

Report to the Stronger Place Select Committee



Date of meeting: 9 July 2020

Subject: Group Company Structure – Epping Town Centre Sites

Responsible Officer: Sacha Jevans (01992 564229)

Democratic Services: Vivienne Messenger (01992 564265)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the current progress with the Group Company set up to be noted.**
- (2) The progress of the five Epping Town Centre sites be noted.**
- (3) The progress of the Roundhills sites to be noted.**

Report:

1. The Qualis Group of Companies have now been established and the interim Board is operating to oversee the work of the companies. This report sets out the activity that has been undertaken since the last Select Committee Place meeting on 24 March 2020:

- (i) Set up of the Group of Companies;
- (ii) Progress of Roundhills Site;
- (iii) Progress on the Epping Sites;

Set up of the Group of Companies

The Group of Companies have all been established with Qualis Commercial focussing on the development of Council Owned land. The Cabinet paper in April approved the transfer of the land ownership into Qualis Commercial for the five Epping Town sites and Roundhills site. The interim Qualis Board has been established as set out in the February Cabinet paper and is meeting to oversee the operations and activities of the companies. The current focus is on the set up of Qualis Management with a go live date of September for the delivery of the Council's repairs service, and the work of the Epping Town Council sites. The Group Board will be supported by a committee structure that will oversee specific aspects of the company business.

Progress on the Epping Sites

Qualis Commercial development team are working with the design team to develop the strategic options for the five sites for Epping Town Centre. The planning department have agreed the Planning Performance agreement which sets out the approach through the preplanning stages up to the submission of a full planning application. As part of this work a detailed communications plan is established to ensure stakeholder engagement in the planning process. In order to assess the suitability of each site and to achieve a policy compliant scheme the following appraisal process is followed:

Conservation

To develop in an economically sustainable manner with a social objective and to create vibrant and healthy communities which protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment.

Sustainability

To do everything within our power to ensure schemes will be carbon neutral by 2030, in line with the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency.

Uses appropriate to town centre proximity

To create successful developments which promote health and wellbeing, culture and leisure, a varied town centre residential offer, and support the existing town centre and its central role in the community.

Placemaking appropriate to location

To deliver integrated architecture and placemaking using high quality specification and material palettes which reflect and take cues from the local setting and vernacular.

Development delivery - separation of use classes

To ensure proposals are viable and deliverable while being suitable to their setting.

Impact on conservation area and historic assets

To preserve the special architectural or historic interest of heritage assets (Locally Listed Buildings) through their retention, sensitive conversion and refurbishment to preserve and enhance the setting of the Epping Conservation Area and Listed Buildings.

Model and protect existing green infrastructure & biodiversity

To support a network of accessible new and enhanced public spaces, public open space and pedestrian routes in the Town Centre and the provision of high quality leisure and recreational facilities. To support a network of accessible new and enhanced public spaces, public open space and pedestrian routes in the Town Centre and the provision of high quality leisure and recreational.

One Quality Review Panel has been undertaken and the Qualis Design team are responding to some of the comments and questions in preparation for a second panel meeting in July.

As the planning process progresses over the next 6 months the more detailed designs and proposals for each site will be presented to the next Scrutiny Committee. The team are currently in the first stage of design and consultation.

Engagement Epping Town Sites

A full consultation document has been agreed as part of the planning performance agreement. Residents can provide direct comments on the proposals through the online platform 'Commonplace' and through Twitter. Commonplace will provide easy access to up to date information as the project progresses. The online methods of consultation will be supported by a series of public exhibitions.

Progress on the Roundhills Site

The architects for the Roundhills site have been appointed and are working to complete the stage 1 design by the end of July with the aim of submitting a planning application by the end of the summer. It is expected that Roundhills will provide good quality family housing for the District and will be one of the first schemes for Qualis to complete.

Resource Implications:

The work associated with Qualis is within the approved working capital loan and is set out in the 2020/21 budget and medium-term financial strategy.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The Qualis governance structure oversees the project delivery with reports back to the shareholder EFDC.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

The developments and will be safer by design and energy efficient.

Consultation Undertaken:

Full consultation will be undertaken on each site through the planning application process.

Background Papers:

None

Risk Management:

The risk map is reviewed by the Interim Qualis Group Board and is also monitored by the Council Corporate Risk Management Group.