

Meeting Date: 14th September 2021

Public/Private*: Public

Title: **Economy, Enterprise & Housing Portfolio Holder's Report –
Councillor Paul Nedved**

ST CUTHBERT'S GARDEN VILLAGE

Work on the St Cuthbert's Local Plan continues at pace with the commencement of vital additional evidence being commissioned. This is necessary to underpin the policies within the plan. An early exploratory meeting with the Planning Inspectorate had been held to confirm the approach, especially in view of the recent changes to the NPPF.

In advance of the Local Plan being adopted, the decision-making framework is set by the recently adopted Strategic Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This document has recently been shortlisted for the Plan Making category of the RTPI NW Planning Awards.

Work on exploring the potential for innovative delivery vehicles for the delivery and longer-term stewardship of the Garden Village is ongoing. The aspiration is to create a public and/or private delivery vehicle for example for green infrastructure, community facilities, homes on site etc, leading to a step-change in two to three years' time.

A national landscape design competition is currently being held for the central piece of strategic green infrastructure in the Garden Village. The competition 'Start with the Park' is being facilitated by the Landscape Institute and funded by the Town Deal capacity funding with additional sponsorship from United Utilities (UU).

<https://competitions.landscapeinstitute.org/st-cuthberts/>

Following Cumbria County Council's approval of the Carlisle Southern Link Road in November 2020, Morgan Sindall have been appointed to deliver the Stage 1 detailed design contract.

Completion of the CSLR remains on track to be delivered by 2024. Consultation on the proposed art works for the roundabouts will commence in early Autumn.

RURAL STRATEGY

Carlisle City Council will be working with Eden District Council to develop a rural strategy for Carlisle & Eden.

The strategy will sit underneath the Economic Strategy, and will recommend actions for the Council's to support rural economic growth, recognising key challenges and opportunities facing the rural economy in Carlisle and Eden in the coming years, including:

- Capitalising on our natural assets
- Supporting rural businesses and communities through the Brexit transition
- Exploring opportunities to grow our rural visitor economy, and champion rural attractions like the AONBs and Hadrian's Wall

The Strategy will be developed following approval of the Economic Strategy, and we will keep members involved in this process.

COVID BUSINESS GRANTS

The Economic Development Team have been administering the discretionary business grants to local businesses since May 2020. To date £3,892,185 has been paid in discretionary Additional Restrictions Grants to sole traders, small and medium businesses in significantly impacted sectors across Carlisle.

TOTAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING DELIVERY

Total completions for 2020/21 were 471, which is below recent years (the previous year saw record completions of 663). The reduction was largely inevitable, due to the impact of Covid-19, as sites were closed during the first wave of the pandemic, as well as Estate Agents being closed, and restrictions on people moving home. This was compounded by delays in some new housing schemes being completed, due to shortages of some building materials, linked to BREXIT and Covid. The housing market has remained buoyant, despite the pandemic, so it is anticipated completions will build back up to pre-Covid levels.

The position regarding affordable housing completions was more positive, with 170 affordable homes built during 2020/21; which is above the 158 annual affordable dwellings target in the Council's most recent SHMA (Strategic Housing Market Assessment). The strong level of affordable completions was supported by the high level of Housing Association-led grant-funded properties (supported by Homes England) delivered during the year. There were also 150 new affordable homes completed in the previous year.

CUSTOM & SELF-BUILD HOUSING EVENT

An online evening event has been organised for people on the Council's Custom & Self-Build register, on Tuesday, 5th October. The panel will include City Council Officers as well as representatives from Build Store, Custom Build Homes and the Cumbria and Lancaster Community-Led Housing Hub. The agenda will cover a range of issues,

including finding a suitable plot; financing a self-build project; community-led housing; the Council's self-build grant programme; and the Council's emerging Custom and Self-Build Policy in the draft St Cuthbert's Garden Village Local Plan.

REGULATORY SERVICES

Empty Property Success

The City Council have an internal empty property working group, the group is designed to bring together departments who deal with empty properties, and their owners, to proactively address long term empty properties that blight the City and our communities. The proactive approach has had success. A property to the west of the City that was subject to enforcement in 2019 and has been a significant blight on a main throughfare into the City for over 10 years, has recently changed hands due to the perseverance of the group. The property was sold to a new developer who will return the property back into a family home.

Sustainable Warmth application

An application for £14,105,000 funding to retrofit a target of 710 eligible domestic homes across Cumbria without mains gas heating, and further funding of £5,850,000 to target 600 homes with mains gas heating, with energy efficiency measures has been submitted to BEIS. Carlisle City Council are the lead authority on a consortium of Cumbrian District Authorities. The decision will be made in the Autumn as to whether the application has been successful. The project will run from January 2022 to March 2023 and details for eligibility and applications will be appearing on the Homelife website.

Energy Efficiency advice training

All Homelife Case Officers are now all qualified to NEA (National Energy Action) Level 3 NVQ in energy advice and are putting their training into practice by carrying out home energy assessments over the telephone, by video or home visits for Carlisle residents. As part of this service Homelife can offer free draught proofing, energy saving lightbulbs, CO monitors, room and radiator thermostats and much more to help Carlisle residents save money and keep warm in their homes regardless of tenure.