

## Growing Places Fund – Project Update

The Growing Places Fund round 3 process is currently being held to allow a full assessment of the options available for supporting economic recovery post COVID-19. As part of this assessment, SELEP are seeking to understand the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the Growing Places Fund projects put forward for consideration as part of the current round of funding.

We would be grateful if you could complete the short questionnaire below regarding your Growing Places Fund round 3 project. We appreciate that it is likely to be too soon for you to have a complete understanding of how your project will be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic but any insight you can offer at this stage into the expected impacts on the project would be appreciated.

**Project name:** No Use Empty South Essex

**Questionnaire completed by:** Tim Rignall, Capital Programme Manager, Southend on Sea Borough Council

**Question 1:** In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, and the anticipated requirement for social distancing measures to be observed over an extended period of time, is your project still viable and deliverable?

Yes ☒

No ☐

If yes, please complete the remainder of the questionnaire.

**Question 2:** Please explain how your project will directly support economic recovery post COVID-19. Please identify those market sectors which will be specifically supported through delivery of the project.

The project is seeking £1M GPF funds to return empty commercial properties back into use, for residential, alternative commercial or mixed-use purposes. The project will focus on secondary retail and other commercial premises which have been significantly impacted by changing consumer demand and which may have been impacted by larger regeneration schemes. The project mirrors a successful initiative implemented by KCC.

By bringing empty commercial properties back into use, South Essex NUE will:

- support economic growth through new commercial activity: attracting new business rates, and creating and safeguarding jobs
- increase the number of new homes available as a result of mixed use development: generating new council tax receipts and attracting Government New Homes Bonus
- support wider regeneration, in particular assisting in the vitality and viability of existing commercial areas, improving the quality of the local environment, complementing wider regeneration activities and supporting community safety and cohesion.

South Essex NUE will achieve this by providing short-term secured loans (up to 3 years) to bring empty commercial properties back into use.

Indications are that there are likely to be more empty properties once the lockdown is eased/lifted and initiatives such as NUE will be key if we are to improve the vitality of High Streets. The funds available will help to ensure that premises are fit for purpose and meet identified need.

**Question 3:** Please indicate the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to affect the following areas of your project submission. It would be useful if you could provide a high-level explanation of any expected impacts.

- Project scope:

Reduced project scope ☐ Project scope unchanged ☒ Increased project scope ☐

Summary of expected impact on project scope (if applicable):

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

- Total project cost:

Reduced project cost ☐ Increased project cost (within available budget) ☐  
Project cost unchanged ☒ Increased project cost (above available budget) ☐

Summary of expected impact on total project cost (if applicable):

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

- Availability of match funding:

Reduced match funding available ☐ Match funding available as per Business Case ☒  
Increased match funding available ☐

Summary of expected impact on availability of match funding (if applicable):

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

- Delivery programme:

Accelerated delivery ☐ Delivery programme unchanged ☒ Delivery programme extended ☐

Summary of expected impact on delivery programme (if applicable):

If there is further significant delay in the decision making process we may need to look at extending the original programme.

- Scale of benefits offered:

Reduced project benefits ☐ Scale of benefits unchanged ☒ Increased project benefits ☐

Summary of expected impact on scale of benefits offered by the project (if applicable):

Click or tap here to enter text.

- Repayment schedule:

Accelerated repayment ☐

Repayment schedule unchanged ☒

Delayed repayment ☐

Summary of expected impact on repayment schedule (if applicable):

Click or tap here to enter text.

Please return the completed questionnaire to Helen Dyer, SELEP Capital Programme Officer at [helen.dyer@southeastlep.com](mailto:helen.dyer@southeastlep.com) by close of play on **Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020**.