

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of People and Places (Introduced by the Executive Member for People)	Executive Cabinet	13 February 2014

## ASTLEY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To provide an update on development work in Astley and to seek approval for the five year development plan - Astley 2020.

### RECOMMENDATION(S)

- That Members note the update on development outlined in the report.
- The five year development plan, Astley 2020, is approved and the further development work as detailed in the action plan is implemented, subject to funding.
- That an initial expression of interest including a first round Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid is prepared and submitted together with Chorley Remembers to support the delivery of Astley 2020.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

- The report provides an update on recent and current developments at Astley Hall and Park.
- Consultation regarding the future development of the site took place during August 2013 together with discussion with key stakeholders.
- A five year development plan from 2014-19, known as Astley 2020, has been produced that details actions covering five key areas:
  - Astley Hall and Park conservation.
  - Improving the visitor offer and experience.
  - Business development to support a sustainable business model.
  - Heritage partnership development.
  - World War I commemoration.
- Existing and proposed funding will support the delivery of some elements of the development. However, significant funding will be required to fully deliver Astley 2020 and this will require external funding through a suitable source such as the Heritage Lottery Fund. Preliminary discussions have taken place and a joint HLF bid together with Chorley Remembers would provide the best option for a further funding submission.

<b>Confidential report</b> Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
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<b>Key Decision?</b> Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
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<b>Reason</b> Please bold as appropriate	1, a change in service provision that impacts upon the service revenue budget by £100,000 or more	2, a contract worth £100,000 or more
	3, a new or unprogrammed capital scheme of £100,000 or more	<b>4, Significant impact in environmental, social or physical terms in two or more wards</b>

## REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

### (If the recommendations are accepted)

9. To maximise the use of Astley Hall and Park by improving the facilities for visitors and residents together with conserving and maintaining the site.

## ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

10. Not to develop Astley Hall and Park on the scale outlined.

## CORPORATE PRIORITIES

11. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

<b>Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all</b>	✓	<b>A strong local economy</b>	✓
<b>Clean, safe and healthy communities</b>	✓	<b>An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area</b>	✓

## BACKGROUND

12. Over the last five years there has been significant investment in Astley, in particular to the Coach House complex via a £3.2 million heritage lottery restoration project. This included renovation of the walled garden, art gallery, new café and meeting room complex. Recent improvements include a new exhibition in the Coach House, changes to the cenotaph and extended opening of Astley Hall.

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

13. Astley Park recently gained Green Flag status in 2012. Whilst developing a long term development plan for Astley Hall and Park, the Council has been running in parallel to this a number of improvements to address immediate issues and also support the longer term development of the site. This has involved close working and collaboration with other partner organisations such as Chorley Remembers and the Astley Advisory Committee.
14. During 2013-14, £380K of additional Council investment has been allocated to develop Astley and there is also a commitment to the long term investment needed to conserve the hall for accessibility now and longer term preservation.
15. Projects recently delivered include:
- Restoration of the Memorial Arch.
  - Chorley Remembers Exhibition.
  - Cenotaph improvements including new footpath.

16. Projects currently in progress include:
- New exhibition space in Astley Farmhouse.
  - Destination play area.
  - Fountain on the lodge.
  - Lighting of Memorial Arch.
17. Astley Hall, Museum and Art Gallery have become registered as part of a successful museum accreditation process through the Arts Council England. This process recognises that Astley Hall adheres to recognised standards in relation to accessibility; management and collection care and also entitles eligibility for public funding. The Council's recent commitment to its cultural offer includes:
- 22% increase in opening hours to the hall, museum and art gallery.
  - A newer, more vibrant temporary exhibitions and events programme.

## CONSULTATION

18. During August 2013 the Council undertook consultation on the future improvement of Astley Hall and Park. The purpose of this consultation was to update the community on the areas where improvement was being considered and canvas opinion in relation to some proposals for development.
19. Residents and visitors were invited to have their say on a range of issues such as lighting in the park, a new play area, mini golf provision, events car parking and the type of events which are run in the park.
20. The consultation was also communicated through the Council's website, social media and directly with stakeholder groups such as the Astley Advisory Committee. During the consultation, the progress and plans to further develop and restore the Hall, Coach House and Farmhouse complex were discussed.
21. The consultation received 176 responses from a diverse audience consisting of residents, visitors, local councillors and key stakeholders including Astley Advisory Group, Friends of Astley Park, Chorley Natural Society and the Town Centre Forum. The results are detailed in Table 1 and clearly demonstrate support for a number of the proposals with strong support for events infrastructure, destination play area, sensory garden, fountain feature and temporary events car parking.
22. Table 1 – Astley Consultation

	<b>Supportive</b>	<b>Partially supportive</b>	<b>Unsure</b>	<b>Not supportive</b>
Footpath Lighting	56%	14%	15%	15%
Temporary Events Staging	69%	26%	0%	5%
Proposed fountain	66%	13%	0%	21%
Proposed Mini Golf	45%	35%	0%	20%
Events car parking off Southport Rd	61%	26%	0%	13%
Destination Play Area	74%	20%	0%	6%
Sensory Garden & Sensory Trail	78%	20%	0%	2%

23. The consultation was structured using open questions to capture additional information and reasons supporting the preferences expressed. Only four of the proposals received >10% responses that were either unsure / unsupportive. The reasons given by these respondents are summarised below.
24. **Lighting** - although 70% of responses were fully / partially supportive, 30% were either unsure or not supportive. The main areas of concern were:
- Impact to wildlife - particularly bats.
  - Light pollution affecting star gazers / astronomy enthusiasts.
  - Concerns that lighting will encourage anti-social behaviour.
  - Historic sensitivity and concerns lighting is inappropriate to setting of house / grounds.
  - Cost of installing, running and maintaining lighting.
25. **Fountain** - 79% of responses were fully / partially supportive and 21% were not supportive. The main areas of concern were:
- Cost of installing, running and maintaining fountains.
  - Impacts to wildlife -particularly wildfowl.
  - Inappropriate to setting of Astley Hall (historical accuracy)
26. **Mini Golf** – Although 80% of responses were fully / partially supportive, a significant number were only partially supportive (35%) and 20% were not supportive. The main areas of concern were:
- Existing golf facility is not fully used.
  - Existing golf facility is sufficient.
  - Maintenance and vandalism.
  - Cost of staffing of the facility.
27. **Events Parking** - 87% of responses were fully / partially supportive and 13% were not supportive. The main areas of concern were:
- Highways access.
  - Impact to wildlife.
28. Two of the proposals are currently being taken forward and implemented as follows:
- **Destination play area** – a concept design has been produced based on a play area themed on the ruins of a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Castle. The detailed design work is currently being undertaken and following planning, procurement and construction the estimated completion is for early 2015.
  - **Proposed fountain** – the estimated cost is £30K and the fountain will reduce future costs by helping to improve the water quality and reducing the need for clearing / dredging of the lodge. The fountain proposal has been discussed with the Council's Planning Conservation Officer and English Heritage and they have not raised any concerns. An ecological assessment is being undertaken to determine the best location for the fountain and to ensure that any impacts on wildlife are minimised.
29. Proposals planned to be taken forward for 2014-15 and 2015-16 include:
- Footpath lighting.
  - Events parking.
  - Sensory garden and sensory trail.
  - Temporary events staging infrastructure.

30. The concerns outlined regarding lighting and events car parking will be fully considered in more detail as part of the development of these options. Where possible they will be designed out or mitigated and this will be incorporated into the final designs submitted for planning permission required for both of these options.
31. The proposed Mini Golf will not be taken any further at this stage and options to enhance the current putting green will be considered.

## **ASTLEY 2020 – FIVE YEAR DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

32. Following on from the consultation a five year development plan, Astley 2020, has been produced together with an action plan detailing future areas of work required (see Appendix 1).
33. The vision for Astley 2020 is ***‘Working together with our heritage partners to maximise the visitor experience and to create a sustainable centre of regional importance’***
34. The aims include providing an offer that is:
  - Accessible, relevant and identifiable to all citizens of Chorley borough.
  - Attractive to those wishing to settle in the Chorley area.
  - Appealing to those visiting the area.
  - Responsive to what people want to see and experience.
  - Promoting the philosophy of cultural pride, identity and diversity.
35. To secure a long term sustainable future that meets the needs of local residents and visitors a number of objectives have been identified as follows:
  - Develop an Astley Hall conservation and maintenance plan and programme.
  - Meet the visitor expectation and improve the visitor offer and experience.
  - Develop the cultural offer to support a sustainable business model.
  - Lead and nurture partnership working.
  - Conserve and enhance the ecological value of Astley Park.
  - Commemorate World War I in an emotive, compassionate and inclusive manner.
36. The objectives outlined above fall into five key themed areas for development:
  1. Hall and Park conservation.
  2. Improving the visitor offer and experience.
  3. Business development to support a sustainable business model.
  4. Heritage partnership development.
  5. World War I Commemoration.
37. The development plan details each of these key areas and draws together future work in a combined action plan.

## **NEXT STEPS**

38. Following approval of the development plan, officers will programme and implement the work packages identified in the five year development plan. This will involve working closely with key stakeholders such as the Astley Advisory Group and heritage partners including Chorley Remembers.

39. Further investment has been incorporated into the Council's future budget proposals to allocate £306K in 2014-15 and a £200K in 2015-16 for further development in Astley. The capital is currently profiled as detailed below to deliver further improvements:

	2014-15	2015-16
Destination play area	£ 75,000	£ -
Events parking	£ 200,000	£ -
Events staging infrastructure	£ -	£ 25,000
Footpath lighting	£ -	£ 125,000
Sensory garden & trail	£ 31,000	£ -
Steps, bridge & footpath improvements	£ -	£ 50,000

40. The other developments required to fully deliver and maximise the benefits of Astley 2020 will require significant investment. This will require external funding through a suitable source such as the Heritage Lottery Fund. Preliminary discussions have taken place and a joint HLF bid together with Chorley Remembers would provide the best option for a further funding submission.
41. It is therefore proposed that the Council work up and submit a first round HLF bid with Chorley Remembers.

#### IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

42. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance	✓	Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal	✓	Integrated Impact Assessment required?	
No significant implications in this area		Policy and Communications	

#### COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

43. The report details developments at Astley that are currently being delivered through existing capital budgets. Any additional developments and associated funding will be subject to further capital investment and / or external funding that will require approval from elected Members.

#### COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

44. None to add at this stage.

JAMIE CARSON  
DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE & PLACES

There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Jamie Dixon	5250	28-01-2014	EC13-02-2014 Astley 2020