

 Executive Committee – 18th, April 2012		Agenda Item No. 9
Title	Warwick Heritage Improvement Programme (Saltisford) - WHIPS	
For further information about this report please contact	Andrew Jones Andrew.jones@warwickdc.gov.uk (01926) 456830	
Wards of the District directly affected	Warwick West	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?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	N/A	
Background Papers	Fit For the Future Executive Report – on this Agenda Tourism Executive Report 14 th March 2012	

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	No
Included within the Forward Plan?	Yes
Equality & Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken	N/A

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive	13 th March 2012	Chris Elliott
Deputy Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer	29 th February 2012	Author
CMT	13 th March 2012	Chris Elliott Bill Hunt Andrew Jones
Finance	13 th March 2012	Mike Snow
Portfolio Holder	26 th March 2012	Councillor Mrs Gallagher, Councillor Hammon, Councillor Vincett, Councillor Shilton

Consultation & Community Engagement	
Lepers' Hospital – English Heritage; Warwickshire County Council; Leamington Conservation Trust; Councillor Mrs Higgins; Warwick Town Centre Partnership Saltisford Common – David Anderson (Green Space Officer) Old Gas Works – English Heritage; Warwickshire County Council; Councillor Mrs Higgins; Warwick Town Centre Partnership Warwick Racecourse – Jon Holmes (Green Space Officer) Canal Visitors' Centre – will take place with Saltisford Canal Trust and Warwickshire County Council should Members agree to the relevant recommendation	
Final Decision?	Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)	

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report seeks Executive approval in respect of a number of initiatives which form a programme of work to improve the Saltisford approach to Warwick Town Centre. The proposed programme is part of the Fit For the Future report which is also on this Agenda.
- 1.2 Warwick Town Centre Partnership has agreed that the Lepers' Hospital and Old Gas Works can be considered separate to the sites that will contribute to Warwick Town Centre Area Action Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Executive agrees to release £15,000 from the Contingency Budget as match-funding with English Heritage to undertake a feasibility study into potential options for the Lepers' Hospital site.
- 2.2 That Executive agrees that officers develop a fully-costed Management Plan to provide significant improvements to the green space known as Saltisford Common.
- 2.3 That Executive notes the work undertaken by officers to bring forward affordable housing on the Warwick Fire Station site.
- 2.4 That Executive determines whether it wishes officers to develop a business case for the purchase of the old Gas Works site to enable the site to be brought forward for affordable housing and that should a business case appear feasible, a further report is brought to Executive.
- 2.5 That Executive authorises officers to enter into discussions with Saltisford Canal Trust and Warwickshire County Council to explore highway, signage and general vista improvements to the Saltisford Arm and towpath of the Grand Union Canal and that £15,000 is released from the Contingency Budget to undertake the necessary studies.
- 2.6 That Executive notes the designation of *Local Wildlife Site* to Warwick Racecourse in respect of the biodiversity work undertaken by Warwick District Council and agrees to release £15,000 from the Contingency Budget to complete the Warwick Racecourse Improvement works as detailed at 7.62.

3. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 As part of this Executive Agenda, Members have been asked to agree the updated Fit For the Future Programme which includes Locality Plans for the District. Part of Warwick's Locality Plan is a programme of works known as Warwick Heritage Improvement Programme (Saltisford) or WHIPS. The programme is complimentary to the Council's approach to Tourism and the anticipated public consultation in respect of the Warwick Town Centre Area Action Plan.
- 3.2 Full details of the programme are described in section 7 of this report, however, successful delivery of the different projects within the programme will not only help preserve Warwick's heritage (as the Town approaches its 1100th anniversary) but also make a contribution to the economy, housing need and well being of the District and its residents.

3.3 The overall objectives of the programme would be:

To enhance green space on the northern approach to Warwick Town Centre;
To bring neglected sites back into use;
To further develop the visitor economy;
To target Council resources in the Warwick West ward;
To contribute to the Council's purpose of making Warwick District a great place to live, work and visit.

3.4 Recommendation 2.1 (see section 7.1)

- 3.41 Seeks Member approval to investigate options for bringing the historically significant Lepers' Hospital site back into use. English Heritage has committed £15,000 funding to a feasibility study and Executive is asked to match-fund this amount. Should a viable scheme come forward following the feasibility study then a report will be brought to Executive.

3.5 Recommendation 2.2 (see section 7.2)

- 3.51 Seeks Member approval for officers to develop a fully-costed management plan to improve Saltisford Common. The majority of this work will be undertaken by one of the Council's Green Space Officer, although the current work programme will need to be re-profiled should Members agree to this recommendation.

3.6 Recommendation 2.3 (see section 7.3)

- 3.61 Asks Members to note the ongoing work and potential purchase of the Warwick Fire Station site for affordable housing. This Council is making a contribution of up to £80,000 to the project which is being met by the Housing Investment Programme. The scheme will deliver up to 12 units of affordable housing.

- 3.62 Under the Government's New Homes Bonus scheme and assuming that the development is completed by October 2013, the Council will receive approximately £55,000 in New Homes Bonus. Therefore the maximum net contribution to the scheme is c£25,000.

- 3.63 The County Council's Cabinet will be making a decision on the proposal at its meeting of 19th April.

3.7 Recommendation 2.4 (see section 7.4)

- 3.71 Seeks Members' views on the old Gas Works site. The site lies adjacent to the old Warwick Fire Station and the Council's Housing partner, Waterloo, has indicated that it could develop the site for affordable housing but because of the high conversion costs associated with this type of development, it would need the land to be gifted.

- 3.72 The site is currently in private ownership and preliminary discussions with the owner suggest that a sale price of c£1m would be required. The District Valuer has undertaken a valuation for the District Council but this is based on affordable housing comprising 7 units for open market sale and 5 units for 50 % shared ownership.

- 3.73 Members are asked to consider whether they would want officers to develop a business case for the purchase of the site. Should a viable scheme come forward then a report will be brought to Executive.
- 3.8 Recommendation 2.5 (see section 7.5)
- 3.81 Seeks Member approval to enter into discussions with Saltisford Canal Trust and Warwickshire County Council to further develop the Canal Centre as a Warwick visitor attraction.
- 3.82 The Centre is currently “tucked away” from easy public view and suffers from poor signage and highway access. A more accessible and visible site could be an enhanced tourist attraction and further support Warwick’s proposition for day-trippers and local residents alike.
- 3.83 Should Members approve the recommendation and a viable improvement plan is developed then a further report will be brought to Executive. To enable any necessary studies/work to take place it is recommended that £15,000 from the Contingency Budget is made available.
- 3.9 Recommendation 2.6 (see section 7.6)
- 3.91 Warwick Racecourse helps contribute to the Town’s economy and social wellbeing of its visitors. Over the past ten years the Council has invested significant sums in St Mary’s Lands. Part of this work has just received recognition with the land being designated as a *Local Wildlife Site*. However, there are still some minor works outstanding which one of the Council’s Green Space Officers believes would further enhance the land.
- 3.92 The proposed works are:
- Site Interpretation @ Access Points
 - Tree Works (Central area & perimeter)
 - Scarify and Seed-in Wild Flowers
- 3.93 In total the works would cost approximately £15,000. The officer’s current work programme will need to be re-profiled should Members agree to this recommendation.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S) CONSIDERED

- 4.1 As a programme of work, Members can decide whether to undertake any or no part of WHIPS. Officers are not proposing any alternative options as it is for Members to decide what they would like to see the Council do.

5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 The Contingency Budget currently stands at £285,000. The total cost of WHIPS work as described in the recommendations is £45,000. Should Members agree to the recommended feasibility studies then further expenditure will undoubtedly be required and future reports would need to be address the costs and potential partner funding opportunities.

6. POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 6.1 The Council's vision is to make Warwick a great place to live work and visit. WHIPS would contribute to the Fit For the Future thematic priorities of Jobs, Skills and Economy, Housing and Health and Well Being as well as the cross-cutting priorities of Sustainability and Narrowing the Gaps.
- 6.2 Warwick West Ward is a targeted ward of the Fit For the Future. The Council has recently agreed to commission community activities in the ward. Agreement to the recommendations is further evidence of the Council's desire to invest in the most disadvantaged areas.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1 Lepers' Hospital

- 7.11 St Michael's Leper Hospital was founded by Roger, Earl of Warwick in the reign of Henry I (1100-1135) and is classified by English Heritage as a scheduled monument. The remains of two of the hospital buildings can still be seen – St Michael's Church, a chapel and the 15th century two-storey timber framed building known as Master's House. They are both grade II listed buildings but on English Heritage's *Buildings At Risk* Register.
- 7.12 Locally the site is known as the Lepers' Hospital. Such sites usually comprised of a church and individual shelters for the lepers and were often sited beyond the fringes of towns to minimise the spread of infection. Documented information on the history of the hospital exists from 1275.
- 7.13 An Archaeological Evaluation of the site was prepared in December 2004. Evaluation trenches located 13th century stone building remains belonging to either the early hospital or chapel. 13th century or earlier post holes and pits were also found and may relate to timber structures in the very early phase of the site. A definite later medieval phase was identified consisting of masonry wall foundations and a yard surface. Other boundary features were also located.
- 7.14 The site is one of a limited number of remaining leper hospital sites in England despite over a thousand such sites having existed in medieval times.
- 7.15 A planning application for the development of the site for offices was approved in 2009 and scheduled monument consent has been granted. However, there is little prospect of the owner undertaking the development given the current economic downturn and he is now keen to sell the land. The District Council's valuer has valued the site at £25k in the current condition/use, but based on the assumption that the District Council's future use would be "...Tourist attraction with gardens...." An updated land value would be obtained at the outcome of a feasibility study.
- 7.16 There is enthusiasm in Warwick for reviving the site and a project group comprising the County Archaeologist, Community Museums Officer, Leamington Conservation Trust Chair, and Town Council and English Heritage representatives has been exploring the best way forward. This paper seeks the Executive's permission to undertake a feasibility study.

7.2 Saltisford Common

- 7.21 Saltisford Common is 5.6Ha in size and consists of two pieces of land either side of Wedgenock Lane. One piece of land is sandwiched between the canal and the road and it appears to be predominantly used by dog walkers, while the other piece of land is more of a community park and contains a play area, mini football pitch and has undergone some wildlife enhancements over recent years. It also borders with Cape Road North Allotments.
- 7.22 In terms of the Council's quality scoring it has been assessed as average. There are currently no plans for improvements but there is an opportunity to improve the biodiversity of the area. A flood storage area was constructed approximately 10 years ago, as the park and neighbouring property were vulnerable to flooding. The area could provide a much improved vista to visitors entering Warwick.

7.3 Warwick Fire Station

- 7.31 In October 2011 Warwickshire County Council gave approval for the former Fire Station to be sold for open market value. Officers considered that this site would be ideal for the development of affordable housing and so entered into discussions with County Council officers. The County Council's Cabinet will be making a decision on the proposal at its meeting of 19th April.
- 7.32 The Council's Housing partner, Waterloo, has agreed to purchase the site and will be developing up to 12 units of affordable housing. A contribution of up to £80,000 will be required from the Council's Housing Investment Programme. Subject to the houses being completed by October 2013, this Council would receive c£55,000 of New Homes Bonus and so the net Council contribution would be approximately £25,000.

7.4 Old Gas Works

- 7.41 The former Warwick gas works is a listed building being listed largely for reasons of historical interest as an early example of a practically complete range of buildings constructed for a Gas Works.
- 7.42 The building is now in private ownership and although a planning application for 12 apartments was approved in 2004 the permission has now lapsed. The building had previously been utilised as offices and the District Council's architect has advised that this use worked well. The building has now sat vacant for over 10 years, a blight on the entrance to Warwick town centre. The Council has had to ask the owners to repair and make safe the building on a number of occasions.
- 7.43 The property was last purchased in 2008 for £1.02 million. Officers have received their own up-to-date valuation based on an open market development comprising 7 units for open market sale and 5 units for 50 % shared ownership. Aan opportunity to extract maximum social benefit has now appeared as the County Council has agreed to sell the Warwick Fire Station to Waterloo Housing Group (see 7.3).
- 7.44 Following a site visit, Waterloo has advised that they would be able to develop the site for affordable housing, providing 12 units of affordable housing apartment accommodation. However, given the conversion costs, it would not

be financially viable for Waterloo to make a bid for the site. If the site was to come forward for development it would therefore require a public sector contribution.

7.45 Officers have also discussed the site with Jephson Housing who have now decided to focus their efforts outside Warwickshire. Latterly a bid for funding under the Kickstart initiative (helping stalled projects gain new momentum) has been made and officers await the outcome.

7.46 To develop the site for housing would require a significant public sector contribution. Set against this investment is the opportunity to bring a historically significant building back into use, improving the streetscape, reducing the opportunity for vandalism and providing social housing.

7.5 Saltisford Arm

7.51 Approaching from the north along the A425, Birmingham Road runs into Saltisford. To the west of the highway lies the Saltisford Arm of the Grand Union Canal. Through the work of the Saltisford Canal Trust (www.saltisfordcanal.co.uk) the canal arm has been restored.

7.52 Dating back to 1799 it was originally the terminus of the Warwick and Birmingham Canal. The Saltisford Canal Centre has been transformed by volunteers from a site of dereliction into peaceful moorings, set in a series of gardens and orchards. From small plots gardened by residential boaters, to a picnic lawn, a mature orchard, raised beds of wildflowers & shrubs, hedgerows and lawns. The site is open to the public around the year with and boasts a visitor centre.

7.53 Before terminating at the Saltisford wharf, major features of the route in Warwick District includes a 433-yard tunnel at Shrewley and a major lock flight of 21 locks at Hatton (known as Stairway to Heaven). Much of the trade along the arm was coal to service the Warwick Gas Works a listed building also in Saltisford.

7.54 The site receives visitors but there is an opportunity to assist the Centre in playing a much more prominent role in the District's visitor and tourist proposition.

7.6 Warwick Racecourse

7.61 Members will be aware of the investment that has been made in St Mary's Lands over the last ten years. With regard to the open space in the centre of the Racecourse the following improvements have been made:

- Landscaped all flood attenuation areas including a revamp of the pond 1-5 to increase biodiversity
- Thinning of spinney adjacent to Hill Close Gardens
- New football pitches created
- Seeded old football pitches to create meadow and increase biodiversity
- Provided solution to parking issues with the Racecourse i.e. the seeding of sprayed stripes on race day parking central grass area with wildlife friendly species to provide forage areas for sky larks; increase biodiversity and manage/improve habitat for a nationally declining species
- Hedge restoration around the caravan club

- Hedge planting and landscaping around stables car park with consequent increased biodiversity
- Landscaped new Sainsbury's car park to increase biodiversity
- Landscaped new members' car park to increase biodiversity
- Upgraded access from Hampton road to racecourse
- Landscaped Townsend Meadow to increase biodiversity
- Additions of barn owl boxes

7.62 This work has just received recognition with the land being designated as a Local Wildlife Site. To further improve the land and increase its attractiveness, the Council's Green Space Officer has recommended that the following further minor works take place:

- Site Interpretation @ Access Points;
- Tree Works (Central area & perimeter);
- Scarify and Seed-in Wild Flowers