

CABINET MEMBER DECISION

Date of decision - 31 July 2024

NEWLANDS DEPOT LAND OPTION

Relevant Cabinet Member

Councillor Marcus Hart, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services and Communications.

Relevant Chief Officer

John Hobbs, Strategic Director Economy and Infrastructure

Local Member(s)

Cllr Karen Hanks

Recommendation

- 1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services and Communications recommends:**
 - (a) the selection of the larger office building, as part of the agreement to dispose of an area of land at Newland Depot and the receipt of a new office building, and area of land adjacent to the site; and**
 - (b) that Full Council approves a variation to the capital programme in the form of a capital receipt on transfer of the Newland Depot land.**

Background

2. Worcestershire County Council (WCC), under the Scheme of Delegation to Officers, entered into an Agreement with a developer on 17 May 2021 to transfer a small triangular parcel of land at Malvern Highways Depot for the purpose of the construction of a new access road and roundabout to enable access to a planned new mixed-use development with 800 residential units (see Appendix A).
3. Planning consent was granted by Malvern Hill District Council (MHDC) for the development on 22 February 2024, Planning Ref 15/01625/OUT.
4. Under the Agreement, the developer is required to:
 - a) pay a land payment, value agreed in the Agreement (Appendix A and B);
 - b) provide the Council with an area of land freehold adjacent to the Malvern Depot site on which they will construct a new office building;
 - c) pay for the costs of demolition of the existing mobile office building on the current depot site; and
 - d) reconfigure the existing site, at the developers cost.

5. The Developer wishes to exercise the Agreement and has served notice on WCC for a decision on the size of office building required (two sizes of building were included within the Agreement, a base level and an enlarged building and car parking) so that it can apply for planning permission for the new office building. WCC must respond within 4 months, no later than 11 August 2024, if it wishes to proceed with the larger office building otherwise the Developer will proceed with the base level sized building.

6. The options are:

- a) the base level, which is a new single storey office building comprising a minimum of 405 sq.m., (GIA) for 50 workstations, a single meeting room and appropriate parking for a minimum of 30 car spaces.
- b) a larger office building of 509 sq.m., (GIA) to accommodate 60 workstations, two meeting rooms and approximately 40 car spaces.

7. The additional cost for option (b) over and above the base level office building would be borne by WCC through a reduction in the land payment (capital receipt). The additional cost of the larger building is shown in Appendix B.

8. The Developer will submit and seek planning consent from MHDC for the new office development adjacent at the developer's cost and the final detail will be subject to any permission granted. WCC will also consult with the developer on the size, internal layout and basic specification of the new office prior to the planning application submission.

9. Following confirmation of the option by no later than 11 August 2024 the developer will submit plans for the office for planning consent. Once planning permission is granted the office accommodation will be constructed prior to transfer of the new building and land to WCC.

10. The land payment will be made to WCC on transfer of the area of Highways Depot land to the developer.

Newland Depot Operational Requirements

11. Newland Depot is adjacent to Malvern Household Recycling Centre. It consists of highways maintenance vehicles, materials and a portacabin office for staff involved with highways maintenance.

12. Newland remains a key operational site for the south of the county. There is a contractual obligation to provide office space for the Highways Maintenance Services Contract (HMSC) Contractor, for which Newlands is one of the two main sites.

13. Many of the staff based at Newlands are operational and required to be in the office every day. The current office accommodation at Newland is unable to accommodate all staff based there at peak office times and the current accommodation is unable to support the demand for meetings at the site.

14. The existing portacabin office on site, is past its useful life and there is a substantial ongoing maintenance liability and cost.

15. Demolishing the portacabin also presents an opportunity to enable other operational improvements on the Newland site by the reorganisation of the site layout uses, which would be paid for by the developer. Moving to the new office site on land adjacent to the depot would then free up the footprint of the existing portacabin offices and the surrounding car parking to it, which will then increase the operational land of the depot, despite losing the small area of land at the edge of the site to the developer.

16. It is fully acknowledged that any work within the depot will not occur between the months of November to March to allow winter working of the depot to be unhindered.

Recommendation

17. In light of the operational requirements identified above, **it is recommended that the option for a larger office is taken.**

18. The benefits to the Council will be:

- I. A capital receipt (see Appendix B for estimated value);
- II. A new office facility supporting 60 workstations, two meeting rooms and associated parking (see Appendix B for estimated value);
- III. The reconfiguration of the existing site;
- IV. Supporting the current and future operational requirements of staff and services based at Newlands Depot.

Legal, Financial and HR Implications

19. The decision to enter into the Agreement was made under the Scheme of Delegation to Officers and is therefore not subject to this decision. Authority for the transaction was given on 7 May 2021 (see Appendix A).

20. If WCC does not respond to the notice served by the Developer then the Developer will proceed with a planning application for the base level sized office building which would be transferred to WCC on completion, in accordance with the Agreement.

21. Worcestershire County Council will incur costs associated with the new office facility. These costs are estimated to be under £50,000. These costs will be funded from the capital receipt. The expenditure is likely to be in advance of the capital receipt and will be managed within the existing capital programme. Use of the capital receipt is supported by the Chief Financial Officer.

Joint Equality, Public Health, Data Protection and Sustainability Impact Assessments

A **joint impact assessment (JIA)** screening has been carried out #762 Appendix C

The JIA screening has been carried out in respect of these recommendations. It identified that further impact analysis will be required in respect of: Equality and Public Health Environmental Sustainability

Supporting Information

- Appendix A: NOT FOR PUBLICATION
- Appendix B: NOT FOR PUBLICATION
By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 – Information in relation to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the local authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.
- Appendix C: JIA

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points

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Specific Contact Points for this report

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Background Papers

[Planning application: 15/01625/OUT - Malvern Hills District Council](#)