

Item 5

AREA 1 FORUM

11th February 2008

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive

Sedgefield Borough Local Improvement Programme

Application - Ox Close Community Garden Project, Ox Close School

This report highlights a Local Improvement Programme (LIP) application submitted to and initially appraised by the Strategy and Regeneration Section. The report provides information to the Area 1 Forum for their consideration and comments, which will be used to further develop the project proposal prior to it being taken through Sedgefield Borough Council's decision-making process.

The Area 1 Forum has been allocated £836,000 of LIP capital resources between 2006 and 2009. A total of £278,600 has been allocated to the year 2007/08 of which £188,503 has been approved to date. A range of projects were allocated in the previous year for this area, and there is some additional under-spend resulting from last year, which will be available to the Area Forum for additional project activity.

Project Background

- **Name of Project:** Ox Close Community Garden project
- **Location:** Ox Close Crescent Spennymoor
- **Name of Applicant:** Ox Close Primary School.
- **Brief Description of Project:** The project aims to develop a currently underused piece of land into a community garden which incorporates a community wildlife area, a community growing area, a community sensory and a community adventure area. The applicant aims to create a high quality learning resource that is sustainable, fulfils a range of functions and serves the needs of the local community.
- **Requested from LIP: £57,548 (91%)**
- **Total Estimated Project Cost: £62,748**
- **What will the LIP be used for:**
 - Growing area – hard standing areas, seating, raised planting beds / plots, glasshouse
 - Wildlife Garden – pond area, paved / decked footpaths / walkways, dipping platforms, bird hide, rock fall and tree shrub / bulb planting, picnic benches / seating, willow tunnel

- Archway entrance into site, welcome sign, boundary fence (40m)

- **Impact of the Project:**
 The applicant has stated that the impact of the project will be:
 - Improvements to currently underused land and the development of a community garden
 - Raised achievement by young people through the creation of a high quality outdoor learning resource
 - Improvement to the health and well-being of the wider community through increased opportunities for physical exercise and the promotion of healthy eating
 - Increased ownership and sense of community responsibility
 - Enhanced community opportunities for learning and inter-generational social interaction
 - A reduction in anti-social behaviour and vandalism

- **Evidence of need and community support:**
 The applicant has stated that the project was developed as a result of local children and young people on how to improve their local environment. In July 2007, year 4 pupils wrote letters to the head teacher of Ox Close Primary School making suggestions of how to improve the local environment. To raise awareness with parents and the wider community, year 5 hosted a coffee morning. Links were then established with Greenways Residents Association who were keen to work in partnership to develop a community garden. In December 2007, a meeting was held for parents, governors and members of the wider community to make suggestions and further improve the initial design. 12000 public consultation leaflets were also distributed throughout the town to raise awareness and invite comments. 30 local residents responded to the public consultation of which 96% were in support of the project. Support and interest in using the garden has also been received from the youth club, beavers and cubs. Spennymoor School has also expressed a keen interest in working in partnership to develop some elements of the project.

- **Value for money and Revenue implications:**
 The applicant has applied for £57,548 of LIP, which is 91% of the project costs. This project is however the first phase of an anticipated larger project. The applicant is working on applications for funding for the 2nd and 3rd phases of the project. This particular project is however, not dependent on these applications. Three quotes have been sourced. Revenue costs will be paid for by the school's budget.

Subject to discussion and agreement by the Area Forum to progress the project, the Strategy & Regeneration Division will work with the applicant during the full project appraisal stage to explore a more detail predicted programme of use for the facility in order to maximise the overall possible impact of the intended project prior to it being taken through Sedgefield Borough Council's decision-making process.

The detailed appraisal stage will also include full exploration of the community use of the facility to ensure the facility is available to the wider community after school and on weekend periods, to ensure the project provides enhanced local community opportunities.

Recommendation from the Strategy and Regeneration Section:

That the Area Forum considers:

- The project proposal, and how it would meet the priority needs of the Area 1 locality.

Material considerations:

Other applications received from Area 1:

In taking the above decision the Area Forum is requested to consider the implication of the funding level requested against the following projects that have been received for future determination by the Forum.

Projects endorsed by Area Forum and waiting decision by SBC.

Ox Close Nursery – Parents Room - £57,551

Projects Approved to date:

2006/07	Tudhoe Grange School Family Centre	£ 15,226
2006/07	Spennymoor Settlement Technical Study	£ 3,231
2007/08	Middlestone Moor Play Area	£ 41,518
2007/08	Spennymoor Settlement	£142,000
2007/08	St Pauls Parish Hall Technical Study	£ 6,848

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