

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PLACE

REPORT TO THE CABINET HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE

8th JULY 2010

SHIREGREEN STREETSCENE PROJECT

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out further highway improvement works associated with the Sanctuary Housing, Decent Homes Programme for Shiregreen, which have been developed by a working group involving Sanctuary together with the Council's Neighbourhood and Transport and Highways staff.
- 1.2 Approval is sought for the design of Phases 2a of the Project, the first Phase of the second Quadrant, following on from the successful completion of Quadrant 1.

2.0 WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE PEOPLE OF SHEFFIELD

- 2.1 These works will provide a significant improvement to the Street Scene of Shiregreen, which will be of benefit to all residents of the area. The way the scheme is being developed will ensure that all residents within the area of improvement work will see some clear benefit.
- 2.2 This same VAT Shelter arrangement which has generated the funding for the proposals would also be possible elsewhere in Sheffield – where council housing stock has been transferred to a Housing Association.
- 2.3 The proposals will meet City of Opportunity priorities to Empower Residents by incorporating their priorities in the design of their streets – and to create streets to be proud of.

3.0 OUTCOME AND SUSTAINABILITY

- 3.1 The highway network and Street Scene across the whole of the Shiregreen Better Homes project will see a marked improvement.
- 3.2 Sanctuary have ensured that the contractor who has been appointed to undertake these works will be using sustainable construction methods, with existing materials being re-used wherever possible.
- 3.3 Where existing trees are being removed, these will be replaced wherever possible, and extra tree planting is proposed within existing green spaces. This will result in a net increase in tree numbers across the scheme.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In 2006 around 2500 council properties in the Shiregreen area were transferred into the ownership of Sanctuary Housing Association (SHA). A general location plan of the area is included in Appendix A. This enabled SHA to secure funding to implement the Decent Homes Programme, which is currently on-going and due to be completed by October 2011. The total cost of the Shiregreen Decent Homes programme will be in the region of £70 million. Value Added Tax (VAT) is payable by SHA at the various rates applicable at

the time. However, by arrangement with the City Council, this tax can be reclaimed by Sanctuary under a VAT Structure Arrangement, known as the "VAT Shelter".

- 4.2 Within the Shiregreen stock transfer agreement, the City Council and Sanctuary agreed that the reclaimed VAT Shelter money would be focused on resolving long standing issues with the Streetscene in Shiregreen. The major investment of the Decent Homes Programme would therefore be set within, and be enhanced by, an improved Streetscene environment. Funding for the Streetscene improvements, from the VAT Shelter, would be in the region of £9.5 to £10 million.
- 4.3 This same VAT Shelter arrangement would also be possible elsewhere in Sheffield – where council housing stock has been transferred to a Housing Association.
- 4.4 This is the fourth report of the Shiregreen Streetscene Improvements. The first, a Report to Cabinet on October 14th 2009, established the background to the Project, which Cabinet Members approved, together with the first phase of proposals. The second Report, to the Cabinet Highways Committee on January 14th 2010 gave details of the second phase of proposals (Phase 1a), followed by the third Report to the Cabinet Highways Committee on March 11th 2010 for Phase 1b. Taken together, these previous Reports detailed the streetscene works that complete the first quarter of the Shiregreen project, which will be completed in August 2010. This Report details the proposals for the next phase of the proposals – identified as Phase 2a. The proposals include the lessons learned from the first Phases. Proposals are also currently being developed for the subsequent Quadrants, which will be brought before Members in order to complete the Project across the whole of Shiregreen by the summer of 2011.
- 4.5 The Working Group proposals represent a significant investment in the Streetscene across the whole of Shiregreen. The works are mainly contained within existing highway limits and will not require planning permission, although some limited special areas, such as the shopping areas, may come forward with changes that will require planning consent. The development of the scheme has and will continue to involve close working with local residents. The final scheme will reflect strongly local choice.
- 4.6 These works represent a highway improvement, and the Section 278 (Highways Act) agreement with Sanctuary which gives Sanctuary authority to undertake works on the highway.
- 5.0 PROGRESS
- 5.1 The VAT Shelter money is available to fund any Streetscene improvement, including the footpaths, grass verges, street lighting, carriageway and street trees. However, as there are 27 km of street in Shiregreen and approximately double that of footways, priorities have to be set.
- 5.2 A Working Group has been set up, involving Sanctuary and the Council's Neighbourhood and Transport and Highways staff, to guide and implement the Shiregreen Streetscene Improvement Project.
- 5.3 The underlying philosophy is that the major part of the improvements should apply across the whole of the Shiregreen area. The improvements should be

universal, in that they can be provided for all streets and all residents. All residents would benefit (including non-Sanctuary private home owners) and there would be no concept of winners and losers.

- 5.4 Related to the concept of universal provision is the need to establish a degree of certainty over what can be delivered within the funding available. This should ensure that the funding does not run out before some streets are completed.
- 5.5 The Working Group has taken direction in establishing funding priorities from previous work, such as the Brightside Shiregreen Masterplan and the Neighbourhood Strategy Reports (approved by Cabinet in January 2008), and from the practical and financial implications of any proposal. For example, previous work has identified long standing issues such as the poor condition of footways and grass verges, safety associated with poor lighting (including within gennels) and the absence (or presence) of highway trees. Practical considerations also need to influence priorities, for example, if all footways were to be improved only to be dug up subsequently in order to improve street lighting under any future Private Finance Initiative.
- 5.6 Some of these works would potentially have been undertaken as part of the Highways & Street Lighting Private Finance Initiative (PFI). However, by using this funding opportunity, works will be delivered far earlier, and more importantly will go beyond a normal highway maintenance scheme in terms of scope and quality of finish. This scheme also allows un-adopted highway areas to be upgraded at the same time.

6.0 LESSONS LEARNED – QUADRANT 2a PROPOSALS

- 6.1 The area of the Shiregreen Streetscene Improvement Project is included in a plan in Appendix A. The plan shows the division of Shiregreen into four Quadrants. Detailed proposals have now been prepared for Phase 2a area. These proposals are indicated on the Plan included in Appendix B. A larger scale version of this plan has been displayed in the Members library and will be on display at the meeting. (It can also be viewed on the Council's website at <http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/your-city-council/council-meetings/cabinet-highways-committee>). For Quadrant 2a, the streetscene proposals are also supplemented by proposals for a number of open spaces within the area, and the options for consultation are also on display. These Quadrant 2a proposals continue the work established throughout the approved Quadrant 1, and, importantly, include the lessons learned from that process.
- 6.2 Work implementing the approved proposals across Quadrant 1 is nearly complete. This work includes the hardening of a limited number of grass verges to improve parking and access, footpath and kerbing replacement, and the removal of trees.
- 6.3 These proposals build upon the existing offer by Sanctuary to provide off-street parking for Shiregreen residents. The potential to also include private home owners does exist, but they would be required to pay. This in itself will resolve one of the main issues identified by residents, and, from the example of the first Quadrant, the offer by Sanctuary has seen a significant uptake. A similar uptake has already been established for the rest of Shiregreen. But there will still be residual on-street parking problems – particularly where off street provision is not feasible.

- 6.4 On a number of streets where residual on street parking is still anticipated to be a problem, a more engineered solution to accommodate vehicle parking will be required, particularly on the narrower streets where normal vehicle access can be impeded. In these circumstances it will be appropriate to remove some limited areas of verge, to create additional on-street parking bays. The lesson learned from the Quadrant 1 experience is that, whereas a full parking bay appears successful, the provision of “half-on/half-off” parking bays, provided in the narrower streets, will need further monitoring to see whether they work. Rather than park half on the carriageway and on the parking bay, motorists may park on the carriageway and across the footway. Further measures, such as lowering the height of the parking bay below that of the footway – or marking out the parking area – may be required. A balance must also be retained to ensure some level of on-street parking is retained, to ensure traffic speeds do not increase on these residential roads.
- 6.5 In all remaining cases, where the streets are not as narrow, the grass verges will be protected across Shiregreen. Protection will include physical measures, such as street furniture, bollards and new kerbs. It may also include legal measures. These options were set out in more detail within the approved Cabinet Report on Grass Verges (July 22nd 2009). The Shiregreen Streetscene Project will provide valuable information on the appropriateness, effectiveness and costs of various options, for use elsewhere in Sheffield via the Community Assemblies. The lessons learned from Quadrant 1 are that wooden bollards can be designed to standards that the Council can adopt – if sufficient attention is paid to height, robustness and fixing. In some cases, the wooden bollards have also been “inscribed” with street names to add to legibility through the estate.
- 6.6 The proposals at this stage include the improvement in lighting levels across the whole of Shiregreen, by replacing (and repositioning) all lighting columns – and increasing lighting levels by approximately 20%. Some additional feature lighting will also be provided in limited areas. The lesson learned from the completed work in Quadrant 1 is that these represent the biggest improvements to the streetscene so far. Both in terms of the street appearance – and the response from the residents in terms of perceived safety.
- 6.7 The proposals will seek, wherever possible, to retain all existing trees. In some circumstances it will however be necessary to remove existing trees, for instance where an existing tree is diseased or badly damaged, where an existing tree would seriously compromise the design of the new lighting or parking layout, or where the existing tree reduces the effective footway width to an unacceptable standard. Improvements would need to be to current Council standards, including compliance with disability discrimination legislation. To achieve these standards for some footways, particularly minimum width standards, it will be necessary to remove a limited number of existing trees where they and their roots are an issue. The lessons learned from Quadrant 1 confirm that highway trees are indeed an emotive issue for residents. The way this is going to be taken forward will ensure the maximum number of existing street trees are retained. We will also make it clear that trees should only be removed where they have caused long-standing issues, in terms of highway safety, maintenance problems or anticipated remaining life span issues, and will not be removed to resolve “all slight issues”. This will help with all consultations with local residents by being clearer on the reasons for removing trees. In a limited number of cases across Shiregreen, where the

case for retention or removal of a tree is borderline, the wish of residents will be the deciding factor. Where possible some issues on tree retention are also being addressed through maintenance work on the tree itself.

- 6.8 In all cases where existing trees are removed, the intention is to replace them where practical, on the same street. Overall, the present proposals will lead to an increase in the numbers of trees across Shiregreen. With the project, the partners are committed to the principle of no reduction in the overall number of trees.
- 6.9 A major commitment of the approved Shiregreen Project has been the replacement of all damaged kerbs across the whole of the area. The lessons learned are that the exact proportion of the total of 54 kilometres of damaged kerb across Shiregreen is not easily predicted – before work actually starts to replace them. Removing one damaged kerb may expose another. Nevertheless, Sanctuary Housing Association is keen that the visual and safety impact of the kerb replacement programme continues. A further “kerb” issue is that the replacement of damaged kerbs necessarily involves disturbance and impact on the road surface alongside. Where the street is particularly narrow, and kerbing is replaced on both sides, there is a stark impact on the street quality and appearance. At present this has been resolved by resurfacing the whole carriageway, but the cost of this type of solution is prohibitive, and consequently this ideal solution will only be used in limited circumstances.
- 6.10 Prominent within Shiregreen, are a number of green spaces. These are not highway” spaces, but are an important part of the wider Streetscene. The Working Group has included improvements to these spaces within the initial proposals, and will be the focus of involvement with local residents in their redesign. The lessons learned so far are, again, that the green spaces are emotive issues for local residents, and that a range of options are required for consultation and their agreement. The issues to be resolved through design and detailed consultation are that residents next to the green spaces may prefer the provision of more parking. Residents further away may prefer retention of improved green space with seating and other communal features, which would be resisted by nearby residents.
- 6.11 All the Street Scene improvements will meet the Council’s adoptable standards and constraints. Maintenance of the non-highway areas, such as the green spaces, will be carried out by Sanctuary.

7.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The original proposals for the initial Phase (approved by Cabinet in October 2009) were displayed at a 2 day community event held on 22 and 23 July, using a mobile exhibition trailer sited within the demonstration area. Residents were asked their views both on the specific proposals and overall design principles. The plans were also on show at the Shiregreen Summer Festival on August 21. These proposals were also reported to the North East Community Assembly, on the 23rd September 2009, where they were supported.
- 7.2 Overall, the responses have been extremely positive. The contentious issues have been the proposals to remove some trees, which are supported by many, but not all residents. The need to be more specific about which trees are to be removed, and why, is referred to in paragraph 6.7.

7.3 The Phase 2a proposals described in this report were displayed on April 20th 2010 in the Council's consultation caravan, set up at the lower entrance to Concorde Park, to which all the residents involved were invited, together with local Ward Members. Again the overall responses were extremely positive and certain changes have been accommodated within the proposals. A further consultation event, again using the caravan, was held within Quadrant 2a to present the options for the Green Spaces, on June 8th. Community Assembly Members have been involved throughout the process.

8.0 NEXT STEPS

8.1 Sanctuary Housing has appointed a Shiregreen Streetscene Project Manager, a Landscape Architects for the Project design, and an Artists Team to engage the local residents in the Project. Sanctuary is also funding the Council's design and supervision fees as the Highway Authority. This "collective" have produced the detailed proposals so far, and these current proposals for Quadrant 2a, and will continue to develop the proposals for the remainder of Shiregreen.

8.2 A single contractor has been appointed by Sanctuary, procured on a competitive basis by the approved European Union contract process. The contract is for the entire Shiregreen Project, not just this phase.

8.3 The timetable for Sanctuary's Decent Homes programme is to complete the housing work by the end of 2010, and complete the streetscene works by October 2011. In order to minimise disruption Sanctuary also propose that the Streetscene Project will follow a very similar timescale. Consultation with residents will continue throughout this period.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Working Group proposals represent a significant investment in the improvement of the Council's streets in Shiregreen, to be funded entirely by Sanctuary Housing Association. This funding includes all the appropriate Highway Authority fees.

9.2 Under the terms of the VAT Shelter agreement between the Council and Sanctuary, the funding for the Shiregreen Streetscene Project, needs to be authorised by the Council. Band A authority was approved in August 2009.

10.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

10.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment was conducted earlier in the project by officers in Neighbourhoods and Community Care. In the short term, the Project may cause an element of disruption to those living or working in Shiregreen. However, in the long term, the improvements made are intended only to have a positive impact on all groups of people, and the improvements to the total footway network will be of particular benefit to disabled residents.

11.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The overall improvements to the Streetscene in Shiregreen will recognise the importance of grass verges and highway trees to the environment and to the climate.

12.0 PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 There are no particular property implications associated with this report, although the proposed improvements to the Streetscene may well enhance the attractiveness of Shiregreen.

13.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 13.1 To approve Quadrant 2a proposals of the Shiregreen Streetscene Improvement Project.
- 13.2 To approve the development of further phases of the Streetscene Improvement Project based on the experience of the first phases.
- 13.3 To report progress to the Cabinet Highways Committee before each subsequent phase of improvement begins, incorporating feedback from work in progress.

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30 June 2010