

18th November 2014

Asset & Enterprise Committee

Hallsford Bridge

Report of: *John Parling, Strategic Asset Manager*

Wards Affected: *Tipps Cross*

This report is: *Public*

1. Executive Summary

1.1 At the 17 July 2014 Asset & Enterprise Committee it was resolved “ That in principle the land should be transferred at an appropriate value and by a compliant mechanism to the Housing Revenue Account and to request that an appraisal be prepared and submitted to the next Housing and Health Committee to enable that Committee to make an in principle assessment as to whether affordable housing can be provided”.

1.2 A report was presented to the Housing & Health Committee on 10 September and it was resolved “That the investigations into the possible development of the site for residential use are progressed and that a report is presented to the next Housing & Health Committee on 5 November 2014 with recommendations.

1.3 A further report was presented to the Housing & Health Committee on 5 November and it was resolved that “ That the Hallsford Bridge site be referred back to the Asst and Enterprise Committee with a request from the Housing & Health Committee to sell and the proceeds to be used for affordable housing within the Tipps Cross Ward if land and sites are available”.

This report seeks the approval of the Committee to sell the site to achieve best value for the Council. Any proceeds will be attributable to the General Fund Capital Programme for the reasons outlined in the report.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That delegated authority be granted to the (Acting) Chief Executive to dispose of the Hallsford Bridge for best consideration.**
- 2.2 That the proceeds of the sale be utilised to fund current and/or future schemes within the General Fund Capital Programme.**

3. Introduction and Background

- 3.1 The subject land is of 1.11 acres, rectangular in shape and situated at the northern boundary of the borough adjacent to the Ongar Road (not A128) and the Hallsford Bridge Industrial Estate, in close proximity to the Springfields PNEU School.
- 3.2 The site had originally accommodated 8 semi detached residential properties known as Edwards Terrace, now demolished.
- 3.3 Site investigations have revealed the part of the site as formed of made ground at varying depths and there is evidence of Japanese Knotweed.

4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

- 4.1 The Council's selling agents had advised the Council that offers in the region of £450,000 should be expected for employment use.
- 4.2 The site is designated as employment land in the existing Brentwood Replacement Plan (2005) and any deviation from this designation would require a change in policy which would require substantiation in the form of lack of demand.
- 4.3 Offers to purchase the site have been received from several parties that would use the land for employment use. The offers are currently being analysed to determine which presents best value to the Council.
- 4.4 Financial information is contained within a confidential Appendix to this report.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 To grant delegated authority in relation to the Hallsford Bridge site to permit the disposal of land for a capital receipt where there is no prospect of receiving a revenue stream.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 The site is allocated as Employment General (E1) in the existing development plan, Brentwood Replacement Local Plan (2005). This reflects changes that have occurred in the since residential properties were demolished. A planning application for residential use would be contrary to adopted Local Plan Policy. The site is also proposed to be allocated for employment uses in the emerging Local Development Plan (Local Plan 2015 – 2030 Preferred Options for Consultation, July 2013). This is to contribute to the employment need over the 15 year Plan period, which is prioritised in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) alongside the requirements to meet housing needs.
- 6.2 The Stondon Massey Parish Council have commented on the fact that the site had contained 6 Council houses and questioned the need for more industry instead of affordable housing. In addition thy shared their concerns that if additional industry was to be provided on the site there would be the inevitable increase in heavy goods traffic through the village.
- 6.3 In addition a Ward member has also indicated that that it would be preferable for “a residential development to replace the affordable houses that were demolished on the site”.

7. References to Corporate Plan

The key criteria for the disposal of the freehold to the site are linked directly to the Corporate Plan 2013-16, specifically:

- a) A Prosperous Borough.
- b) Set planning policy that supports discerning economic growth and sustainable development.
- c) Promote a mixed economic base across the Borough, maximizing opportunities in the town centers for retail and a balanced night-time economy.

8. Implications

Financial Implications

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- 8.1 It was originally anticipated that this asset would generate a capital receipt in the region of £450,000 and this is the value which has been assumed in the financing of the General Fund Capital Programme. Any amount received below this value may impact on the Council's ability to fund its Capital Programme without the need to borrow.
- 8.2 The Housing & Health Committee of the 5 November 2014 requested that the capital receipt from the sale of the land should be used for the provision of affordable housing within the Tipps Cross Ward. As a general principle authorities do not have discretion to transfer expenditure and income between the HRA and the General Fund, although there is a limited number of specific instances where this can, or sometimes must, occur. Given that there are current and future capital programme schemes which require funding, it is recommended that the proceeds be earmarked and utilised for General Fund capital projects.

9. Legal Implications

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None

- 10. Other Implications** (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

- 10.1 A habitat survey has not raised any significant issues enabling the intrusive Geo-Environmental ground investigation to proceed. Apart from the made ground and Japanese Knotweed being present the investigations have not identified any other issues. The Japanese Knotweed has been treated in October 2014 as part of a programme to eradicate from the site.

11. Background Papers

- a. 5 November 2014 – Housing & Health Committee
- b. 10 September 2014 – Housing & Health Committee
- c. 15 July 2014 – Asset & Enterprise Committee
- d. 5 March 2014 Ordinary Council
- e. 27 September 2012 – Assets, Infrastructure and Localism Panel
- f. Development Brief, Hallsford Bridge Industrial Estate

12. Appendices to this report

Confidential – financial information.

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