

Date: 23rd September 2021
Title of report: Soothill Development Site - Appropriation to Housing General Fund - Officer Delegated Key Decision

Purpose of report To secure authority for the removal of land at Soothill Lane, Batley from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and appropriation to the Housing General Fund in order to enable access to Homes England Accelerated Construction Programme grant funding.

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	Yes Expenditure in excess of £250k
Key Decision - Is it in the Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)	Yes
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	Yes
Date signed off by Strategic Director and name	David Shepherd 23 rd September 2021
Is it also signed off by the Service Director - Finance - (S151 Officer)?	Eamonn Croston Yes
Is it also signed off by the Service Director - Legal Governance and Commissioning?	Julie Muscroft Yes
Cabinet member portfolio	Cllr Cathy Scott Housing and Democracy

Electoral wards affected: Batley East

GDPR

There is no personal data contained in this report.

1. Summary

This report seeks to secure authority for the removal of land at Soothill Lane, Batley from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and appropriation to the Housing General Fund and provides background information required to inform this decision.

Under the Strategic Assets Capital delegations, the Strategic Director – Growth and Regeneration has authority to agree an appropriation of this site under Section 19 of the Housing Act 1985.

2. Information relating to the decision

2.1 Background

There is a need for 1,730 new homes every year in Kirklees (until 2031).

The Soothill site is a key part of the council's programme of Housing Delivery, and has a grant allocation of £4.59M as part of Homes England's Accelerated Construction Programme (ACP). This represents one of the largest grant allocations in England under this programme. The grant will enable the carrying out of an agreed schedule of Site Preparation Works which will, in turn, enable the delivery of 319 homes on the site, 20% of which will be affordable homes in line with policy requirements.

2.2 Grant Funding Agreement

Kirklees Council entered into a grant funding agreement with Homes England on 23rd September 2020. It is a pre-condition of the grant funding agreement that the site is not held in the council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

2.3 Current position

The Soothill site is currently held in the council's Housing Revenue Account. It will need to be appropriated to the Housing General Fund in order to access the Homes England ACP funding, thereby enabling the scheme to advance to delivery.

The Housing Growth Team has consulted with the council's Service Director for Finance and he has advised that he has no objections to the appropriation.

The site has been independently valued for appropriation purposes.

3. Implications for the Council

3.1 Working with People

This proposal is for the council to use the grant funding to work with a partner to deliver market and affordable housing which meets local needs. There is therefore significant benefit to Kirklees citizens in providing access to housing across a range of tenures as part of a quality development.

In addition, as part of the construction process, the benefits to the local supply chain, and opportunities for apprenticeships and training will be maximised by the selected partner.

3.2 Working with Partners

To deliver the development at Soothill, as set out above, the council will work with a private sector partner to deliver market and affordable housing.

Taking this approach enables delivery of a range of housing without the council having to undertake direct delivery, and this has resource benefits for the council.

The emphasis on MMC and pace required by the Accelerated Construction Programme represents a new, innovative approach to delivery which will be used to inform future developments across the district.

3.3 Place Based Working

N/A

3.4 Improving Outcomes for Children

No direct impact.

3.5 Other Impacts

Legal

It is a pre-condition of the council's Grant Funding Agreement with Homes England that the site is not held in the council's Housing Revenue Account.

Financial

The appropriation of the site from the Housing Revenue Account to the General Fund will enable the receipt of up to £4.59M Homes England funding.

Human Resources

The scheme has human resource impacts for the council in that officers will work with with the preferred bidder and Homes England to deliver and monitor the development. These impacts are being managed from within existing resources.

4. Next steps

Subject to the approval of Strategic Director – Growth and Regeneration, in consultation with the Service Director – Finance and the Service Director – Legal, Governance and Monitoring, agrees to remove the land at Soothill, Batley, the next step will be to appropriate the land to the Housing General Fund. It is anticipated that the appropriation will take place in September 2021.

5. Officer recommendations and reasons

That the Strategic Director – Growth and Regeneration, in consultation with the Service Director – Finance and the Service Director – Legal, Governance and Monitoring, agrees to remove the land at Soothill, Batley from the Housing Revenue Account and appropriate to the Housing General Fund.

The appropriation is required in order to access grant funding from Homes England to support the preparation of this site for development and, ultimately, to enable the delivery of 319 homes, 20% of which will be affordable homes in line with policy requirements.

6. Contact officer

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7. Background Papers and History of Decisions

Not applicable

8. Strategic Director responsible

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