

 Executive – 30th July 2014		Agenda Item No. 6
Title	Proposed Consultation on Release of Land off Stratford Road, Warwick, for Employment Purposes	
For further information about this report please contact	Chris Elliott (01926 – 456000) chris.elliott@warwickdc.gov.uk	
Wards of the District directly affected	Warwick South	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?	No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	Not Applicable	
Background Papers	None	

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	No
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	No
Equality and Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken	No
A sustainability appraisal will be undertaken as part of the consultation process.	

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	10.07.14	Chris Elliott
Head of Service	10.07.14	Tracy Darke, Rob Hoof, Richard Hall
CMT	10.07.14	Bill Hunt, Andy Jones
Section 151 Officer	10.07.14	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	10.07.14	Andy Jones
Finance	10.07.14	Mike Snow
Portfolio Holder(s)	10.07.14	Les Caborn, John Hammon
Consultation & Community Engagement		
Consultation with the wider community and statutory agencies would be undertaken as the next stage.		
Final Decision?	No	
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		
If agreed, the consultation response would be fed back for Council to then make a decision.		

1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To seek approval for the Council to undertake a consultation on the release of land off Stratford Road, Warwick and for that consultation response to be fed back for a decision in the context of the next stage of the Local Plan; and for officers to report back on the financial and other implications of provision/re-provision of the current depot on part of the site.

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That land shown on Plan A be subject to a public consultation with the community and statutory agencies in relation to its release in the new Local Plan for the purposes stated in paragraph 3.7 of this report.
- 2.2 That, subject to 2.1 being agreed, the response to the consultation be reported back as part of the next stage of deliberations regarding the Local Plan.
- 2.3 In parallel but separately with recommendations 2.1 and 2.2, officers conduct discussions about the provision/re-provision of a depot for two of the Council's contractors and report back separately on the financial and other implications.

3. **REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 The Council has been approached both as Local Planning Authority and as an adjoining landowner by Severn Trent Water (STW) to consider the release of land it owns off Stratford Road, Warwick for employment purposes. STW have proposed that the employment land release should include their land and immediately adjoining owned by other parties. The whole of the land proposed to be released is shown on Plan A attached. The STW land is marked by a black border, with the third party land shown as a shaded area to the left and the land that this Council owns, currently used as a depot by two of its contractors, shown as the shaded area closest to the sewage works.
- 3.2 The land in question is partly within the cordon sanitaire of the sewage works that lies immediately to the north. The vertical line on Plan A shows the existing boundary of the cordon sanitaire, with all land to the right of this line included within it, which currently includes the majority of the Council's land. The cordon sanitaire rules out the use of land within it for housing use and constrains its potential for use as employment land. However, steps are now planned by STW that would reduce the cordon sanitaire in size and so free up the land within the proposed allocation, including the Council's land, for development. This proposal has not been raised previously in the Local Plan process and so is new information and a new opportunity for a development.
- 3.3 The land in question already has the normal services and vehicular access to Stratford Road by means of a roundabout and is already partly developed land, used as a depot for the Council or for ancillary offices for Severn Trent Water. The current level of uses though is quite low and could, without the cordon sanitaire, be easily increased.
- 3.4 The local economy is showing significant signs of uplift with both companies and agents reporting difficulties of finding suitable land and buildings for local expansion or relocation with a possible consequent impact on employment opportunities. To give some indication of immediate unmet demand the Council is aware of outstanding space demands for 2 employers seeking circa 20,000

square feet (sq. ft.) each, one seeking 50,000 sq. ft. and another seeking 250,000 sq. ft.

- 3.5 Currently the Local Plan has made an employment land allocation off Europa Way of 8 hectares (19.2 acres) but this will require significant new infrastructure provision before it is ready for development, so will not be available in the short term to meet the evident and increasing demand. The landowner of this site is also currently objecting to the proposal as they believe it would compromise a wider housing development. Whilst, there is still some undeveloped employment land currently available within Tachbrook Park and on Tournament Fields this is unlikely to meet all the current market demand and, even if were capable of doing so, would leave the district with a gap before the current new Local Plan allocations are ready for development.
- 3.6 Consequently, a new employment site of a similar or greater size that does not require major infrastructure provision to make it developable would be very attractive to the needs of the market in the short to mid-term and could potentially resolve an objection to the Local Plan on a current employment land allocation. The proposed site is c15 hectares (35 acres), has good access to Junction 15 of the M40 and the A46, is on a bus route, has cycleway access, and is within walking distance of a significant housing area. It has existing service provision which can be upgraded and has few other environmental constraints, making it a potentially viable employment site that could be brought forward relatively speedily.
- 3.7 It is recommended therefore that a public consultation be undertaken in relation to the release of this land for employment purposes, i.e. Use Class B1, B2 and B8. However, STW suggest that the site could also be considered for C2 and car showroom activities. The District Council may also have another use for part of its land which is to be considered in another separate report by the Full Council on 13th August. All of these potential uses should be explored as part of the proposed consultation. The consultation response would then be fed back and the matter decided as part of the deliberations of the next stage of the Local Plan.
- 3.8 As landowner the Council had intended to lease the land it owns to two of its main contractors, although no formal leases have yet been agreed. However, it may be possible to relocate the depot (which is largely open land) within a scheme for the whole of the land shown at Plan A. This would have financial consequences for the Council which are set out in a subsequent section of this report as would disposal of the site. However, these would need to be explored more fully as a separate but parallel discussion for the Council to consider as a landowner and so it is suggested officers are authorised to do conduct discussions in order that they can then report back on the financial and other implications.
- 3.9 The proposed consultation would be with the full range of statutory and local community organisations and individual members of the public and would include use of the Council's web site, press releases and direct notifications.

4. **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

- 4.1 **Policy Framework** – This report does not bring forward any changes to the policy framework at this time although depending on the response it may lead to a change to the Council's Development Plan framework.

4.2 **Fit for the Future** – The Council’s purpose is to improve the quality of life for everyone who lives in, works in or visits Warwick District. With our partners, we aspire to build prosperous, sustainable, safer, stronger and healthier communities. As this proposal could help increase employment locally it will contribute to these aims.

4.3 **Sustainable Community Strategy** – The proposal could contribute significantly to the Prosperity theme by bringing forward a site in the short term to help meet the accommodation needs of local and relocating companies.

5. **BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

5.1 The public consultation costs can be provided for within the existing budget for the Local Plan.

5.2 The depot site has earned the Council £20k Per annum in rent. Disposal of land for employment use could be within the range of £200k to £500k per acre which for a site of just over 5 acres could yield the Council a receipt of between £1 million to £2.5 Million. However, the cost of re-provision of a depot is as yet unknown and would have to be considered as part of a decision by the Council as landowner about its own participation.

6. **RISKS**

6.1 The main risks as a landowner are in respect of the implications for the depot and the impact on the services which two of the Council’s contractors deliver using that depot but this can only be properly assessed after further discussions.

6.2 As Local Planning Authority the risks of this proposal relate to the possibility of further delay to the Local Plan process but this is regarded as minimal. On the other hand a successful consultation and alteration to the Local Plan would greatly assist as it would resolve a significant objection.

7. **ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S) CONSIDERED**

7.1 The Council could decide not to progress this opportunity with consequent potential adverse impacts on the possibility of resolving a current objection to the Local Plan, enabling the local economy to grow and gaining a capital receipt.

7.2 The Council could decide not to include its own land. This is possible and the impact is only on the Council financially in terms of a possible significant capital receipt foregone.

7.3 It is felt that since at this stage the proposal is only to go out to consultation there is little merit in closing down its options at this stage. The Council can consider these options once it has the benefit of a full consultation response.