West Cheltenham/Cyber Central Update Report

Accountable member: Councillor Andrew McKinlay, Cabinet Member Development and Safety
Accountable officer: Tim Atkins – Managing Director Place and Growth
Ward(s) affected: All (site is in Hester’s Way and Springbank)

Key/Significant Decision: Yes

Executive summary

West Cheltenham is a strategic Joint Core Strategy (JCS) allocation that allows for the delivery of around 1,100 homes and approximately 45 hectares of employment land focussed upon a cyber technology uses. Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC), through the acquisition of a large quantum of development land have taken a major step in leading on the delivery of this ambitious, complex programme.

This report sets out the historic context of the project, the early financial investment the Council has already committed to in delivering it and the emerging programme to ensure successful delivery. The aim is for Cheltenham to attract local and international talent to a vibrant new sustainable community and continue as the cyber capital of the UK.

Significant due diligence was completed prior to the acquisition of 47 hectares (112 acres) of land at West Cheltenham. This considered a range of extenuating factors including financial and planning risk and identified detailed mitigation strategies to successfully navigate these risks. It was concluded that the investment supported the guiding principles of the corporate plan and place strategy in promoting and delivering economic growth of both the residential and commercial market sectors.

The future programme set out in this report is complex and challenging. It will result in significant positive investment in the town and the wider regional economy. The Council is assembling a multidisciplinary highly skilled team of officers and external advisors to deliver the project. It is also working collaboratively with key partners to maximise the growth opportunity for the wider area. A joint programme board has been established between Tewkesbury Borough Council (TBC) and CBC, to promote and drive forward the overarching vision and growth potential. This is supported by Gloucestershire County Council and GFirst LEP. This report details the considerable costs associated with a project of this significance. As the project develops it is anticipated that these costs will be mitigated through partnership arrangements with a future delivery partner.

From the outset the Council has successfully targeted external funding and support from central government and key partners. The project has been promoted by a number of members of government including the Secretary of State as well as local MPs.

Recommendations

Cabinet approves:

1. Continued support to the ongoing Cyber Central work programme to include:
   - Delivery vehicle / route to market for development / investment partner(s)
   - Further land assembly
2. To note spend to date on the Cyber Central Programme and the projected financial position until the end of 2020.

3. To delegate authority to the Managing Director Place and Growth, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member and the Executive Director of Finance and Assets, to approve and submit planning applications to the relevant planning authorities.

### Financial implications
This is as per the original Council report on 18 February 2019 and in line with the current budgets that have been previously approved.

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### Legal implications
The Council's Contract Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 will need to be followed when carrying out the procurements referred to in the report. The Regulations must also be considered when developing land and as stated in the body of the report, the authority will seek advice and assistance from specialist advisors and lawyers.

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### HR implications (including learning and organisational development)
The acquisition of this land will add to the Council’s property investment portfolio, there will therefore be a requirement for the property team to manage and maintain the land alongside existing assets. The capacity of the property team will be kept under review to ensure the land management can be fully resourced.

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### Key risks
There are a number of risks associated with a programme of this ambition. A risk register is set out at Appendix 1; this is subject to monthly monitoring and reporting to the programme board.

### Corporate and community plan implications
The Cyber vision is a key priority of the Corporate Plan, in particular the objectives of making Cheltenham the Cyber capital of the UK and increasing the supply of housing to build resilient communities.

### Environmental and climate change implications
The opportunity exists for this programme to become an exemplar for environmental and sustainable development across both the commercial and residential sectors. Any merging developments will be governed by the Local Planning authority and must adhere to adopted and emerging polices encouraging sustainable development and promoting health, wellbeing and biodiversity. Full assessment on the impact of the Council’s carbon emissions will be completed as Cyber Central develops as a project.
1. Background

1.1 West Cheltenham is a strategic Joint Core Strategy (JCS) allocation that allows for the delivery of around 1,100 homes and approximately 45 hectares of employment land focussed upon a cyber technology uses. In addition adjacent safeguarded land can provide for an additional 1,375 dwellings. The cyber industry provides one of the most important growth areas in the UK and global economy and in 2015 the Chancellor unveiled Cheltenham to be the new home for the government’s Cyber Innovation Centre (CIC).

1.2 Cheltenham’s Place and Housing Investment Strategies set an ambitious context for the town’s economic growth. The proposed West Cheltenham urban extension has been a priority project for the Council recognising the potential positive economic and community outcomes that could be achieved. West Cheltenham has a strong strategic location, adjacent to GCHQ home to the National Cyber Security Centre and proposed Cyber Innovation Centre (CIC); it is close to a motorway, airport and mainline railway station providing excellent connectivity. The development of West Cheltenham will be led by the cutting edge cyber tech and innovative industry offering a strong commercial anchor, which has the potential to drive forward the region’s growth agenda. The opportunity for Cheltenham, Gloucestershire and the region is significant.

1.3 Comprehensive delivery could create more than 7,500 high quality jobs for Cheltenham and the county along with thousands of homes as part of a high quality integrated development. These jobs and the associated academic institutions will attract local and international talent to a vibrant new sustainable community that will create benefits and opportunities for existing adjacent communities. In addition, provision of housing will assist in addressing issues with Cheltenham’s 5-year supply and support the delivery of Cheltenham West Regeneration Project that seeks to refurbish or rebuild a large proportion of the social housing stock in the area.

2.0 West Cheltenham - Progress to date

2.1 Cheltenham’s Place Strategy sets an ambitious vision for economic growth and housing delivery. In September 2018 the Council unanimously approved a Housing Investment Strategy advocating the need for a step change for its approach to housing. It approved a budget of £100M for the authority to take a direct role in housing delivery to support the wider growth and community objectives.

2.2 As a response to these key strategic drivers, the West Cheltenham urban extension and delivery of Cyber Central is a corporate plan priority project for the Council and considerable resource has been invested in maximising the economic opportunities that could arise through its development and delivery. In July 2018 the Council approved funds towards the creation of a multi-disciplinary team to consider how to maximise the economic and social benefit for Cheltenham and the wider region by realising the growth of the cyber industry and develop plans for growth across the residential and commercial property sectors.

2.3 Subsequently in September 2018 the Council produced the Cyber Central Vision, illustrating the extent to which the location could be a positive catalyst for change in the region through the promotion of a new community that combines world class cyber business and academic facilities, exemplar housing and state of the art amenity and leisure facilities in a highly accessible and environmentally sustainable location. The schematic formed part of the background documents to the JCS review process; it also formed the basis of the future garden communities bid to Homes England.

2.4 The emerging ambitions for the Cyber project were highlighted as:
• Build on the strength of the established cyber expertise in the Cheltenham area
• It will be highly connected; physically, digitally and socially
• Centrally located, to the west of Cheltenham in the UK Cyber Arc
• Enabling barrier-free knowledge sharing & collaboration between industry, academia, government and the local community
• To create a vibrant and diverse 24/7 campus style environment
• Built with the natural environment and sustainability at its heart
• It will play a key role in making the region, & the UK, “the safest place to live and work online”

2.6 In November 2018 the authority commenced negotiations regarding the purchase of a significant landholding within the allocated land at West Cheltenham. In February 2019 Council approved a budget allocation of £44,000,000 for land acquisition, subject to the necessary due diligence and risk appraisal. This sum included provisions towards land costs including fees/charges etc., project management and professional fees to support the delivery and development of the project. It also included provision for potential enabling works and future infrastructure costs.

2.7 Following a recommendation to Cabinet on 14 May 2019, it was approved that the Council could proceed with the acquisition for development of up to 47 hectares (112 acres) of land allocated for employment and residential uses at West Cheltenham for £37,500,000. The land comprised a series of medium scale arable and pastoral fields and was acquired from two local landowners (both farmers) and the strategic land promotion company, who controlled the land by way of promotion agreement.

2.8 The Council exchanged contracts on the purchase of this land in June 2019 with the acquisition completing on 22nd August 2019. The final purchase was unconditional and comprised the freehold interest in the land with vacant possession. In addition to the land, the contract allowed for the purchase of a considerable amount of technical work made available through the novation of a number of technical contracts from the vendor to the Council.

Central Government Support

2.9 There has been considerable market and government interest in bringing forward development at West Cheltenham.

2.10 The Council and Local Economic Partnership (LEP) has been successful in a funding bid for £22m Growth Deal 3 monies for transport infrastructure to enable the delivery of the future cyber park; this is currently being delivered by Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) as accountable body and highways authority. This should significantly reduce the access / highway infrastructure risks for the commercial phase of the delivery.

2.11 In July 2019 West Cheltenham was selected by Homes England as a new Garden Community following a joint submission by CBC and TBC; Garden Communities is the collective name for new garden villages, towns and cities, chosen by the Government as demonstrating successful approaches to large scale housing led development. Garden Communities are rooted in ‘Garden City’ principles and exemplify high quality design and place making together with innovative approaches to delivery and stewardship.

2.12 A Highways Infrastructure Fund (HIF) bid for highway improvements to junction 10 on M5 was submitted in March 2019 by GCC. The outcome of this submission will dictate future network capacity and the delivery of residential development at both West and Northwest Cheltenham, it is currently anticipated that a decision on funding will be announced in late 2019.

2.13 The Council continues to work closely with GCHQ, Cynam (a non-profit networking cyber organisation) and other local tech companies in relation to their requirements and developing the wider cyber tech ecosystem in the town. It is also supporting the emerging commercial proposals for the site and more particularly the formulating of the value proposition for Cheltenham as a ‘centre of excellence for the cyber tech and innovative industries’ along with the operating model for the first cluster of development known as ‘Cluster One’ which will include the Cyber Innovation Centre (CIC). Cyber Central forms part of our efforts to secure the longer term interests of GCHQ in the town and growth of the innovative, creative and cyber tech industries, which are hugely important to the economic future of Cheltenham. The Council will work closely with these stakeholders to facilitate their long term business plan and investment in the local and wider region, by providing flexible accommodation in both the short and long term.
3.0 Cyber Central Vision and Project Objectives

3.1 In achieving the objectives of the initial Cyber Central vision, more detailed project objectives have emerged through economic analysis. These are set out as follows and are illustrated in the diagram below:

- The opportunity to control and lead development across the strategic employment and residential allocation site;
- To strive for a high quality exemplar scheme including environmental sustainability;
- Major delivery of Cheltenham’s housing investment strategy with the potential for c.500 homes;
- Will allow the safeguarding of land for the expansion of cyber tech innovative industries and delivery of the Cyber Innovation Centre;
- Allow Cheltenham to develop as the Cyber capital of the UK;
- Enable the development and growth of cyber focused academia at sub-regional level;
- In encouraging employment growth, develop a culture for innovation and interaction;
- Working with our ALMO, Cheltenham Borough Homes, to implement the approved £100m housing investment plan and delivery of much need housing in this location;
- Increase revenue to the Council through new business rates;
- The promotion of the cyber industry in this location is anticipated to provide up to 10,000 direct and indirect jobs;
- Enhances the Council’s land assembly position for the wider site to seek a better integrated development;

3.2 The development of this site is a ‘once in a generation’ opportunity for the growth of high quality jobs and homes, putting Cheltenham at the heart of one of the world’s fastest growing and important innovative tech industries.

4.0 Cyber Central Project Programme

4.1 The Cyber Central programme is being delivered by a core team comprising four full time staff members and one part time. There are a large number of workstreams which have been split between the council’s separate functions in relation to this project as 1) landowner, 2) promoter and enabler of growth, prosperity and place. The landowner workstreams are managed and delivered wholly on behalf of Cheltenham Borough Council (as GCC and TBC do not have land interests in this project). The promotional and enabling workstreams (including the Garden Community vision) involve direct collaborative working with Tewkesbury Borough Council (TBC) as well as support from GCC, Gfirst LEP. Close working relationships have also been developed with a range of other central government agencies, businesses and academic institutions.
4.2 Set out below are the key workstreams and reporting lines. This diagram is also referenced in the governance section later in the report.

![Diagram: Cyber Central Programme Structure]

Delivery Vehicle / Route to Market

4.3 In delivering the Council's objectives, an early exercise is to identify and review a range of delivery options for the commercial and residential allocations at West Cheltenham. This will culminate in a clear recommendation for the preferred route to market. To inform these options it is important to understand the cost, value and viability drivers of the emerging planning framework and the emerging infrastructure elements and to undertake a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the Council's key objectives.

4.4 This early due diligence, alongside a detailed working knowledge of the property market and occupier activity, an understanding of developer requirements and a clearly defined proposition will allow a review of developer procurement options. This will form part of Cabinet paper scheduled for the December meeting, that will recommend a way forward, providing the Council with the optimum level of control and returns (financial, environmental and economic) for an acceptable level of risk transfer and participation. It will include a project risk register and action plan that will be underpinned by a clear vision and objectives.

4.5 Market dynamics at the time of the procurement will determine the immediate appetite and potentially type of partner to come forward. At this stage it is hoped that formal procurement will be launched in early 2020; assuming there are no significant external influences to the programme, a preferred development partner should be identified by late summer/autumn 2020.

4.6 The property consultants Avison Young and lawyers Trowers and Hamlins LLP have been appointed by the authority to support this workstream.

Collaboration with adjacent landowners

4.7 Prior to acquiring land at West Cheltenham, the site was subject to promotion through the planning process
by the West Cheltenham consortium. The West Cheltenham consortium presented their initial vision for the site in a public exhibition in summer 2017. This consultation set out the emerging plans following detailed work undertaken by a technical consultancy team to understand the site's characteristics and potential development constraints including ecology, landscape, drainage, heritage, transportation, accessibility and odour. Following this consultation further plans were presented to the public in February 2018.

4.8 Through the acquisition of the land at West Cheltenham, the Council have acquired Intellectual Property (IP) rights to this historic technical work. We have the opportunity to partner with the principal land owners to develop an outline planning application. The Council have started partnership conversations with those parties.

4.9 Funding for this element of the work programme has previously been approved by Cabinet in February 2019, however authority is sought to submit planning applications and seek other necessary consents / enter into agreements to enable the site to be developed in the most effective manner with different partners as appropriate. This will potentially include: collaboration and development agreements, feasibility studies, technical reports outline, detailed or hybrid planning applications for different phases of the development, temporary consents and / or smaller applications as required to support the overall delivery of the Cyber Central vision.

**Occupier Requirements**

4.10 In order to engage effectively with end-users, we have been undertaking a number of engagement events with key stakeholders, with the objective of creating a business plan in respect of the operating model for Cluster One and the Innovation Centre. After hosting a visit of key stakeholders to Manchester Science Park, which included touring the Park and listening to presentations from their CEO and Head of Digital, as well as Deloitte’s Cyber Team on LORCA, it became clear we needed to set up an Inception Group of local stakeholders to assist in formulating the value proposition for Cyber Central.

4.11 To date, we have undertaken two workshops, with attendees from GCHQ, University of Gloucestershire, University of Bristol, University of the West of England, Gloucestershire College, Cynam and GFirstLEP. The second session was facilitated by Deloitte. These sessions will inform the creation of the strategy, value proposition and operating model to ensure the eco-system of Cluster One and the Innovation Centre is distinctive and can challenge on a global level – we need to think big and be ambitious. Some elements that have already been identified are the:

- Attractive environment
- Concentration of expertise and experience that already exists.
- Existing community and eco-system already curated by Cynam
- Proximity to GCHQ and the validation effect by association

4.12 The next steps are to establish a prospectus setting Cheltenham’s value proposition supported by evidence of the strong market demand. In addition the Council is considering supporting the establishment of a Community Interest Company to benefit existing business communities and entrepreneurial enterprises in Cheltenham and ensuring they too benefit from future investment in Cyber Central.

4.13 The next workshop session is due to take place in November 2019, which will be led by Deloitte. The Council is currently interviewing for an industry expert, who will lead this work-stream going forward to deliver the business plan.

**Further Land Assembly**

4.14 To ensure the comprehensive, sustainable development of West Cheltenham, consideration needs to be given to wider land interests and ownership in and surrounding the JCS allocation, safeguarded land and its environs. Although discussions are taking place with landowners within the allocated land area, it is possible that some land may not come forward in a reasonable timeframe and has the potential to cause delays to the delivery of the wider ambitions set out in the Cyber Central Garden Communities vision. Therefore all options regarding land assembly are being explored.

4.15 The Authority also continues to liaise with third party landowners in and adjacent to the allocated and safeguarded land to ascertain their aspirations and future ambitions regarding their land.
Land Management Strategy

4.16 Through acquisition of the land, the Council has significantly increased its local landholding; the land will enter the asset register and be managed by the Council’s property team moving forward. This brings challenges in terms of ongoing maintenance and the Council is actively managing the site to deliver continued security and maintenance.

4.18 There are limited viable options to gain significant income from the site over the short term; however the Council is currently exploring all opportunities.

Government Support and Liaison

4.19 The Authority will continue to work closely with Homes England to understand better and appreciate the key delivery risks, barriers & opportunities associated with the Garden Communities designation of Cyber Central. The Council is currently developing a Project Delivery Plan (PDP) to capture expectations for the delivery of a high quality and innovative new sustainable development which builds on the support of Homes England and subsidiary partner bodies.

4.20 This element of work will also identify any opportunities for aligning with other national government initiatives and local development and investment interventions as part of the ‘single pipeline’ to create a new pioneering community at West Cheltenham,

Supplementary Planning Document

4.21 West Cheltenham is allocated under Policy A7 within the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy (JCS), adopted in December 2017. The allocation proposes approximately 1,100 dwellings and 45 hectares of B-class led employment land to be focused upon a cyber security hub and other high technology GVA generating development and ancillary employment uses. Tewkesbury Borough Council is directly affected by these proposals and is the planning authority for approximately half of the West Cheltenham site as allocated, with the safeguarded land being wholly within the boundary of Tewkesbury.

4.22 The Local Planning Authorities of Cheltenham Borough Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council have jointly commissioned consultants Avison Young to prepare a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

4.23 The SPD, once approved by Cheltenham and Tewkesbury councils will be a material consideration for all future planning applications in this area, supporting the delivery of the development allocations as set out in the JCS.

4.24 The SPD is currently being prepared and a number of community information gathering events have taken place to inform its development.

5.0 Communications

5.1 Given the significance of the emerging proposals of the Cyber Central programme it is important there is a clear narrative which sets out the schemes’ benefits at an early stage to ensure it is well positioned for public consultation and taking to market to find an appropriate development partner. Through its work with its communication partner, Target, the Council have developed a consistent narrative focused on the benefits of the scheme.

5.2 To date there have been three external events hosted by the Council, all to publicise the purchase of the land at West Cheltenham and targeted at different audiences and groups. These events and the primary purpose are set out below:

- Press Launch – Friday 23rd August at Gloucester College
  - To publicise the land purchase by CBC
  - To signpost future events when more detail will be available
  - To outline the key activities commissioned to support the plans

- Cheltenham Launch – Tuesday 17th Sept at Hub8
  - Communicate the vision for Cyber Central (what, where, why, who, how, when etc.)
  - Make evident the united partnership bringing forward the project (local authorities, LEP, GCHQ, education providers, businesses)
Emphasise the opportunities for the whole community; the inclusive growth agenda
Convey the scale of inward investment already committed and further anticipated c.£500m of investment into the area
Illustrate Cheltenham’s existing strength in Cyber tech, supporting the credibility of the vision

- LEP Annual Review – Thursday 19th Sept at the Growth Hub, Gloucester
  - To update the wider business community of the purchase of the land by CBC and the positive implications for the development of Cyber Central,
  - To support the LEPs vision for Cyber as the primary economic development thread for the Local Industrial Strategy
  - To create initial interest from the development and business community in the business opportunities that the Cyber park will bring.

5.3 Moving forward it is anticipated that the project team will continue to identify key dates in the project timeline to advise on appropriate publicity and control publicity accordingly. The Communication team will act as guardians of the website and manage all social media messaging and continue to identify and advise on key areas for PR and appropriate messaging e.g. presence at cyber-specific events, schools careers events, public forums.

6.0 Governance

6.1 Delivery of the Cyber Central vision will be a challenging and complex undertaking, requiring robust control mechanisms but also input from a wide range of public and private sector stakeholders and subject matter experts. Since 2016 there have been a number of bodies that have either directed or taken interest in the development of a cyber park and housing at West Cheltenham.

6.2 As set out earlier in this report in section 4, a Joint Programme Board has been established to provide a mandate, oversight and guidance to the Cyber Central project and to ensure the vision is consistent with each authority’s wider strategies and policies. This group uses the Councils’ wellbeing, economic development and growth roles to promote the development of the site and ensure that opportunities are maximised. It also acts as the focal point and co-ordination of the garden communities programme, the bid for J10, the GD3 programme and other related projects. This group meets monthly and is chaired by the Managing Director, Place and Growth who is the Senior Responsible Officer acting for both authorities and manages the workstreams as set out in this report.

6.3 A separate landowner board has been established to deal specifically with decisions and business relating to Cheltenham Borough Council’s land interests. Updates from this board and the associated workstreams will be made to the Programme Board (as appropriate).

6.4 The Council must ensure that arrangements are in place to demonstrate clear separation of its role as Local Planning Authority from that as land owner/developer. A more detailed paper setting out governance arrangements will be presented to a future Cabinet meeting.

7.0 How this initiative contributes to the corporate plan

7.1 The corporate plan sets out the ambition of wanting to make Cheltenham an even greater place for all; a place that is celebrated for its strong economy, its vibrant cultural offer and a place where our communities benefit from inclusive growth. It continues that Cheltenham is a place where everyone thrives, supported by a thriving economy, a thriving cultural offer and thriving communities.

7.2 The Plan highlights a number of key priorities, at the forefront of these is the determination to make Cheltenham the Cyber Capital of the UK, a place that will deliver homes, jobs, infrastructure and enable the Council to deliver inclusive growth for our communities.

7.3 The workstreams set out in this report detail the programme the Council are implementing to achieve this key priority. By acquiring a significant land holdings at West Cheltenham the Council can lead and attract future investment in the Cyber industry and through the successful garden communities bid can ensure exemplar development and high quality design together with key place making principles will ensure the successful future development of this location.

7.4 Working with others we will attract cyber related businesses and secure Cheltenham’s position as a cyber and digital innovation hub for the UK. We will secure the investment needed to ensure successful delivery
of the Cyber Park and supporting infrastructure, investing today to create the jobs for tomorrow. We will ensure that all our communities benefit from future investments by working with them to regenerate their neighbourhoods and improve their living, working, education and leisure facilities. (copied from CP)

8.0 Consultation and feedback

8.1 Due to the confidential nature of negotiations in acquiring the land at West Cheltenham and the sensitive emerging proposals there has been no significant public consultation on the workstreams as set out in this report.

8.2 This Council have however been transparent about its land investment, holding public and press events immediately following completion of the purchase; there has also been some ongoing engagement with key local stakeholders to inform the workstreams as set out in this report. It is proposed that the Council will continue to consult both the public and private stakeholders as proposals emerge and where announcements will not impact market confidentiality.

8.3 A number of the workstreams set out in this report will require statutory consultation. The SPD and emerging documents are subject to formal consultation as set out in this report and any future planning applications will be subject to a formal period of public consultation by the Local Planning Authority.

9.0 Performance management – monitoring and review

9.1 The Senior Responsible Officer, the Managing Director of Place and Growth will monitor and review the project.

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**Explanatory notes**

**Impact** – an assessment of the impact if the risk occurs on a scale of 1-5 (1 being least impact and 5 being major or critical)

**Likelihood** – how likely is it that the risk will occur on a scale of 1-6

(1 being almost impossible, 2 is very low, 3 is low, 4 significant, 5 high and 6 a very high probability)

**Control** - Either: Reduce / Accept / Transfer to 3rd party / Close