

Land north of Droitwich Road, Fernhill
Heath: the provision of a new public open
space

Feasibility study, masterplan and business
case

Invitation to Tender



June 2020

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to North Claines Parish Council and the Parish

North Claines Parish Council is a civil local authority, within the lowest tier of local government, located within the District of Wychavon. The Parish, which covers some 3,403 acres (1,377ha) or 5.3 square miles, is located immediately adjoining the northern boundary of the City of Worcester. It is some 2.5 miles wide in an east-west direction and 1.4 miles long in a north-south direction. Although within very close proximity to the City the Parish has a distinctively rural character with undulating farmland with hedgerows and copses.

The principle village in the Parish is Fernhill Heath which has a population of 3,256 (2011 Census). This represents 92.5% of the population within the Parish. The remainder of the population live in the hamlets of Bevere, Lower Town and Hawford and isolated farmsteads. Fernhill Heath is predominantly residential although it contains a small level of amenities including a first school and two private schools.

There are a limited number of small outdoor community facilities freely accessible to the public within Fernhill Heath including:

- the 'Brum' on the Droitwich Road includes an equipped children's play area and open space;
- Agatha Gardens green space; and
- Teasal Way green space.

There are three new small public open spaces being or to be provided as part of new development adjacent to Fernhill Heath:

1. 'The Shires' on Dilmore Lane;
2. 'Heath Meadow' on Droitwich Road; and
3. Worcestershire Hunt Kennels site, Kennels Lane.

There has also been public open space provision within new housing developments in Bevere on the western side of the Parish.

Parish Councils have the power to tax their residents through the 'precept', via the Council Tax, to support their operations and to carry out local projects. They (within reason and where possible) provide local services – i.e. children's play areas, maintenance of closed churchyards, control of litter, clearance of ditches, etc. Subject to County Council consent they also oversee other local services such as the provision of bus shelters, lighting of footpaths, signposting of footpaths, etc.

In addition, Parish Council's also obtain funding through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), the New Homes Bonus (NHB) and 'S106' agreements from new development. North Claines Parish Council has a 'made' Neighbourhood Development Plan (April 2017) and as such is entitled to receive 25% of any CIL monies from the date the NDP was made. There has been significant amount of housing development granted and started within the Parish over recent years. Monies from these developments has enabled the Parish Council to pursue one of its most ambitious projects, the provision of a new public open space for the Parish.

1.2 Background to the Project

Three adjacent and adjoining lots of land, to the east of Fernhill Heath and to the north of Droitwich Road, measuring 9.07ha (22.41acres) came up for sale in early 2019. In April 2019, the Parish Council decided to pursue the purchase of this land (minute 12 of 1 April 2019 Parish Council meeting). On 30 August 2019, the Parish Council purchased Lots 2 and 3 which measure 2.78ha (6.87 acres) and 2.74ha (6.78acres) respectively. The site location plan is shown at Appendix A.

The land is currently designated as Green Belt and was most recently used for agriculture. The land is relatively flat with a high point in the south west corner of just over 45m AOD falling to around 35m AOD on the northern boundary. The northern boundary is formed by Martin Brook which flows, at this point, in a westerly direction. The Brook is flanked by woodland and scrub. The western boundary is formed by a hedgerow which connects with the woodland at the northern boundary. Beyond the hedgerow is a further field which formed Plot 1 of the land sale and is in private ownership. The eastern boundary is also formed by a hedgerow which again connects with the woodland on the northern boundary. Beyond the hedgerow is land in agricultural use possibly belonging to Martin Court. This land is outwith the North Claines Parish boundary. The southern boundary is formed by the A38 Droitwich Road. There is a hedgerow along this boundary with some breaks particularly towards the western boundary. The hedgerow sits immediately adjacent to the pavement which runs along the entire length of the A38 adjacent to the site. Towards the eastern end of the southern boundary the site moves away from the road and a wide highway verge is formed which includes a drainage ditch. The southwestern part of the boundary is formed with the residential garden to Fernhill Heath House which, along with its wall and gate piers, is Grade II Listed.

There are two access points off the A38 into the site. The principle one appears to be that to the east which runs across the wide highway verge. The second access, formed by a gate, would appear to be a secondary access and is towards the centre of the site. This is located adjacent to the pond which is to the rear of the old gatehouse on Old Drive. This access is close to 30 mile per hour speed zone and the road markings for the right-hand filter turn for vehicles coming from the west entering West Mercia Police Headquarters at Hindlip Hall via Old Drive.

There is a public footpath, NC-560, bisecting the site. This is located towards the eastern side of the site and runs from the A38 to Martin Brook connecting with public footpath MH-522. It is understood there are also informal footpaths along Martin Brook.

The nearest bus stop is adjacent to the Cedars supported living housing on the A38 which is some 350m to the west from the first access point into the site.

The site is located within Flood Zone 1 according to the Government's flood maps for planning.

Adjacent the southern boundary of the site is the Grade II listed lodge to Hindlip Hall on Old Drive. The gate and gate piers are also Grade II listed. A number of buildings within Martin Court to the north of the site are also listed. However, the woodland along Martin Brook screens the site from these buildings.

As stated above the land is designated as Green Belt within the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) (adopted February 2016) and the North Claines Neighbourhood Plan (NCNP) (made April 2017). Other relevant designations, taken

from the SWDP Interactive Map, that are relevant to the site from these documents include:

SWDP

- Minerals Safeguarding Area/Minerals Consultation Zone for Sand & Gravel
- Green Infrastructure (Protect & Restore)
- Areas Susceptible to Surface Water Flooding (1 in 200-year rainfall event) – areas adjacent to Martin Brook
- Heavy Goods Vehicles Route Network – A38

NCNP

- Local Heritage Area – Fernhill Heath
- Local Nature Conservation Site – Martin Brook

In January 2020, the Parish Council delivered a questionnaire on the future use of the land to residents within the Parish. There were 387 responses representing a 27% return rate. The questionnaire put forward 13 potential uses that could be accommodated on the land and asked respondents to state whether they 'strongly agreed', 'agreed', had 'no opinion', 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' to that use. The responses in descending order from the most popular (i.e. strongly agree/agree) to the least popular (i.e. 'disagree/strongly disagree') were:

1. Circular Track
2. Wetland and Wildflower area
3. Community Garden
4. Grassy Areas
5. Parking Facility
6. Seating and Picnic Area
7. Forest School Area
8. Multi Use Games Area
9. Community Orchard
10. Playground
11. Village Hall
12. Football Pitch
13. Skate Park

Many of these uses are not mutually exclusive and could be provided on the land. Additional ideas were put forward such as toilets, community cafe, ice cream parlour, swimming pool and a fishing lake. However, these numbered under 10 responses each.

In June 2020, Parish Councillors provided their views on the future use of the land. The main 'principles' for the land include:

- Proposals should be designed, developed and delivered by the local community in a phased manner dependent on funding and support;
- Proposals should be considered in the context of existing provision within the Parish and surrounding area and, the needs and requests expressed by the local community;
- Proposals should be flexible in order that additional uses including more formal activities have the potential to be provided in the future;

- Initial proposals should seek to secure the boundaries of the site and improve access to and within the site;
- There should be a series of connected natural spaces providing a variety of habitats appropriate to the site's location, landscape character and Green Belt designation;
- Recreational activities should be low intensity and informal in character using natural features and materials;
- Proposals should look at opportunities to demonstrate how the land can provide an educational and environmental resource for current and future generations particularly in relation to climate change and health and well-being.

From the above principles, a draft vision for the land has been produced as follows:

A public open space providing a variety of natural spaces and habitats for a range of low intensity recreational and amenity uses, that can change over time, appropriate to its location and landscape setting; is accessible to the local and wider community, and provides an educational and environmental resource for current and future generations.

2 TENDER INFORMATION

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this tender is to procure a feasibility study, masterplan and business case for the provision of a new public open space within the Parish. The results of this study will help to ensure that proposals for the future use of the land are both technically and financially viable and have broad support from key stakeholders such as the local authority and the local community. It is the initial stage in the process of the project for providing a public open space which will also include in broad terms the following stages:

- Design proposals including applying for planning permission (including for the change of use of the land);
- Implementation of the agreed design proposal (i.e. the physical works); and
- Use and the ongoing management, maintenance and adaptation of the space.

2.2 Indicative Methodology

The supplier should propose a methodology which includes the following stages:

1. Assessment and analysis

Undertake an assessment and analysis of 'needs, opportunities, challenges, options and responses' for the use of the land for a public open space including consultation and engagement with key stakeholders (including Wychavon District Council, Worcestershire County Council, Hindlip, Martin Hussingtree & Salwarpe Parish Council, etc) and the local community. This assessment should look at the following (not exhaustive):

- A review of existing public and community open space provision in the area and a review of existing strategies for parks, open spaces and recreation facilities to understand the strategic context.

- A review of the responses to the Parish Council's Survey Questionnaire (January 2020).
- Land use planning including change of use from agriculture to public open space and any implications from development, engineering and other operations on the land in the context of its designation within the Green Belt;
- Technical constraints such as whether there are any fundamental geo-technical, geo-environmental and geo-hydrological and flood risk issues;
- Access and accessibility including access to the site from the village and other parts of the parish and access within the site including the existing public footpath;
- Bio-diversity and nature conservation issues relating to existing habitats within and adjacent to the site and the potential of the site to be a corridor;
- Arboricultural issues in relating to existing trees and hedgerows; and
- How the site can help make a positive contribution to tackling climate change and improving health and well-being for the village and the parish.

2. Draft masterplan

Provide a draft masterplan (i.e. proposed layout) for the land with a description, reasoning and phasing for the potential mix of uses, habitats and functions and broad cost estimates and potential funding options and opportunities.

3. Public consultation

Undertake consultation with the local community on the draft masterplan proposal, including holding at least two events in the village, and analyse and report on the implications of the comments received.

4. Final masterplan

Provide an overall masterplan for the public open space showing:

- a. The proposed location of spaces, habitats and uses, any built development proposals and access points and routes within the site;
- b. The phasing of proposals over 5, 10 and 15+ year period;
- c. The outline business case including the economic, environmental, social and health value from the provision of public open space detailing the broad cost estimates and funding sources;
- d. The proposals for the effective and efficient management and operation of the land;
- e. How the stage 1 'assessment and analysis' and stage 3 'public consultation' has influenced the masterplan proposals; and
- f. The proposed next steps in delivering the masterplan.

2.3 Timescales

We anticipate that the project will last approximately 4.5 months, starting early August 2020 and will be delivered by the middle of December 2020. Below is an indicative timescale for key milestones for the project:

- Appointment of supplier and project inception meeting: early August 2020
- Draft masterplan presentation to project working party: mid-September 2020
- Consultation events on draft masterplan: mid-October 2020
- Final masterplan submission to project working party: mid-November 2020
- Final masterplan presentation to the Parish Council: early December 2020
- Final masterplan submission to the Parish Council: mid-December 2020

The precise timescale for the project will be determined in collaboration with the selected supplier during the inception meeting, which is expected to take place early August 2020.

2.4 Governance

The Parish Council has set up a project working party made up of nominated Parish Councillors. The Parish Council may invite additional representatives on the project working party including from Wychavon District Council and Worcestershire County Council. For day-to-day communications, the supplier will report to the Chair of the project working party.

2.5 Outputs

The expected outputs from the project are, in a digital format, the following:

- Draft masterplan report and presentation providing a spatial plan with precedent images and relevant diagrams and infographics along with a narrative providing a reasoning for and description of the proposals, and a schedule and explanation of budget cost-estimates and potential funding sources.
- Exhibition posters, publicity material and comments form for the purposes of the local public consultation.
- Final masterplan report and presentation providing final agreed spatial plan and business case along with description of how residents and stakeholder involvement has influenced the masterplan and next steps.

2.6 Tender Submission Requirements

Potential suppliers should submit a tender document that includes:

- The Proposed methodology demonstrating conformity with the 'indicative methodology' described in Section 2.2 of this document;
- The Proposed outputs demonstrating conformity with the project purpose and outputs described in Sections 2.1 and 2.5 of this document;
- The Project team and general experience;
- A Statement of experience relevant to the project, and selected projects that demonstrate relevant experience including the contact details for two references;
- Proposed approach to project management, identifying any risks and mitigation strategies, and specifying how the project will be delivered on time and do a high standard;
- Total cost of the project; and
- A budget breakdown between the stages, daily rates and personnel inputs.

2.7 Evaluation and Assessment

Tender submissions will be evaluated against four criteria:

1. Quality and rigour of the proposed methodology;
2. Experience and track record of managing and delivering similar projects relevant to the project;
3. Experience of effective partnership working (i.e. with project stakeholders and the public); and
4. Value for money and added value.

An assessment panel comprising members of the Parish Council will evaluate the tenders against the criteria above. Applicants may be invited to interview.

2.8 Budget

This project will be funded up to a maximum and fixed sum of **£7,500** (to include all disbursements but excluding VAT), with the intention that this be paid in four equal instalments according to agreed project milestones of an acceptable quality standard (i.e. on signing of the contract, delivery of the draft masterplan, the analysis of the consultation responses and delivery of the final masterplan report). This budget is non-negotiable and bids should demonstrate clear value for money

2.9 Deadlines for Tender Submissions

Tender applications should be submitted electronically to:
clerk@northclainesparishcouncil.gov.uk

The deadline for applications is **17:00, Monday 27 July 2020**.

We may interview bidders during w/c 3 August 2020 and will seek to appoint the successful supplier during the same week.

2.10 Further Information and Enquiries

We welcome enquiries about this project, but please note that all responses to enquiries will be issued as (anonymised) Q&A's to all bidders.

For enquiries, please contact clerk@northclainesparishcouncil.gov.uk

Appendix A: Site Location Plan (Not to Scale)

