

CABINET MEETING – 17 JUNE 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

Title of Report:

St Peter's Landscape Vision

Author(s):

Deputy Chief Executive

Purpose of Report:

The report seeks approval for the implementation of the landscaping and interpretative works for the St Peter's site. The proposals will be funded from the Council's Capital Programme.

Description of Decision:

Cabinet is recommended to:

- a) Authorise the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Secretary, to approve detailed designs and budgets and to appoint contractors to deliver the proposals
- b) Approve the use of £1.7 million budget allocated in the capital programme

Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework? ***Yes**

If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework

Suggested reason(s) for Decision: To deliver improvements to the setting of St Peter's Church

Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:

The alternative option would be to not progress the proposals.

Impacts analysed:

Equality
 Privacy
 Sustainability
 Crime and Disorder

Is this a "Key Decision" as defined in the Constitution? **Yes**

Is it included in the 28 Day Notice of Decisions? **Yes**

Scrutiny Committee

ST PETER'S LANDSCAPE VISION

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To give an overview of the St Peter's Landscape vision and its objectives
- 1.2 To provide a description of the design development
- 1.3 Provide the indicative capital expenditure required.

2.0 Description of Decision

- 2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:
 - c) Authorise the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Secretary, to approve detailed designs and budgets and to appoint contractors to deliver the proposals
 - d) Approve the use of £1.7 million budget allocated in the capital programme

3.0 Background

- 3.1 St Peter's Church is located in an urban setting on the banks of the River Wear, surrounded by a number of buildings which form part of the Sunderland University Campus. The Church is a grade I listed building, the anglo-saxon monastic archaeological remains within its grounds are a Scheduled Ancient Monument and the site forms one half of the twinned monastic sites of St Peters, Wearmouth, and St Paul's, Jarrow, that together formed the candidate World Heritage Site (cWHS).
- 3.2 The future development of the area is guided by the Wearmouth Masterplan and Design Code. This establishes a planning and design framework within the buffer zone of the cWHS against which development proposals will be considered with the aim of celebrating St Peter's and enhancing its setting. The Masterplan aims to protect and enhance key views to and from St Peter's.
- 3.3 The outstanding universal value of the St Peter's site (as defined in the cWHS Management Plan) rests primarily in the above and beneath ground remains of the anglo-saxon monastic building complex, its estuarine setting and the unique combination of knowledge gained from archaeological investigation and attributable surviving

manuscripts and documents. These testify to the monastery of St Peter's being an innovative and creative centre of learning and culture in Northern Europe, deliberately created by Benedict Biscop, which was of the highest importance in the formative period of the Early Medieval stage of European culture, the emergence of an 'English' identity and the transition from late antiquity to Medieval Europe.

- 3.4 No other monastic site of this Early Medieval period in Britain or Europe has the richness of combined evidence to surviving fabric and manuscripts.

3.5 **World Heritage Status**

The twin monastery of Wearmouth - Jarrow was submitted for consideration as a World Heritage Site to ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites). ICOMOS's report of the 14th March 2012 recommended that the twinned monastic site should not be inscribed on the World Heritage List as it was considered the present architectural and archaeological remains are not convincing as a unique or at least exceptional example of Western European Christian monasticism. The Wearmouth-Jarrow Partnership considers ICOMOS's evaluation to be flawed in certain critical areas and have written to ICOMOS with a detailed critique of its evaluation on these matters. ICOMOS have acknowledged receipt of the Partnership's critique and have stated that they will take it seriously. Their response is awaited. The Local Authorities of Sunderland and South Tyneside are currently considering submitting an expression of interest later this year for the twinned site to be considered again for nomination as a World Heritage Site.

4.0 **Current Position**

- 4.1 A Landscape vision has been prepared by the Council in consultation with the County Archaeologist, English Heritage, Sunderland University, The Church/Diocese, Lead Artist and St Peter's ward Councillors.
- 4.2 The Vision for this important site takes the buried archaeological remains and manifests them as a modern garden tracing the monastic footprint and bound with interpretive material. The vision attempts to bring to light the work of the archaeologists in an accessible and sensory way. A cobble path becomes a timeline chronicling the journey of Benedict Biscop from courtier to founder of St Peter's and St Pauls, along with his six visits to Rome. That a cobble path found on the site perhaps predates the church itself suggest Biscop may have walked the path on his first visit to the site. The wall foundations become living hedges, and a sense of the Mediterranean is introduced in the planting to give a further nod to the connection to Rome. A simple herb garden makes a tacit link back to the monk's self-sufficiency. Where a significant find of Opus signinum was made becomes the location of an interpretive map detailing the remains beneath the visitor's feet. The

walls of the processional hall linking to the Wear become raised walls leading into the grounds. All these elements combine in a cohesive garden, interesting in itself, but underpinned by the significance of what lies beneath. Elsewhere the work of Bede is brought vividly to life in the stained glass windows of the church, and the connection to the glass centre is marked by a set of bespoke lighting columns, making a connection between glass blowing and the sea.

- 4.3 A Lighting design and specification has been prepared by a subcontractor 'Enlighten' to deliver a sophisticated highly visible lighting scheme. Using the lighting to support the primary viewing points of the St Peter's Church and the Monastic footprint.

5.0 Stakeholder Engagement

- 5.1 Engagement has already taken place with English Heritage, the church, the Diocese of Durham and the ward Councillors. This engagement will continue to ensure that key stakeholders are fully engaged at all stages.

6.0 Reason for Decision

- 6.1 The St Peter's Church and adjacent monastic footprint is an asset steeped in historic importance for Sunderland. Sunderland City Council recognises its position in regards to its adjacencies e.g. Sunderland Glass Centre, Sunderland University Campus, Sunderland River Side/Walks. The delivery of a Landscape Vision for St Peter's Church is intended to act as a catalyst in the delivery of the Wearmouth Masterplan.
- 6.2 The Landscape vision will seek to enhance the grounds, expressing and interpreting the monastic footprint, and provide better linkages and legibility through the site including improved viewing points and a replacement lighting design.
- 6.3 The Wearmouth Masterplan and design code has been prepared to guide future development in the area. The project will ensure that there is the right balance between protecting and enhancing the area's heritage and achieving significant regeneration activity.
- 6.4 The development will be brought forward in a way that respects the heritage of the area and creates a vibrant, new city quarter.
- 6.5 It will help celebrate the significance and enhance the setting of a grade I listed building, scheduled ancient monument and potential world heritage site and reinforce the former monastic site's historic relationship with the river.

7.0 Project Objectives

- 7.1 Create an attractive/modern attraction which highlights the monastic footprint within the back drop of St Peter's Church
- 7.2 Ensure the linkages to the surrounding areas are incorporated within the landscape vision
- 7.3 Ensure the stakeholders feel engaged and have ownership of the design

7.0 Relevant Considerations

- a) Financial Implications – The works will be funded from the £1.7m allocation in the capital programme.
- b) Legal Implications – Scheduled Ancient Monument consent is required prior to undertaking any works on site. Faculty consent is required from the Diocese prior to undertaking any works on site. Archaeological evaluation is required to investigate the archaeological potential of the site via trial trenches, and consultation with the County Archaeologist and English Heritage.
- c) Policy Implications – The project conforms with the adopted Wearmouth Supplementary Planning Document
- d) Health & Safety Considerations – A Construction Design Management (CDM) Coordinator will be appointed at the earliest opportunity to ensure the project is compliant with CDM legislation and to ensure the successful contractor takes responsibility for all health and safety considerations during design, construction and demolition.
- e) Project Management Methodology – the delivery of the project is via the Council's standard Prince2 methodology.
- f) Procurement – The project will be advertised on the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) and will meet competitive procurement guidelines.