

REPORT TO: **HOUSING COMMITTEE - 20 JANUARY 2003**
 PLANNING & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE -
 27 JANUARY 2003
 DSO COMMITTEE - 10 FEBRUARY 2003

REPORT ON: **WHITFIELD COMMUNITY WOODLAND**

REPORT BY: **DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION**
 DIRECTOR OF HOUSING
 DIRECTOR OF CONTRACT SERVICES

REPORT NO: **825-2002**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to obtain Committee approval of the proposal to create an estate wide community woodland in Whitfield.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- agrees the details of the proposal, and notes the development of an estate wide framework for future developments, which will be reported to future committees;
- remits appropriate officers to begin consultations on the estate wide programme of community woodlands within interested community groups;
- remits appropriate officers to reach agreement with a local training organisation regarding training placements;
- approves the allocation of parts of the budgets already assigned within the Housing Capital expenditure plan to the projects;
- accepts the offer from Dundee Contract Services of £135,000 for the first scheme at Dunbar Park;
- approves the overall expenditure on this first scheme of £150,000, which includes further allowances of £15,000 for fees, and contingencies.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 £100,000 has been allowed in 2002/2003 in the Housing Capital expenditure, which will part fund the proposed works in the first stage of the Dunbar Park area.
- 3.2 Contributions of £50,000 in 2003/04 and £50,000 in 2004/05 are required. These can be met from the allowances already made for in the Housing Capital Programme for demolition works in the estate, subject to approvals of the Housing Capital Programme in each financial year.
- 3.3 Scottish Enterprise Tayside is presently considering an overall approval for the project of £245,000. Confirmation of this is expected by the end of January 2003. £50,000 of this approval is allocated to the first scheme at Dunbar Park.

3.4 Maintenance Costs

The Woodland will attract additional funding from SET over the first three years in recognition of the need for more intense maintenance required over this period to establish the planting. Thereafter maintenance will be borne by the Council.

Sites proposed for redevelopment in both the short term and the long term will remain on the Housing Account and the costs will fall to the Housing Department. A requirement of the design of these sites will be to seek to limit the cost of maintenance to that equivalent to the cost, which would have been incurred if the site were entirely grassed.

For sites being converted to Permanent Public Open space it is recommended that discussions are entered into with the Parks Department with a view to these areas being transferred to the Parks Account. Again the design will seek to limit the maintenance costs to those which would have been incurred if the site were entirely grassed.

The proposals remove redundant infrastructure and boundaries and will therefore reduce future maintenance costs on these items.

Therefore implementing the proposals will reduce overall maintenance costs.

4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Sustainability is at the root of the proposals for Whitfield Community Woodland, which has been developed to meet the aspiration of the Council's Dundee 21 Policy and SET's Sustainable Development theme. The large scale of tree planting will contribute to improvement of the environment and to the visual amenity of the estate. A primary facet of the proposal is to link all the internal public spaces and connect them to the wider paths and woodlands network. Not only will this benefit people it will also offer further diversification of habitats for wildlife.

4.2 Road and path infrastructure is being reviewed in the framework plan with a view to rationalising provision and where possible reducing the adverse effects of traffic whilst encouraging walking and cycling. The proposals will result in a series of homogeneous public open spaces with accessible links to the city network. This will encourage residents to adopt a healthier style of living.

4.3 Future developments will be required to utilise Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and areas for possible wetlands will be incorporated, which will provide outlets for surface water runoff.

4.4 Opportunities for re-use and recycling of construction materials have been identified in the projects.

5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The proposal for Whitfield Community woodland embodies sustainable regeneration on three levels:

- The physical works will not only remove blight caused by dereliction but will continue the regeneration of the estate in a sustainable manner;

- The project will nurture the strong local community focus and thus sustain the involvement of the local community in the process; and
- On a city-wide scale the project will support social inclusion and training initiatives by providing training placements.

6 BACKGROUND

6.1 The Whitfield estate was one of four Regeneration Partnerships in the "New Life for Urban Scotland Initiative" in the mid eighties. The Partnership between Central Government, the local authorities, Scottish Enterprise Tayside, Scottish Homes and the Community has transformed the estate. Over £60 million of public money has been invested in housing and public realm works which has secured private investment in both new build and refurbishment developments. Since the conclusion of the formal partnership, work has continued on the regeneration of the estate under the auspices of the Dundee Partnership.

A current woodland development is already underway on the northern edge of the estate at Middleton wood. This development is very much community focused and is supported by the Dundee Partnership and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). It has also attracted various small grants. The Middleton Woods project has been carried out as a phased project involving preparatory works by the Councils work force; local community groups then assisted with the planting.

A second wave of major demolitions of unpopular housing stock is underway. Because of financial constraints in the budgets for demolition the cleared sites are receiving minimal post demolition treatment. However, on a wider area basis the demolition of buildings leaves behind large areas of ground, which contain redundant infrastructure and unconnected areas of planting. This has the potential to cause major blight to adjacent houses and facilities and to reduce the attractiveness of development sites. This blight will also counteract the aim to stabilise the estate and will jeopardise the large-scale investments.

There is a need to counteract the possible negative effects and enhance the marketability of the future development sites while simultaneously improving the permanent open spaces in the estate.

A framework plan for future development of the estate is in the initial stages of development. It is intended to report on the initial draft of this framework plan to the relevant Committees in early 2003, with a view to undertaking external consultations prior to finalising the framework plan.

The initial framework has established blocks of land for development with associated infrastructure layout, and areas for woodland planting established.

6.2 For the purposes this report but subject to the above consultations, the estate can be divided into four discrete areas:

- Dunbar Area;
- Newfields Area;
- Central and North Area; and
- Longhaugh Area.

Each of these has been assessed in terms of the future built development potential, associated infrastructure requirements and potential for woodland area and permanent open space. In this process, two categories of development sites have been identified which will be treated in different ways:

- Short Term Development Sites, which could be developed within 5-10 years. Here the treatment will include removal of redundant above ground infrastructure, play facilities and planting and installation of structure planting to define sites and increase their attractiveness to developers. For these sites the proposal is to install permanent structure planting which will define the development area and to treat the ground to produce more attractive sites. Notional infrastructure layouts will be prepared for each sub area in the estate and layouts of planting reserve service strips for roads, footways and cycleways and public utilities. The structure planting belts are 40/60 mixture of native species and quick growing species, with the native species forming a central core in the planting enclosed in the more robust quick growing species.
- Permanent Open Space and Long term Development sites, which will not be developed for 25 years. Here the treatment will be removal of redundant above ground infrastructure, play facilities, and replanting as urban woodland, incorporating existing planting where possible. This will improve the environs of the estate and preclude the potential blight. It is intended to plant out these areas, taking the view that if the ground is required for development after 25 years, trees can be harvested or used as a tree bank. The planting will have a range of forms and mixtures depending on the topography and aspect of the site. Generally, the native species will predominate with other species used to provide protection or interest. In one or two locations it is intended to form wetlands using sustainable urban drainage techniques to increase the diversity of the habitat. In particular, the north section of Dunbar Park, which links to Middleton Woods, offers potential to expand the wetlands being created there.

- 6.3 The native species will provide the long term woodland form and diverse habitats for flora and fauna. The quick growing trees will provide initial massing and screening and can either be harvested or coppiced after 10-15 years. Whitfield Estate lies between the flood plain of the Dighty Burn to the south and open countryside to the north. The proposals will enhance the urban wildlife corridors between these areas.
- 6.4 The future infrastructure of the estate will require Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems. Therefore, possible wetland areas have been incorporated in the proposals. These will provide outlets for the surface water runoffs. They also add another element of biodiversity.
- 6.5 It is intended to use the Middleton Wood delivery model for the project but with one important addition. Because of the larger scale and longer term nature of the project, it offers the opportunity for training placements to trainees who are currently pursuing Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) in hard and soft landscaping skills. A local training company has developed these courses and requires good quality placements. The long-term nature of the project might also see modern apprenticeships being established. The Council's DCS is committed to training and has record of promoting apprenticeships. Initial discussions have

concluded that this arrangement can be directed at people from the SIP areas in the city. It is recommended that appropriate Officers conclude these and reach an agreement on the terms of a training provision.

- 6.6 The woodland programme is envisaged to last for three years.
- 6.7 However there is an opportunity to implement an early action project at the Dunbar Park area this year. The area falls into the long term/permanent open space category. Details of this project are shown on the attached plan. Consultations have taken place with the residents immediately affected by the project and final details will be prepared accordingly. The proposals have been prepared in accordance with Safer by Design Guidelines and will be finalised in conjunction with the Police Architectural Liaison Officer. Funding of £100,000 is in place from the Housing Capital Allowances in 2002/2003 for this project. Approvals are being sought within Scottish Enterprise Tayside for the overall programme with £50,000 being allocated to this first project, which may be spent either in 2002/03 or 2003/04. Authority is sought for expenditure of £150,000 on the Dunbar Park scheme. Further approvals will be sought on a project by project basis, subject to the availability of capital funding.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 To summarise, the future structure of Whitfield is under review and the need to deal with large areas left behind by a second wave of demolitions has been identified. Sites can be categorised into those which may be developed in the short term and those which will not be developed, if at all, until after 25 years. If not dealt with, these areas will blight the adjacent developments and thus jeopardise not only the large investment but also the efforts to stabilise the estate. The Whitfield Community Woodland proposal seeks to deal with this blight. It has two objectives; one to create permanent woodlands and paths on long-term sites and one to install structure planting to define the short term development sites and make them more attractive to the private sector and thus ensure their redevelopment. Redundant infrastructure will be removed and a series of interlinked open spaces will be developed. Whitfield is part of the SIP2 area and the type of work envisaged has the potential for community involvement and training opportunities. To realise this potential it is proposed to use Dundee City Council's DCS in conjunction with local training providers to provide placement for trainees in landscaping skills. Preference will be given to trainees from SIP areas. A first project has been prepared for the Dunbar Park area and subject to final consultations and approval of funding SET, can be implemented this financial year.

8 CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 Final consultations are taking place with residents in the immediate vicinity of the first scheme of the project at Dunbar Park.
- 8.2 Further consultations are required on the overall woodland project with interested groups and residents in conjunction with consultations in the framework plan for the estate.
- 8.3 The Chief Executive, Director of Finance, Director of Support Services and Director of Corporate Planning, Director of Housing and Director of Contract

Services have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report.

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None.

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KL/GG/EH

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