

SCRUTINY REPORT

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD

14 NOVEMBER 2019

CALL IN REFERRAL – EXECUTIVE RESPONSE

CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Summary

On 26 September 2019 the Executive held an extraordinary meeting to discuss the Overview and Scrutiny Board's referral following the Call In meeting of 16 September 2019.

At the Extraordinary meeting the Executive decided to proceed with its original decision, made on 27 August 2019, with no other amendments.

Detail

As per the Council's Call In protocol, a valid Call In form was received on 2 September 2019 regarding the Executive's decision: *Long-term Lease of the Gresham Housing Site to Thirteen Housing Group*, made on the 27 August 2019.

Both the Call In Proposers (Cllrs Matthew Storey and Denise Rooney) and the Executive Members for Regeneration and Finance and Governance put forward representations to support their case. The details of the meeting can be found in the OSB minutes of 16 September 2019.

After considering all of the evidence put to it, the Overview and Scrutiny Board decided to refer the decision back to the Executive. As part of the referral, the Overview and Scrutiny Board put forward the following recommendations to assist the Executive in its deliberations:

1. Evidence of formal consultation with key stakeholders should be provided.

There was insufficient evidence that formal consultation had taken place with important partners and stakeholders, namely Teesside University and MHomeS.

OSB heard that formal consultation was not required due to a lack of proper agreements being put in place. However, it also heard that informal discussions had taken place,

specifically with Teesside University, but had not been evidenced in the report of the 27 August 2019.

OSB felt that as Teesside University has expressed an interest in developing a Student Village, neighbouring the Gresham site, formal consultation should have been evidenced. Similarly, OSB felt that MHomes had sufficient interest in the site to warrant formal consultation.

The inclusion of such information would have made the decision making process more robust and transparent.

2. The decision should show adherence to established plans and policies relating to the development of the site.

OSB felt the decision deviated from approved plans and policies, namely the Gresham Master Plan and Local Housing Plan as approved in 2018 and 2014, respectively.

OSB felt the decision did not adequately rely on information contained in relevant policies and plans. Because of this insufficient information was provided especially in relation to schools and infrastructure, public open spaces and the size of the development.

3. The decision should demonstrate a transparent process of developer choice.

OSB felt that insufficient information was provided to demonstrate what other developers, aside from Thirteen Group, were considered. While OSB recognised the site posed challenges, they felt that more effort should have been made to approach a wider range of prospective developers.

As part of this recommendation, the Board also felt that the inclusion of a cost comparison between prospective developers would have been advantageous.

Conclusion

On 26 September 2019 the Executive held an extraordinary meeting to discuss OSB's referral.

After discussing the recommendations above, the Executive felt the information provided at the Call In meeting, defending the decision, was satisfactory. Details of the Executive's discussion can be found in the meeting Minutes at Appendix 1.

In summary the Executive felt that:

- There was no requirement to formally consult the University with regard to the decision as the Council had held many business meetings with the University. During these meetings their position was clear; they were keen to see Gresham developed after years of inactivity.
- The proposal was in line with the 2014 Local Plan and the Master Plan of 2018. As with any other development, any matters of detail would be an issue for the planning process.
- There had been plenty of opportunity for developers to propose schemes at Gresham, including a Housing Developers Event on 23 April 2018, but none had

come forward. The Council had, however, received a good proposal from Thirteen, matching Council requirements.

The Executive therefore decided that their original decision, made on 27 August 2019, should be enacted without further delay and with no other amendments.

Contact:

Scott Bonner
Democratic Services Officer
Town Hall
Middlesbrough

01642 729708
scott_bonner@middlesbrough.gov.uk