

SUBJECT	SOUTH BUCKS COUNTRY PARK
REPORT OF	Resources Portfolio Holder – Cllr Gibbs
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Director of Resources
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WARD/S AFFECTED	All

1. Purpose of Report

Following the determination of the planning application at the November Planning Committee, the Cabinet needs to confirm the intention implement the scheme, and that the site be designated a Country Park under the Countryside Act 1968.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. The scheme to develop a Country Park is progressed in line with the approved planning application and the agreed tender.**
- 2. That Cabinet formally designates the development once complete as a Country Park in accordance with the Countryside Act 1968.**

2. Reasons for Recommendations

In November the Planning Committee determined the application submitted for the site. The application was in conformity with the scheme drawn up and consulted on by the Council. The project will now progress to the implementation phase. As a result of the public consultation members had expressed the intention to designate the site as a country park if the scheme was implemented, which provides the site with greater protection from any future change of use, and additional powers around its operation.

3. Content of Report

3.1. In June 2017 the Cabinet agreed to progress to a planning application the proposal to develop of a country park at the former Academy 9 hole golf site which had closed in October 2016. The planning application was determined by the Planning Committee on 7th November. The plan of the approved scheme is attached as Appendix A for information.

3.2. The Planning Committee imposed a number of conditions on the development the main ones of which are as follows.

- Production of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (Construction Traffic), which essentially covers how traffic movements will be routed and managed.
- Plans for the management of surface water drainage
- Production of a Construction Environment Management Plan (Biodiversity) for monitoring of the ecology of the site.

- 3.3. There are a number of steps that will now follow to implement the scheme. Firstly the contractual arrangements with the company that will be constructing the country park, Glendale Construction, need to be concluded, taking into account any conditions attached to the planning permission. This will include being satisfied that Glendale are fully meeting the requirements on them under the CL:AIR protocol governing the importation of material to the site, and this is built into the contract documentation.
- 3.4. Discussions will be concluded with the British Cycling Federation (BCF) regarding any financial contributions to the scheme in respect of the enclosed cycletrack. The Federation have been supportive of the scheme which they see as creating an important regional facility for public and club cycling, and have indicated they will assist the Council in applying to them for grant funding towards the cost of elements of the scheme such as the mountain bike trail and enclosed cycletrack.
- 3.5. A resource employed by the Council for the duration of the construction period, will be used to monitor on site working/activity and liaise with the local community on any issues.
- 3.6. The construction period is anticipated to commence in February, with pre-construction mobilisation commencing in January. The project is expected to take 24 - 30 months with facilities opening by summer 2021.
- 3.7. As part of the process in developing plans for the country park there was public support for designating the site as a country park. Under the Countryside Act 1968. This is an executive decision of the Cabinet, on the basis of the strong public support from the public consultation carried out.
- 3.8. The benefits of a designation are primarily around giving authorities powers to provide facilities compatible with the nature of the country park and make appropriate charges for facilities if they choose. It also clearly identifies the site as a public open space asset which would be a material feature in planning terms. Appendix B sets would the relevant section of the legislation.

4. Consultation

There was extensive public consultation on the project leading up to the submission of the planning application, including on the question of designating the facility as a country park. Members have been consulted over the course of the projected development via the South Buckinghamshire Panel.

5. Options

N/a.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Financial. The works to construct the country park are estimated in the draft contract to be £2,300k, but could vary depending on any funding provided by BCF. The estimated volume of material that will be imported to landscape the site is 400,000m³. This will result in an income to the Council over and above the construction costs of at least £750k, plus reimbursement of cost incurred to date in achieving planning permission. The Council will account for the VAT on the construction costs even though it is not making any payment of these costs, but the income it receives does not attract VAT.

6.2 The cost of the client monitoring, £80k, was factored in to the original financial estimates for the scheme.

6.3 In 2019 once the construction is fully underway, the operating budget for the site once it is handed over in 2021 will start to be prepared. This will identify the necessary contracts and service level agreements that need to be put in place.

6.4 Legal. The relevant elements related to the country park designation are appended to this report.

7. Links to Council Policy Objectives

The proposed redevelopment would contribute towards the Council's aim of promoting and supporting healthy life styles by encouraging exercise and physical activities. It strongly supports the objectives of the Healthy Communities Strategy.

8. Next Steps

- Update local stakeholders and community on the project
- Finalise contractual arrangements
- Discharge pre-commencement planning conditions
- Put in place site monitoring arrangements.

Background Papers:	None
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