

Strategic Case Summary – Levelling Up Fund Bid – Grove Lane

Levelling Up Fund investment will be used for the acquisition and remediation of 3.45 hectares of poor quality and under-utilised industrial land, demolition of existing buildings to make way for 151 new homes and a 'two form' entry primary school. The LUF bid will deliver much needed investment in a designated Housing Zone area, across four sites, all of which are within the Grove Masterplan. The housing development will provide a mix of homes for shared ownership and affordable rent in an area that is income deprived and will become a regional centre for key worker employment.

Under the proposal the council will acquire the freehold of these sites to consolidate land ownerships and to undertake demolition and remediation to prepare the sites to come forward for residential development. Following land assembly, tenants will be supported to find alternative premises.

The overarching Smethwick to Birmingham Corridor Framework sets out six guiding principles for the Corridor area to deliver a vision of 'promoting the future corridor as a healthy place with a healthy environment and positive outlook built on its history and identity' and contribute to achieving net zero by improving green spaces, encouraging sustainable travel choices, reducing congestion and delivering sustainable new homes. The six guiding principles are:

- Healthy centres
- An active travel exemplar
- A new hospital as an anchor institution
- Green new neighbourhoods
- A green corridor; and
- Health sense of place.

The investment will change the area's profile, refocusing from an area characterised by industrial legacy to a residential community. Sites to the east of the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital is dominated by industrial units, some of which are vacant and in a state of disrepair, that are low rise and between fifty to sixty years old. Failure to address these sites would be a missed opportunity in the context of surrounding development, resulting in the area's unprecedented level of investment being surrounded by areas of derelict buildings.

The purchase and demolition of industrial building to facilitate housing development will help to support the housing delivery deficit experienced in the Borough and address market failures by:

- Overcoming the challenge of fragmented land ownership in the Grove Lane areas that restrict the aspirations of the masterplan being realised
- Address viability issues by funding demolition and remediation of sites that were historically utilised for heavy industry. These upfront costs currently restrict housing from coming forward on the identified sites.
- Deliver public good in terms of enabling a housing scheme that meets local needs by providing a mix of units for affordable rent, shared ownership, and private sale. This will ensure the development responds to local affordability challenges and provides accommodation that is accessible to key workers at the neighbouring Midland Metropolitan University Hospital. A scheme of this nature would not be delivered without public funding and by the private sector which would seek to maximise the returns generated from the site.
- Focus on high quality urban realm including the provision of street lighting, both of which will provide a more welcome feel to the area and help to reduce the high levels of crime recorded locally. The roads surrounding the site currently lack street lighting and offers a poor sense of personal safety due to a low level of footfall, dereliction, and poor site lines particularly at the North end of the area where large industrial buildings adjoin the pavement and span around sharp corners of the public highway.

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