

**Bolsover District Council**

**Meeting of the Employment and Personnel Committee on 12th May 2022**

**Senior Economic Development Officer (Pleasley Vale)**

**Report of the Portfolio Holder for Growth / Economic Development**

<b>Classification</b>	This report is Public
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**PURPOSE/SUMMARY OF REPORT**

- To seek approval from Council to create a new position of Senior Economic Development Officer (Pleasley Vale) within the Economic Development Team
- To outline proposals for a dedicated officer to project manage master planning and prepare a planning application for the redevelopment of Pleasley Mills.
- To seek approval for the use of Transformation Reserves to fund the 3-year fixed term appointment and costs associated with the establishment of the new post.

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**REPORT DETAILS**

**1. Background**

- 1.1 In May 2020, Members were presented with proposals for the redevelopment of Pleasley Vale at an informal meeting of the Executive – the illustrative master plan is shown overleaf.
- 1.2 At a subsequent meeting of the Executive, Members endorsed an officer recommendation to undertake flood modelling.
- 1.3 This approach was agreed because

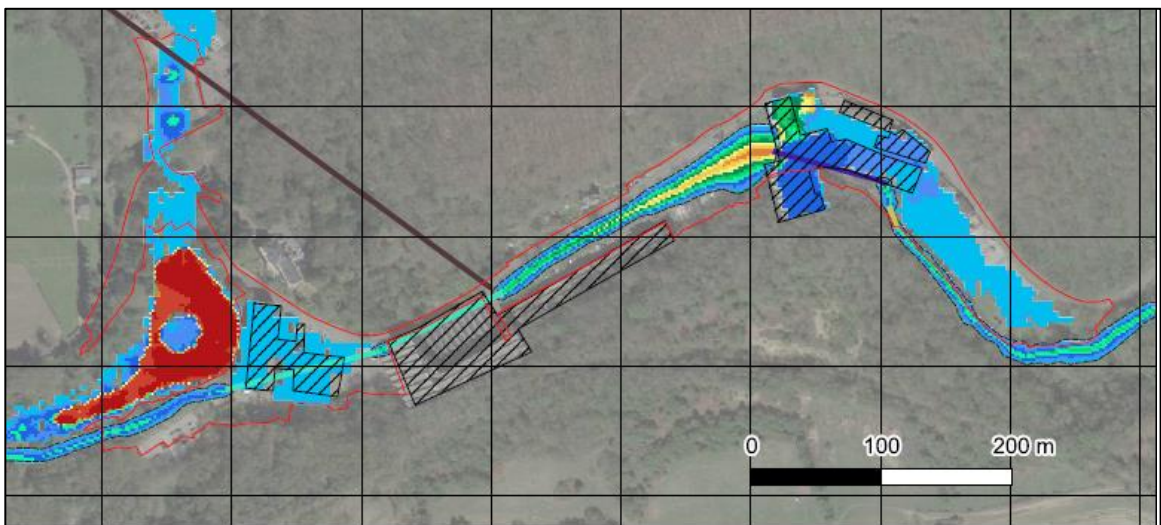
*The Council needs to be satisfied that flood risk would not be a significant constraint on development of the site and that provision of appropriate drainage*

*and disposal of foul drainage would be achievable and affordable before it could be satisfied that the proposed development is reasonably likely to happen*

### Illustrative Master Plan



### Outcome of Flood Modelling



- 1.4 The findings of the flood modelling are that a significant proportion of the site is indicated to be located within the predicted flood extent for a 1 in 20 year flood event. This flood event is often used to determine the extents of the functional floodplain.
- 1.5 The functional floodplain designation will restrict the types of redevelopment that are considered appropriate at the site and it is anticipated that any redevelopment proposals would be limited to a built footprint of no greater than the current built footprint.
- 1.6 Consequently, the redevelopment proposals previously presented to the Executive cannot be considered to be feasible because of flood risk and the

redevelopment potential of the site will be severely restricted based on the flood modelling commissioned by the Council.

- 1.7 Therefore, a renewed approach towards Pleasley Mills is needed to be able to produce a credible scheme for redevelopment within the next 3 years as proposed in the Council's Business Growth Strategy.

## **2. Details of Proposal or Information**

- 2.1 To achieve the redevelopment of Pleasley Mills within a reasonable timescale, this report proposes recruitment of a dedicated officer to have oversight of master planning at Pleasley Mills with the specific objective of making a planning application within the next three years.
- 2.2 It is considered that this officer would take on responsibilities and duties most similar to those contained within the person specification of a senior economic development officer. The person specification and job description are in appendices 1 and 2 respectively.
- 2.3 A senior economic development officer is paid at Grade 8 so with on-costs, a two-year temporary post would cost c.£47,000 per annum (at the top of the grade) and that cost would increase to a total of £151,000 if the post holder was kept on for three years.
- 2.4 If this post was agreed to be necessary, an appropriate budget would also be needed to allow the officer to commission necessary survey work or technical reports as they are required.
- 2.5 As a reference point, the flood modelling cost the Council over £40,000 but this was a particularly substantial piece of work. Nonetheless, the following sections of this report outline a summary of other technical reports and survey work that will be required to support any future planning application.
- 2.6 Therefore, with reference to the staffing costs and an appropriate budget for a dedicated officer to project manage the process of seeking planning permission for the redevelopment of Pleasley Mills; it is recommended the staffing requirement be in the region of £250,000 from the transformation reserve to fund this proposal.
- 2.7 The new post holder would also be responsible for identifying and pursuing grant funding opportunities to offset costs and complement the development of the masterplan and delivery of the project.

## **3. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 3.1 Firstly, aside from Flood Risk there are a number of other constraints on the site that need to be addressed to de-risk any future planning application and arrive at a credible scheme for redevelopment of Pleasley Vale including:
  - the condition of the buildings;
  - geotechnical;
  - heritage conservation;
  - transport and highways;

- utilities; and
  - wildlife and ecology.
- 3.2 The extent of the work that is required to deal with these issues indicates a requirement for a dedicated officer with experience to be able to identify, coordinate, and programme the necessary survey work and/or technical reports as they are required to work through the issues and options and go on to develop a renewed masterplan for Pleasley Mills.
- 3.3 The range of work that is required also indicates a dedicated officer would be required to work with a range of different stakeholders with different interests at stake to ensure they are engaged with the process to properly de-risk any future planning application and subsequent redevelopment of the site.
- 3.4 There are also multiple stakeholders within the Council that need to be properly engaged with the redevelopment of the site especially when taking into account leisure services offer outdoor leisure from the site; the mills form part of the Council's commercial estate; and facilities management have responsibility for maintaining the site as a whole.
- 3.5 In the current situation, the uncertainty around the future of Pleasley Vale and the inability to plan over the longer term gives rise to multiple issues including:
- loss of revenue through lack of investment;
  - stalled capital projects;
  - potentially abortive costs on short term repairs;
  - overall deterioration of the buildings and mill ponds pending 'big ticket' repairs; and
  - costs of resolving landlord/tenant 'disputes' relating to condition of the buildings and/or uncertainty about security of tenancies.
- 3.6 In this light, a single officer with oversight of redevelopment of Pleasley Vale would help different service areas better understand how to plan and budget for service delivery over the short to medium term, which would save costs and generate additional revenue pending commencement of any scheme.
- 3.7 This approach may also help reduce or spread the cost of redevelopment of the site because capital works could be programmed in line with an emerging master plan that would allow for the conversion of the buildings to a different use in the future whilst allowing for a continuation of their existing use in the meantime.
- 3.8 In addition, this approach may allow partial or ongoing redevelopment of the site – allowing organic regeneration over time rather than relying on the somewhat problematic 'big bang' approach suggested in other proposals.
- 3.9 Therefore, appointing a dedicated officer 'in house' with an appropriate budget is considered to offer clear benefits to the Council by providing a dedicated resource designed to accelerate delivery of a credible redevelopment scheme for Pleasley Mills.

#### **4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

- 4.1 A 'do nothing' option was rejected because the existing buildings are increasingly becoming a liability with over £3,000,000 of investment already required to carry out repairs to the roofs and windows, and mill pond and dam wall, amongst other things.
- 4.2 A 'do more' option such as appoint an external consultancy was rejected because the constraints on redevelopment on the site do not indicate that a consultancy could add any substantial value to master planning or redevelopment of the site at this stage. However, additional funding may be required depending on what other constraints or opportunities emerge during the master planning process.
- 4.3 Alternative options including the use of existing staff or establishing a permanent post, paid from general funds were rejected (i) because of insufficient capacity within the relevant service areas; and (ii) the need for this post is considered to be short term and there was a desire to avoid putting additional, unnecessary pressure on the Council's finances over the longer term.

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#### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

1. To approve a new 3-year fixed term post within the Economic Development Team for the role of Senior Economic Development Officer (Pleasley Vale).
2. To approve the transformation reserves budget of £150,000 to fund the salary and all associated on-costs, subject to job evaluation and consistency checks confirming the grade of the post.
3. To delegate authority to the Assistant Director of Development and Planning, to complete the recruitment and selection of a suitable candidate, if the post is scored grade 8 or less.
4. To approve the transformation reserves budget of £100,000 to enable the post holder to undertake all necessary surveys and preparatory works in connection with the master planning and planning application submission.

Approved by Councillor Liz Smyth, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development

#### **IMPLICATIONS:**

**Finance and Risk:**            Yes             No

#### **Details:**

The cost for the creation of the post per annum is between £41,121 and £46,960. Whilst this vacancy will not directly generate income / revenue to the council, it will offer clear benefits to the Council by providing a dedicated resource designed to accelerate delivery of a credible redevelopment scheme for Pleasley Mills. However, this is committing a significant amount of Transformation Reserves, which is now at less than £1m.

On behalf of the Section 151 Officer

**Legal (including Data Protection):** Yes  No

**Details:**

There are no legal implication arising from this report

On behalf of the Solicitor to the Council

**Staffing:** Yes  No

**Details:**

The Council's policies and procedures will be followed for recruitment to this post. If the fixed-term appointment continues beyond the two-year appointment, and is for the full three year recommended term, the council will be liable for redundancy costs.

On behalf of the Head of Paid Service

## DECISION INFORMATION

<b>Is the decision a Key Decision?</b> A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds:  <b>Revenue - £75,000</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Capital - £150,000</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i>	No
<b>Is the decision subject to Call-In?</b> <i>(Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)</i>	No

<b>District Wards Significantly Affected</b>	Ault Hucknall / Pleasley
<b>Consultation:</b> <b>Leader / Deputy Leader</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Executive</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>SLT</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Relevant Service Manager</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Members</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Public</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	Details:

### Links to Council Ambition: Customers, Economy and Environment.

The creation of the fixed-term role will directly contribute to the economic priorities of 'unlocking development potential: unlocking the capacity of major employment sites', 'making the best use of our assets', and also 'ensuring financial sustainability and increasing revenue streams' as set out in the Vision Bolsover prospectus. It will also directly contribute to the delivery of objectives as set out in the Council's Growth Strategy in connection with Pleasley Vale Mills.

**DOCUMENT INFORMATION**

<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
1	Person Specification
2	Job Description