



Levelling-Up Fund

Consultation Pack – February 2022





What is Levelling-Up?

- Levelling-up is a concept introduced by central government in 2019
- It is about reducing inequality between places
- Greater detail has been expected for some time, and levelling-up policy is due to be set out by government early in 2022
- Levelling-up covers things like improvements in skills, health, employment and housing
- Government want levelling-up to lead to visible change – and this is the reason for the creation of the Levelling-Up Fund





What is the Levelling-Up Fund?



- The Levelling-Up Fund (LUF) is a £4.8bn UK-wide infrastructure fund
- Infrastructure means building and improving things such as roads, workspaces, parks and health facilities
- Bids can only be submitted by local government
- Round 1 (2021) asked projects to reflect one or all of three themes, and we expect round 2 to be the same. These themes are:
 - Transport
 - Regeneration and town centres
 - Culture
- Bids can be for up to £20m of LUF money
- Local authorities are strongly recommended to contribute at least 10% of the value of the project from their own funds (this is known as 'match' funding).





What does priority status mean?

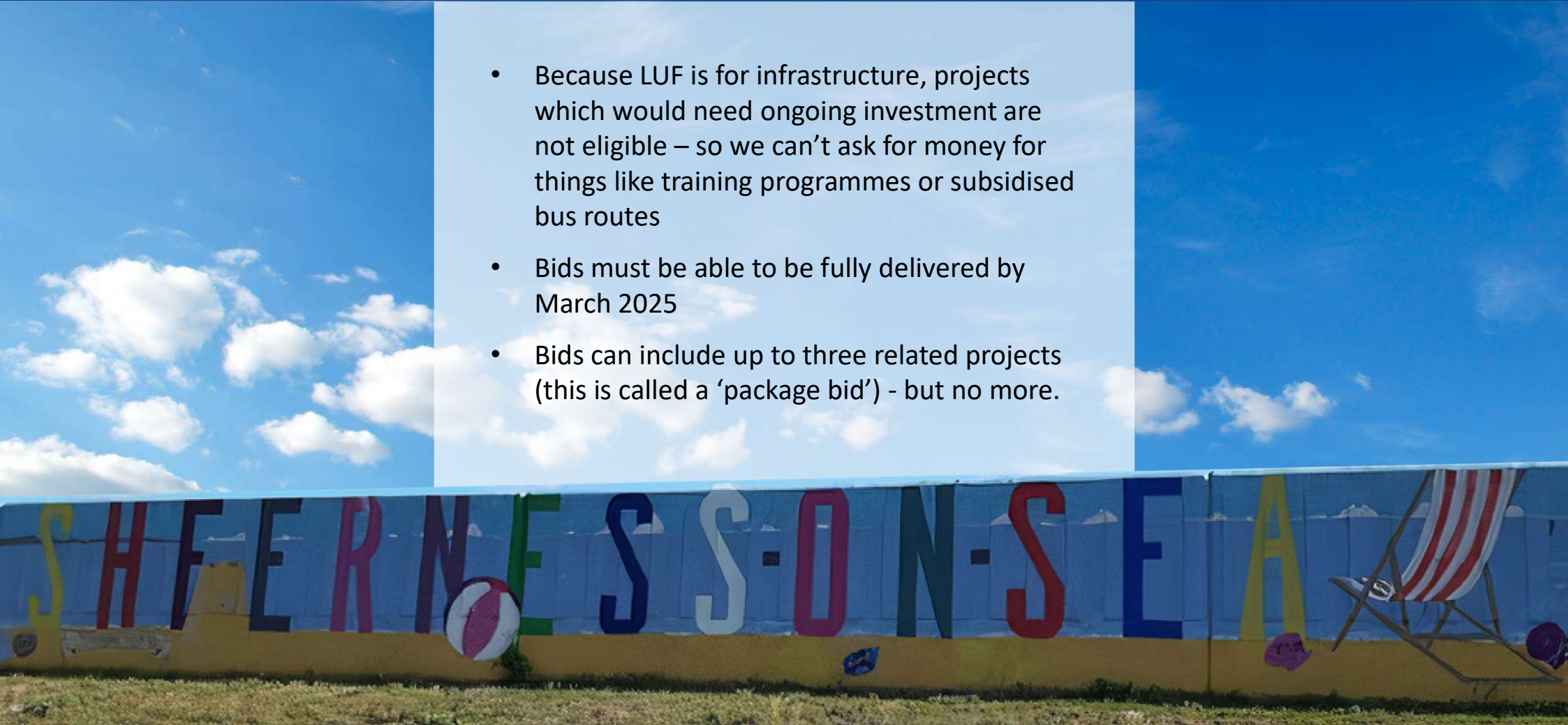
- Central government has given each area a priority category based on need for investment. There are three priority categories and Swale is in band 1 – meaning it is one of the areas in greatest need
- Band 1 areas received £125,000 to work up bids (this was only available for round 2 projects – the money was received in October 2021)
- Band 1 status means our bid will be given a ‘weighted’ score when it’s assessed by government – so if we were to submit an identical bid to a band 2 or 3 area, our final score would be higher
- Around 5 out of every 12 band 1 bids were awarded money in round 1.





What can we bid for?

- Because LUF is for infrastructure, projects which would need ongoing investment are not eligible – so we can't ask for money for things like training programmes or subsidised bus routes
- Bids must be able to be fully delivered by March 2025
- Bids can include up to three related projects (this is called a 'package bid') - but no more.





How are bids assessed?

- Central government want bids to demonstrate
 - **Strategic fit** – projects which match local, regional and national priorities and which respond to an obvious need
 - **Value for money** – government look for projects to deliver at least twice as much in terms of benefits as they require in cost. (This is called a ‘benefit-cost ratio’ or BCR)
 - **Deliverability** – projects must be realistic. This includes capable of being delivered to time; very likely to receive planning permission (if needed); have the full consent of landowners
- Each of these areas receives a score
- Band 1 bids are awarded extra marks because of their priority status
- MP support makes a positive contribution, with each MP allowed to formally back one bid within their constituency
- Letters of support are also taken in to consideration





What are the timescales?

- So far, we don't know when round 2 will open beyond 'the spring'
- We are working to an earliest possible deadline of round 2 opening on 1 March and closing on 15 April. This should mean we are not taken by surprise when the call for projects is launched and the bid submission deadline is announced.
- Round 1 funding awards were announced 4 months after the submission deadline, so we might expect to hear from September onwards
- **All of these dates are assumptions**
- As bids must be delivered by 31 March 2025 (this date appears fixed) we will plan to start delivering from October 2022 onwards if successful





Who have we spoken with so far?



- Swale Borough Council's Cabinet Advisory Committee met last summer and developed a short list of project ideas. Many of these built on previous consultation with Sheerness residents
- Councillors and officers discussed the pros and cons of each idea, with a particular eye on how they match what central government are looking for
- In 2021 Councillors confirmed that Swale's Levelling-Up Fund bid will focus on Sheerness
- Since then, we have spoken again with Cabinet Advisory Committee, with leaseholders, ward members, Gordon Henderson MP, and EKC Group.





What are the ideas?

- Our emerging project focuses on Sheerness, as the area has the greatest levels of inequality within the borough
- It seeks to achieve benefits in terms of economy, education and skills, leisure, health and wellbeing
- There are four main ideas
 - Connectivity - between the sea front and High Street, and the following areas which the bid would improve:
 - Beachfields
 - Sheppey College
 - Master's House
- It has been given the working title 'Sheerness Revival'
- An aerial view can be seen on the next page highlighting key areas for the bid





Ravelin wall

Sheppey College

Car Park

Sheppey Leisure Complex

Swimming Pool

RCGG Comfort Haven (The treadmill)

Rose Street Cottage of Curiosities

Holy Trinity church
Master's House



Sheerness High Street

Red line area = Swale Borough Council landholding

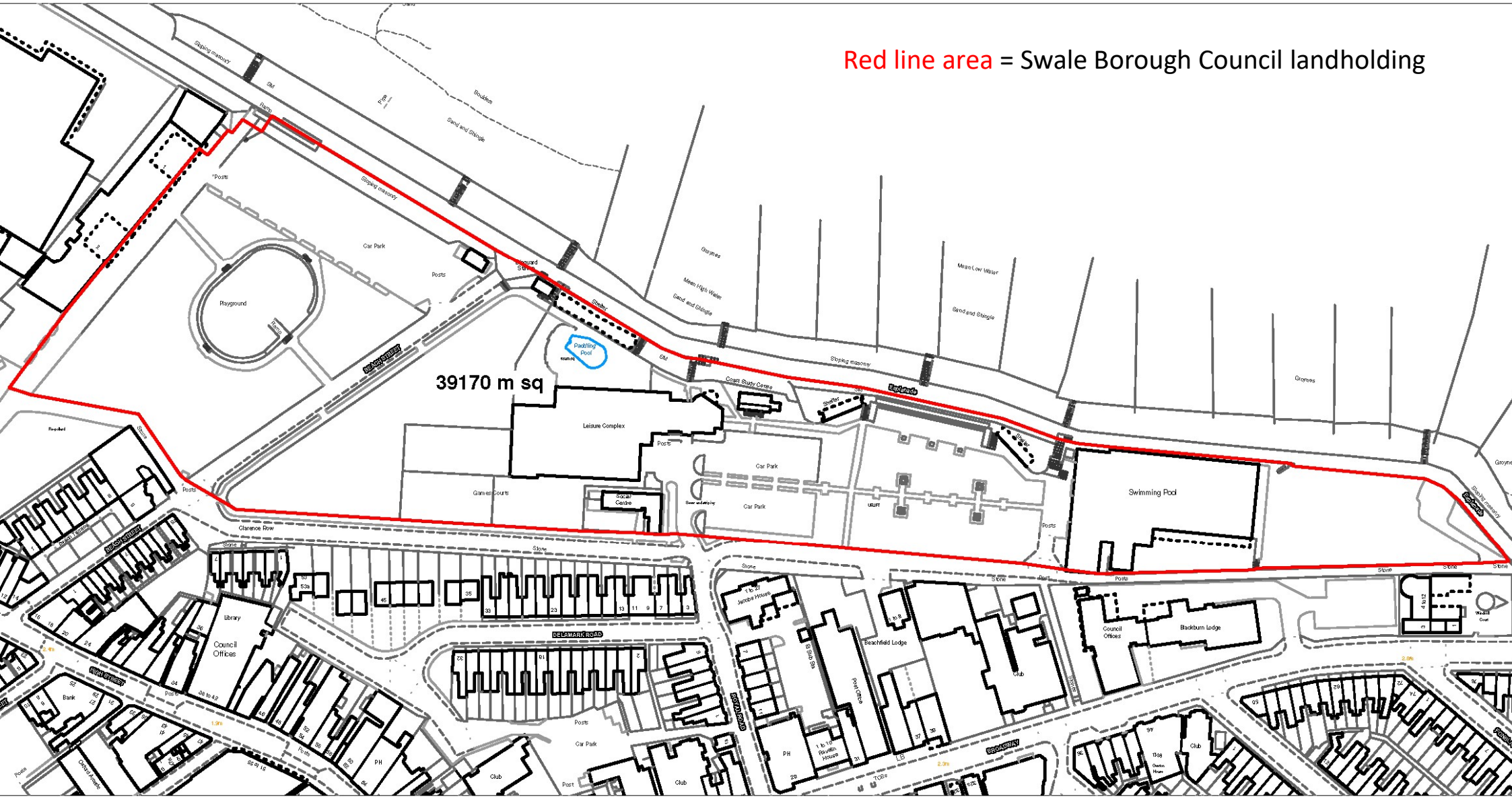




Image Gallery – Beachfields





Image Gallery – Beachfields





Image Gallery – Master's House





Why will this time be different?

- We know plans for the Isle of Sheppey have been discussed lots of time before, and some people are fed up of offering their time and ideas without seeing any action
- This time, consultation is being targeted to a specific funding stream
- Whilst there can't be any promises, Swale is a recognised priority area for the Levelling-Up Fund
- We have been given £125,000 to develop Swale's bid – even if we're not successful with this bid, we will have made progress in developing proposals for other funding sources
- Just under 1 in 2 round 1 Levelling-Up Fund bids were successful – these are promising odds, and worth working hard for.





What will the bid include? (1)

- Ideas include the demolition of the ageing swimming pool in its current location and its rebuild next to the leisure centre
- This will allow us to invest in new and more environmentally-friendly equipment to run the pool, and reduce running costs
- It will also free up land for other attractions at Beachfields
- The existing Leisure Centre will be upgraded, and may include expanded health facilities
- Other attractions *could* include outdoor 5-a-side football, adventure golf and a bowling alley.
- We plan to replace the paddling pool with a splashpad – all the fun, and improved safety
- We want help to shape what these attractions could be – ideas will need to stack up financially, and we can test this as part of the developing the bid.





What will the bid include? (2)

- EKC Group (who run Sheppey College) are keen to increase the courses they offer on the Island
- The council-owned car park next to Sheppey College has more spaces than are needed in Sheerness and could be the ideal place for the College to expand
- Master's House (the former council offices on Trinity Road) is currently undergoing a £1.5m refurb. Levelling-Up Fund money could be used to bring the workshop studios to the rear back in to use as creative studio workspace. (This is not funded by the main works programme)
- We also want to create better links between these projects and the High Street and waterfront. This could be through better signage and public realm improvements.





Some inspiration...





What might it include?

- We are focussing our consultation on four key areas:
 - What would you like to see inside the new swimming pool building / refurbished leisure centre?
 - What would you like to see in the wider Beachfields footprint?
 - The proposed extension of Sheppey College could create new courses in engineering and creative industries, and a Junior College for 14-16 year olds to study technical and vocational subjects. Are there any other industry sectors and types of courses that could be considered?
 - How do you think the projects can benefit the town centre, waterfront, and beyond?





What do we need to consider?

- We would like to achieve a balance of things that people can enjoy everyday, and things which will act as a draw for special outings and occasions
- We would like Beachfields to take pride of place at the heart of the community, as well as attracting visitors from further afield
- We want (and government will want) wider Sheerness – and beyond - to benefit
- Ideas must stack up financially, and be deliverable by March 2025
- Projects must bring obvious benefits that government can attach a value to
- We need to consider the running costs of attractions and facilities as well as the upfront costs. Levelling-Up Fund investment will only fund building work - we can't burden ourselves with large upkeep responsibilities.





How can I contribute?

- A special meeting of the Sheppey Area Committee is being held on Tuesday 8 February from 6.30pm – 8.00pm where plans will be presented and views invited
- Everyone is welcome, and you can attend in person or on line
- The meeting will take place at Sheerness East Working Men’s Club or via MS Teams
- If you are attending in person, please be mindful of Covid-19 safety guidance
- On line consultation will be open from 04 - 25 February 2022
- See details at <https://swale.gov.uk/levelling-up>





What next?

- Consultation will remain open until 25 February 2022
- We will regularly update our [webpage](#) with timescales, progress and further engagement opportunities
- Swale Borough Council's Cabinet will be asked to formally endorse the bid in March 2022
- We will ask stakeholders and community groups for letters of support to help strengthen our case.





Useful Links and Contact Details



- Government Levelling-Up Fund guidance - [Levelling Up Fund: additional documents](#) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Swale Borough Council's webpage - [Major projects and developments - Sheerness Revival](#) (swale.gov.uk)
- Please get in touch via sheernessrevival@swale.gov.uk



**Thank you
for your time
and ideas**

