

# MAKING MANSFIELD PLACE BOARD

## Agenda Item 5

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Mansfield Connect and Levelling Up Fund</b>
<b>Presenting authority / representative:</b>	Mansfield District Council Geoff George Regeneration Programmes and Projects Manager
<b>Report author and contact details:</b>	Geoff George ggeorge@mansfield.gov.uk

<b>Value of decision:</b> n/a	
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<b>Partners affected:</b> All	<b>Date of consultation:</b> 6 <sup>th</sup> April 2022
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### **Purpose**

This report provides an update on the Mansfield Connect project, noting that Round 2 of the Levelling Up Fund has now been announced.

### **Background**

The report to the Board in January 2022 offered background details on the Levelling Up Fund (LUF), focusing on capital investment in local infrastructure, aiming to prioritise bids that invest in regeneration and growth in places in need and areas of low productivity and connectivity. At that stage, no announcement had been made regarding a second round.

The report also confirmed the continued development of the Mansfield Connect project, and the intention of Mansfield District Council (MDC) to prepare a submission to the LUF in readiness for an announcement.

### **Mansfield Connect Progress**

MDC has been working closely with key local stakeholders and consultants to develop a bold and ambitious proposal for Mansfield Connect, being a new multi-service, multi-use hub, located in a key town centre location.

The positive and constructive engagement of a wide range of partners in potentially taking space within this new hub has been hugely welcomed and following a period of extensive initial development and the mapping of needs and expectations, a number of key milestones have been achieved:

- MDC's acquisition of the former Beales store to secure control over an important and sizeable town centre asset;
- The finalisation of consultation over the town centre Masterplan which sets out the potential for change within the town centre and how investment in the built environment contributes to an improved town centre, better addressing the challenges of a changing role and meeting the range of residents' and businesses' social and economic needs;
- MDC has worked closely and regularly with local partners and stakeholders, consultations with these parties and establishing steering and coordination groups including the Mansfield Connect Steering Group;
- The appointment of Arc to provide architectural and technical services in support the exploration of occupancy, capacity and cost expenditure elements;

- The appointment of PRD to develop MDC’s LUF submission and to support it to develop its thinking around delivery elements of Mansfield Connect;
- The headline prospectus for LUF Round 2 has now been published in late March 2022 with further technical guidance to follow. Submissions are required by the deadline of 6<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

This preparatory work has proved valuable. Following the purchase of Beales, the completion of the first phase of reviewing the proposed schedule of accommodation with all partners and the announcement on LUF Round 2, a milestone review has been commissioned from PRD with input from Arc to:

- overview of the position as it currently stands, reviewing the space implications, the outline costs of options (including demolition and new build; a refurbishment or a hybrid approach) within the likely budgetary framework;
- identify and address the key critical issues facing the project including financing and potential operating models and the benefits to cost ratio;
- demonstrate how the LUF submission will be progressed over the next 3 months, developing a draft business case and a bid to Round 2.

The conclusions of this work will be shared with partners through the established governance arrangements and will inform the practical engagement and work programme going forwards.

**Levelling Up Fund Round 2**

The Prospectus for Round 2 of the LUF is available under background documents at the end of this report but of particular note:

- There looks to have been minimal changes to the core criteria from Round 1 to Round 2.
- Each local authority area has previously been priority ranked between one and three, with level one representing places with the highest level of need; Mansfield has been ranked as a priority one area. Local authorities are able to submit one bid for every MP whose constituency lies wholly within their boundary and the Council therefore has one opportunity to make a submission.
- The local MP’s support of the submission will be important, as MPs will have a formal role in the process to reflect their valuable local perspective.
- The previously announced maximum available of £20 Million for a project of this type is confirmed in the Round 2 Prospectus.

**Partner Engagement**

Continued discussions with all partners seeking to remain a party in the proposed hub and thus being supportive of the LUF submission will be essential. One-to-one discussions have commenced to review options, including the ability to potentially contribute towards the costs and to explore satisfactory operating Models. As referenced in the January report, the project must reflect the market realities and sit within the financial scope.

The Place Board can play an important role in offering wider partnership support to the project from across the private, public, educational and voluntary sectors and further engagement will be made to all over this next critical period. Letters of support will be requested as part of his process and the Board and its constituent partners will be approached over the period.

**Exempt information:**

None

**Recommendation(s): That the progress in respect of the LUF bid to support the Mansfield Connect project is noted.**

**1 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

N/A

**2 BACKGROUND (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)**

N/A

**3 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 N/A

**4 DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN THIS REPORT**

4.1 LUF Prospectus (Round 2, March 2022) – available [here](#).

4.2 Round 1 LUF Announcement (October 2021) – available [here](#).