

**Report for:** Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Panel, 29 September 2022

**Title:** **Wards Corner Update**

**Report authorised by:** David Joyce Director of Placemaking and Housing

**Lead Officer:** Peter O'Brien, AD Regeneration and Economic Development

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Report for Key/**

**Non Key Decision:** For information

## **1. Describe the issue under consideration**

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide a response to the following question raised by the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel following the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 2022 cabinet decision to approve the Wards Corner Acquisition Programme:
- 1.2. *Outline what the council's approach is to ensure that the right scheme will be in place going forwards and what the viability position is. The Panel would like assurances that the scheme will contribute towards a vibrant town centre in Seven Sisters.*

## **2. Recommendations**

The Scrutiny Panel is asked to note this briefing paper.

## **3. Reasons for decision**

Not applicable.

## **4. Alternative options considered**

N/A

## **5. Wards Corner**

### **Current position**

- 5.1 In August 2021, the council's development partner Grainger, made a public statement confirming that due to viability challenges they will withdraw from the Wards Corner development.
- 5.2 On 5<sup>th</sup> July 2022, [cabinet](#) approved the Wards Corner Acquisition Programme which involves the acquisition of 43 third-party property and land interests within the Wards Corner site; these include 36 owned by Grainger and 6 held by

private third-part property owners/occupational leaseholders, and 1 parcel of land owned by Transport for London (TfL). Cabinet also approved the termination of the council's [Development Agreement](#) (DA) with Grainger.

- 5.3 The DA gives the council the option to acquire all the property interests within the Wards Corner site which have been purchased by Grainger. The target is to complete the acquisitions by early October 2022.
- 5.4 The council strategy is to conclude the acquisitions of the 6 remaining private third-party properties by agreement. If agreements cannot be reached with property owners/occupational leaseholders by the end of October 2022, then the council will use its existing Compulsory Purchase Order powers to obtain ownership and vacant possession of the relevant properties.

## **6. New council led delivery approach**

- 6.1 Securing the acquisition of the properties within the Wards Corner site is a onetime opportunity for the council to pursue a new council-led delivery approach for the Wards Corner site that aligns with the Haringey Deal and strategic priorities for housing, economy and place. It also provides an opportunity to complement TfL's plans to refurbish Seven Sisters Market building with a significant potential to reinforce the local high street economy.
- 6.2 Following the completion of the acquisition of the Grainger properties, the council is looking to listen and engage with members on the approach for the council-led scheme which reflects the following four key development objectives approved by July cabinet.

### **Objective 1 – A Placemaking Approach to Seven Sisters Gateway**

- Involve the current occupants and landowners of the site in the project from the outset and as it develops, seek to closely engage with and look to accommodate businesses that wish to remain on site.
- Work with and empower local communities to participate in the design process to ensure that key objectives for the masterplan align with local aspirations/needs.
- Work with local communities, particularly young people and underrepresented groups, to shape the future of commercial, community and public spaces proposed on this scheme.
- Greater focus on promoting Seven Sisters strengths, such as its unique international food and beverage offer.
- Help to foster strong, vibrant, diverse and culturally rich town centre by celebrating its uniqueness, diversity of communities and their heritage and culture.
- Enhance the reputation and safety of the area, such that it might be competitive with other Victoria Line destinations.

- Improve visitor experience, including through smart technologies and public realm improvements.

### **Objective 2 – Delivering a Good Economy**

- Deliver on the council's Community Wealth Building Agenda through commissioning
- Drive wider local benefits relating to place making and social value
- Enable greater town centre activity with activation of retail on High Road frontage, Seven Sisters and West Green Road to support local employment opportunities.
- Improve linkage between creative clusters on West Green Road and Seven Sisters Road.
- Encourage the development of a suitable day and evening economy.

### **Objective 3 – Delivering council homes**

- Provide secure, high quality and affordable housing which residents are proud to call home.
- Aim to maximise the quantum of council rented homes, consistent with a viable scheme.
- Deliver inclusive, mixed and sustainable communities. Mixed tenures should be 'tenure blind' with no distinction in terms of design or space standards.

### **Objective 4 – Climate change and sustainability at its heart**

- Target net zero for new development, prioritising renewable energy sources
- Retain buildings where possible to enhance local character and deliver on Circular Economy principles
- Delivering on the Council's 'Health in All Policies' agenda, by responding to air and noise pollution, minimising parking and promoting use of sustainable transport (walking and cycling).

6.3 It is important to note that the council will not be acquiring the Seven Sisters Market (SSM) buildings and TfL have indicated their intention to work with SSM traders and the community to secure the buildings as a community asset into the future. The council will need to work with TfL and the community to ensure that the plans for this key part of the Wards Corner site are realised.

## **7 Viability position**

7.1 The comprehensive development of the Wards Corner site is a long-standing strategic objective of council. However, it is clear from an independent viability review that a comprehensive redevelopment has a substantial viability gap. The cabinet decision to acquire the Grainger and other third-party property interests recognised these viability challenges.

7.2 The approach for the council-led scheme for the site will involve the development of a more detailed delivery strategy for the site that could include a range of options that would need to keep in mind the protection of the council's financial interests during this process.

7.3 A slower, more nuanced delivery approach gives the council the time to develop a placemaking approach to implementing a viable development strategy working closely with the local community. It also gives the council the opportunity to explore further external funding opportunities to help bridge the gap between the council's strategic objectives and the current viability of the scheme.