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Title	Colchester Northern Gateway (North) development proposal		
Wards affected	Myland, Boxted, Highwoods		

This report provides an initial business case for the creation of a new leisure and community sports hub development on land to the North of the A12 at Northern Gateway, Colchester.

1. Decisions Required

- To note progress made to date on the feasibility study for the development of the site see attached site plan.
- To agree the initial business case, attached as a confidential report, for the proposed development and agree for work to progress onto a detailed business case which will be presented to the RIF in January 2016.

2. Reasons for Decisions

- 2.1 To ensure the development of Northern Gateway as a key sports/leisure destination within the Borough and wider.
- 2.2 To ensure the initial business case is reviewed and agreed before progressing onto the more detailed work around the proposal.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 At this stage there are few alternative options as work is still at an early stage although the RIF could decide to re-visit the mix of uses and proposals for the site in the light of planning policy and market conditions

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 This project is complex, involving a range of potential uses, land areas, users and rental streams and further work is needed to present a full business case and viable business plan for the sport and leisure complex itself. The initial business case therefore outlines some of the key elements which could contribute to a successful scheme but it must be appreciated that the project continues to undergo iteration and re-appraisal. The Council appointed Leisure Consultants, FMG, in June 2015 to assist in project development and feasibility.
- 4.2 Following development of the Northern Gateway Masterplan in 2012, the Vision for this site has developed following consultation with key stakeholders, market research, the

practicalities of site layout and initial feasibility. There are three related themes providing structure being *participation*, elite *performance*, and *health* and activity:

- Improving performance
- Improving community health
- Elite and high performing sports
- Using sport and exercise to improve health
- Accessing the pathways to sports and physical activity
- Improving participation in activity and sport

5.0 The Proposal

- 5.1 It is proposed to develop approximately 100 acres of agricultural land to the north of the A12 at Cuckoo Farm for community sport and leisure purposes. The aim is to provide an exciting regional leisure destination that meets local needs for participation in a range of sporting activities with a particular focus around cycling. It will provide for the needs of the semi-professional and high performing athlete and the local community, aiming to increase participation in physical activity and improve community health.

In summary the project that is developing includes:

- British Cycling interest in supporting a Closed Road Circuit facility or outdoor velodrome, with initial preference to a road circuit, and indoor cycling-focused health and fitness facilities
- Multi sports building including conventional and extreme sports, broadly related to the cycling experience and including bespoke areas for cycling fitness as well as capacity for wellbeing sessions and treatments
- Informal recreational facilities and linkages to the wider public realm including bridleways, cycle paths, informal running tracks and a Village Green on the Mill Road Site encouraged by the Parish Council
- Rugby Club relocation mostly to the western end of the site with benefit from the Park and Ride scheme. The club's requirements include up to two 3G pitches, a show pitch with a first floor viewing gallery from the pavilion and a range of different sized playing surfaces, the precise configuration of which are under discussion. The different site layout options produced to date demonstrate that the Club can be accommodated on the site.
- Discussions are ongoing with the Colchester United Football Club in respect of land in this area to enhance current facilities.
- Encouraging discussions have commenced with some health providers and it is hoped that well-being programmes in the widest sense can complement some of the more sport focused elements of the site and multisport building.

5.2 The ambition is to create a self sustaining recreation facility and parkland location. Utilising part of the Mill Road rugby club site will create enabling capital funding from

quality residential development, reducing the revenue burden for open space and playing field maintenance. As a proposed major visitor attraction around a cycling theme there must be a range of exciting, conventional and informal recreation activities to attract from the wider catchment area. Some of the potential extreme sports that are under consideration are illustrated below:

5.3 The proposed building will be of high architectural quality so that it makes an iconic statement about place making and encompasses state of the art communications, low carbon energy generation, and sports facilities as well as informal meeting space, treatment rooms and café areas. The rugby club will have their own building nearby incorporating a 200 seater function room overlooking the dozen playing pitches and sharing a car park with the multi sports building. There would be two artificial playing surfaces. Other external users will be the relocated archery club, American football club and long-established dog training club. The site will include different cycling tracks and a BMX track as well as the potential velodrome, suited to a range of abilities. Equipment will be for hire, including tricycles and bicycles for those learning to ride or less confident. The whole will be in a landscaped setting with walking cycling and equestrian routes.

5.4 All building options designs must be flexible and permit new uses to be accommodated or to occupy different floorspace as necessary. The building would also provide a base for established clubs, particularly triathlon, cycling, badminton and possibly gymnastics, together with rental streams from other more adventurous activities. In particular, the proposal would entail development outside the existing Colchester settlement boundary. If the principle of development there is accepted the amount of built development involved will need to be justified and treated sensitively to minimise impacts.

6. Strategic Plan References

6.1 In creating a visitor destination, the scheme will “Promote Colchester to attract further inward investment and additional businesses, providing greater and more diverse employment and tourist opportunities.” It will “enhance the diverse retail and leisure mix supporting independent businesses valued by residents and visitors” and will “create the right environment for people to develop and flourish in all aspects of life, both business and pleasure” by creating a new sports and leisure hub, within which new businesses can be developed as well as residents using the facilities during their leisure time.” The nature of the project will “provide opportunity to increase the number of homes available including those that are affordable for local people...” on the site at Mill Road.

6.2 It is anticipated that the preferred scheme will make a significant contribution to the Council’s wish to “cultivate Colchester’s green spaces and opportunities for health, wellbeing and the enjoyment of all” by creating a quality landscape setting. The scheme will also improve sustainability, cleanliness and health of the place by supporting events that promote fun and wellbeing” as part of the overall programme of activities at the complex. The building will be run very much as “a welcoming and safe place for residents, visitors and businesses with a friendly feel and will embrace tolerance and diversity”. In so doing it will encourage and be clear about the financial and sporting “opportunities to work in partnership with public, private and voluntary sectors to achieve more for Colchester.”

6.3 The wider context for the CNG North project is national policy and guidance relating to sport, health, physical activity and participation. The Council’s Strategies on Playing Pitch and Leisure Facility Needs Assessment identify local need. Sport England funding is dependent on identifying how the CNG North project addresses this identified local need.

In terms of the National Strategy Sport England's objectives reflect the ambitions for CNG North:

- To see more people starting and keeping a sporting habit for life.
- To create more opportunities for young people.
- To nurture and develop talent.
- To provide the right facilities in the right places.
- To support local authorities and unlock local funding.
- To ensure real opportunities for communities.

6.4 Officers are in regular dialogue with Sport England over the bid to the Strategic Facilities Fund. It is important to bear in mind that support from Sport England for capital funding rests on how the CNG project relates to and delivers the strategies for the *Borough*, crucially, not on its own but in association with other partners such as The Garrison, University and Colchester Institute. Our funding bid will need to address the question: "To what extent does the CNG North project deliver against the strategies for the benefit of Colchester as a whole?"

7. Consultation

- 7.1 The project was subject to a consultation programme on the Master Plan a year ago. All stakeholders are engaged in the emerging proposals and relocation requirements. Officers attend the local parish council meetings to share understanding of the plans and to invite comment. It is intended to hold a stakeholders' workshop and to run a pre-application consultation in order to encourage public engagement. Once the hybrid planning application has been submitted in spring next year there will be a separate period of statutory consultation when all aspects of the scheme including the transport and access proposals, layout, building design concepts, landscaping and environmental concerns will be subject to public scrutiny.

8. Publicity Considerations

- 8.1 The Colchester Northern Gateway scheme has had regular publicity primarily relating to developments on the south side. The creation of a leisure destination with quality facilities for elite sports people and exciting recreational cycling activities will increasingly attract press attention and is a positive news story. One of the consultants' studies is to derive a branding strategy and to reconsider the CNG logo in order that an appropriate image is portrayed and the destination becomes attractive to potential investors.

9. Financial implications

- 9.1 The detailed financial implications and the business plan will be addressed in a full business case for investment at a later date. However the key financial elements currently being addressed are:
- The capital cost of the scheme is intended to be largely funded from recycled capital receipts from the sale of the existing rugby club site, funding from external sporting bodies and from other funding sources.
 - Any income will need to balance against the costs of maintenance, depreciation and management of the site leading to a fully financially sustainable scheme
 - Income from potential lease of part of the site to users
 - Building design to be environmentally sustainable leading to lower running costs.

10. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights, Community Safety and Health and Safety

- 10.1 The underlying ambition for the leisure proposals is to encourage participation from a wide a range of people as possible including children, older people, people with disabilities, and people who have health or recuperation needs that would benefit from increased physical activity and related well-being programmes, as well as high performing athletes and sports people. The scheme is designed to address these needs.

The design of the sport and recreational facilities will comply fully with health and safety standards, and in the design of the landscaping, outdoor spaces and routes, and buildings will ensure that community safety implications are fully addressed.

11. Risk Management Implications

- 11.1 The CNG programme as a whole scheme has a risk register. Key risks to the project are identified in the confidential initial business case attached to this report.

Site Plan for Colchester Northern Gateway –North

