

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

10 October 2018

Report of the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer

Part 1- Public

Executive Non Key Decisions

1 GARDEN COMMUNITIES PROSPECTUS – EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

This report summarises the most recent Government prospectus launched in August and seeks agreement to make an Expression of Interest for assistance in respect of the Strategic development site at Borough Green being promoted through the emerging Local Plan.

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 The Government published the Garden Communities Prospectus on 15th August inviting local authorities and private sector partners to come forward and explain how the Government can assist in delivering the vision for new garden communities. Subject to meeting certain eligibility criteria, expressions of interest can be made up to the closing date of 9th November.
- 1.1.2 The proposed strategic development site at Borough Green forming part of the emerging Local Plan meets many of the eligibility criteria for making a bid for assistance. It is important to acknowledge that the deliverability of the site in accordance with the Local Plan is not dependant on a successful bid, but tailored assistance towards the master planning of the site and ensuring the early delivery of the relief road would be welcomed.
- 1.1.3 Approval is sought for making an expression of interest led by the local authority with support from the promoters of the site, Kent County Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership.

1.2 Summary of the Prospectus

- 1.2.1 The prospectus aims to encourage bids for ambitious, locally supported, proposals for new garden communities at scale. In return for tailored assistance to help design and deliver the vision for these places, the Government expects local areas to deliver significant housing and economic growth.
- 1.2.2 While the prospectus does not set out a single template for what a successful garden community might look like, there are assessment criteria:

- 1.2.3 Scale: New Garden Towns of 10,000 or more homes or Garden Villages of between 1,500-10,000 new homes.
- 1.2.4 Where a garden community is proposed to take the form of a transformational development to an existing settlement, it will have to meet the criteria set out in the prospectus and in addition, highlight the transformational outcomes for the settlement as a whole.
- 1.2.5 Strategic Fit: Proposals should offer opportunities for significant long term housing and economic growth in a local area and demonstrate how the garden community fits with the housing need for the housing market area. Priority will be given to proposals which respond to housing need in high demand areas.
- 1.2.6 Locally-Led: Proposals should have the backing of local authorities, including county councils in two tier areas and have the support of Local Enterprise Partnerships. Proposals should set out how the local community is being engaged and involved.
- 1.2.7 Garden community qualities: Proposals should demonstrate that they are based on high quality place making design principles.
- 1.2.8 Deliverability and viability: Proposals should be accompanied by credible outline proposals including consideration of delivery models and timescales; infrastructure requirements; opportunities to capture land value; and access to finance and private sector investment.
- 1.2.9 Delivery timescales and accelerated delivery: Proposals that offer a strong prospect of early delivery will be prioritised.
- 1.2.10 If successful the sort of assistance that would be available includes Government support for resource funding, expert delivery advice for Homes England and cross-government brokerage to resolve barriers to delivery.
- 1.3 Expression of Interest for Borough Green Gardens Local Plan Strategic Site (Policy LP27)**
 - 1.3.1 The Government launched an earlier initiative in 2016 entitled 'Locally-led garden villages, towns and cities', which has now closed, but this only applied to new, free-standing settlements. The new initiative includes extensions to existing settlements, which would apply to Borough Green.
 - 1.3.2 Although the Borough Green Gardens strategic site included in the Local Plan can be delivered without any further assistance, the importance of the early delivery of the relief road and other important infrastructure has been emphasised throughout the plan making process. Much of the work necessary for making an expression of interest has been prepared as part of the Local Plan process. Early discussions with the promoters of the site and Kent County Council suggest that there would

be support for making a bid. At the time of writing a response from the Local Enterprise Partnership was awaited.

- 1.3.3 The strategic site at Borough Green meets many of the assessment criteria listed in the prospectus. It is the only site proposed in the Local Plan that is of a sufficient scale to be considered.
- 1.3.4 If a bid were to be successful, the types of potential Government assistance on offer, particularly in facilitating the early delivery of infrastructure, would be welcomed.

1.4 Conclusion

- 1.4.1 This report summarises the recent Garden Communities Prospectus and seeks approval for preparing an expression of interest for the Borough Green Gardens site, in liaison with private and public sector partners before the deadline for submission on 9th November. Due to the timescales involved, delegation to officers to finalise and submit the bid is also sought.

1.5 Legal Implications

- 1.5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 If successful Government assistance for bringing forward one of the strategic sites in the Local Plan could potentially contribute to the master planning and early delivery of key infrastructure as required by the Local Plan.

1.7 Risk Assessment

- 1.7.1 The delivery of the Borough Green Gardens site in the Local Plan is not dependent on a successful bid so there is no risk.

1.8 Recommendations

- 1.8.1 That the content of the report be noted; and
- 1.8.2 That subject to Member's support, delegated authority be granted to the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning & Infrastructure to finalise an expression of interest and submit to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by the 9th of November 2018.

Background papers:

Garden Communities: Prospectus (MHCLG August 2018)

contact: Ian Bailey (Planning Policy Manager)
Jeremy Whittaker (Economic Regeneration Officer)

Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer
Adrian Stanfield