. Key issues that have come out of previous consultations have been considered in the concept designs.
- 3.3 The proposed consultation is the first formal step in the development of a master plan for the site the speed of delivery of which will be subject to securing funding.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 This report seeks permission to carry out wide-scale consultation. The purpose of the consultation will be to seek the views of residents, businesses and visitors which will contribute to the development of the master plan. The consultation will also inform stakeholders of issues surrounding funding and other issues that will affect the redesign of The Level such as conservation issues, sustainability and equalities. The consultation will be carried out working in partnership with key officers and agencies including park rangers, the environmental improvement team and the police.
- 4.2 It is proposed that the consultation includes:
 - At least one consultation meeting to be held at The Level which will:
 - provide information to the public about the plans to improve the park
 - allow the public an opportunity to provide feedback about the park and the concept designs
 - allow the public to give their feedback about the location of the new skatepark
 - At least one consultation meeting to be held in the New England Quarter/London Road area focussing on the local businesses in and around The Level
 - The establishment of a focus group involving local residents and businesses who can be consulted throughout each stage of the design process
 - Consultation with groups within The Level catchment who may not use the park to explore why and what would encourage them to use it.
 - Development of a web page with information about the plans to improve the park and to allow the public to feedback on their views about the park and on the designs.
 - Development of survey forms to be used at consultation meetings, on the web page and via direct mailing.

- Displaying all documents at the libraries, nearby meeting halls and on park display boards.
- Holding workshops with the established Stakeholder group to help develop the designs

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 Securing funding is a significant risk to the redevelopment of The Level, particularly in the current economic climate. However, consultation and the development of a master plan will improve the ability to submit successful funding applications. The consultation itself will be carried out for less than £5,000 which is available through the 106 funding for the project.

Finance Officer Consulted: Patrick Rice

Date: 17/07/09

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 There are no legal implications arising from the proposal to consult on redevelopment at The Level. If funding is secured, the proposed scheme would need to come back to CMM/Cabinet for approval.

Lawyer Consulted

Elizabeth Culbert

Date: 17/07/09

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 Equalities will be a key design element for The Level redevelopment. An equalities impact assessment will be carried out to ensure that all relevant members of the community are consulted including those who may at present be unable or unwilling to use The Level.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Sustainability will be a key design element for the master plan, including financial and environmental sustainability.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 The Level has a reputation for anti-social behaviour. Measures to minimise crime and disorder will have embedded in the designs for the park. This will be achieved by involving the relevant agencies right from the start of the consultation.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 While some funding is available, this is insufficient to transform The Level in to a flagship park. In the current economic climate it may not be possible to raise sufficient capital for the project, or the work will have to be phased over numerous years. The skate park in particular is in a state of disrepair, and unless funding is secured, will have to be removed. In addition to this many aspects of redevelopment will be interdependent, eg if a change in location of the skate park or children's play is proposed.

5.7 Carrying out consultation and development of a master plan will put the council in a better position to submit funding applications. To further minimise risks it is proposed that:

- A funding bid is submitted to the Parks for People Heritage Lottery Fund;
- A specific Skate Park Funding plan is developed

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

5.8 None identified.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

6.1 This report seeks permission to consult. As part of the consultation process options will be developed which will feed in to the development of a master plan.

6.2 The alternative to consulting on redevelopment at The Level is not to consult on or bid for improvements to the park. Given the reasons outlined in this report, not consulting is not considered to be appropriate.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 The Level is an important open space for the city, heavily used by residents and visitors. It does suffer from anti-social behaviour and parts of it are in a poor state of repair. Some funding is available to make improvements to the park, and applications are being made for further funding. In order to be able to start to deliver improvements and apply for further funding a master plan is essential. This plan needs to be based on extensive public consultation.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

None

Documents In Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None