

## **Report to the North Weald Airfield Cabinet Committee**



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Report reference: NWA-010-2009/10**

**Date of meeting: 17 May 2010**

**Portfolio: Finance & Economic Development  
Environment**

**Subject: Use of land adjacent to Merlin Way, North Weald for waste depot /  
transfer station**

**Responsible Officer: J Gilbert (01992 564062)**

**Democratic Services Officer: Rebecca Perrin (01992 564532)**

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### **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

(1) That notwithstanding the forthcoming aviation review of North Weald Airfield, to consider allocating the land detailed in appendix 1 as a site for a temporary waste depot to enable the relocation of the existing depot from Langston Road, Loughton; and

(2) To note the continued interest of Essex County Council in securing an interest over the land adjoining North Weald Airfield at Merlin Way, North Weald as a waste transfer station and to consider whether the Council is able to provide a written commitment of land availability by the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2010.

### **Executive Summary:**

At the Cabinet meeting in January 2010 a number of decisions were made in respect of relocating services away from the Langston Depot to Oakwood Hill and other locations (Minute ref: 4 Jan 2010 – 113). Recommendation (3) was *“That the relocation of the Refuse and Street Cleansing Contractor from the Langston Road Depot be timed to coincide with the renewal of the current contract in 2012 or 2014”*.

Since that decision was made matters have moved forward and active negotiations are underway with the current owners of the T11 site (adjoining the Depot site) regarding the possibility of a development which encompasses both T11 and the Depot site and which would provide a significant capital receipt/revenue receipt to the Council. However, if this proposal is to proceed immediate consideration needs to be given to relocating the waste depot from Langston Road.

The County Council has also expressed an interest in securing an interest in land adjacent to the airfield for use as a waste transfer station for handling waste from this District and Harlow. Transfer stations are an integral part of the adopted Essex Joint Municipal waste Strategy. This enquiry has been deferred pending the outcome of the aviation review of the airfield, but subject to decisions on depot transfer, this may be an issue that the Council wishes to reconsider.

## **Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

If the Council wish to enable the development of the Langston Road depot site, the waste service has to be relocated. The contract with Sita requires that the Council provides a depot. Given that there is no other land in the Council's ownership which might be suitable, the site identified is the only one which might be available for that use within the timeframe envisaged for the sale of the Langston Road depot site.

The County remain interested in the use of this land a decision has to be made now on the Council's position since the County has indicated that it needs to have acquired an interest in sites before the 31<sup>st</sup> of August this year. The decisions are put forward to:

- (1) enable consideration to be given to the use of land adjoining the Airfield at Merlin Way and to put into a place a strategy for the eventual vacation and disposal of the existing depot site at Langston Road, Loughton; and
- (2) inform the County Council of this Council's position on making land available for a waste transfer station.

## **Other Options for Action:**

There are no other options available in the timeframe envisaged for the disposal of the Langston Road depot site.

## **Report:**

### Background

1. At the meeting of the Cabinet Committee in July 2009, it was agreed to pursue the relocation of the depot at Langston Road in conjunction with the strategic review of the airfield (Minute ref: 7 – 27 July 2009). As part of that decision Members considered:

- (a) the operational benefits of a depot co-located with a transfer station at the airfield;
- (b) economies of scale which might arise through joint depot arrangements with Essex County Council;
- (c) the gypsy & traveller consultative exercise; and
- (d) the impact such developments might have upon the future of the airfield for aviation or mixed use

2. It had been intended to report to the Committee at its meeting in December 2009 on options regarding the land adjacent to the Airfield in Merlin Way, but that report was withdrawn ahead of the meeting taking place. However, Cabinet at its meeting in January 2010 (deferred from December 2009 due to weather) did consider a report on the future development of the Langston Road Depot and other key sites and resolved as follows:

*“(1) That the relocation of the Grounds Maintenance section, Vehicle Workshop MoT and Servicing Bays and the Waste Management Team to an alternative site on the Oakwood Hill Industrial Estate be agreed in principle;*

*(2) That a detailed report on the construction and relocation costs arising from the decision in (1) above be submitted to a future meeting of the Cabinet before a final decision be made;*

*(3) That the relocation of the Refuse and Street Cleansing Contractor from the Langston Road Depot be timed to coincide with the renewal of the current contract in 2012 or 2014;*

*(4) That the request by the Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS) for a six months extension of their existing lease at the Langston Road Depot from April to September 2011 be refused, and steps taken to terminate the lease in April 2011;*

*(5) That a District Development Fund supplementary estimate for 2009/10 in the sum of £15,000 be recommended to the Council for approval in order to procure specialist external advice on the development potential of key sites within the District; and*

*(6) That an existing sum of £10,000 currently allocated for consultancy fees in connection with Council Car Parks be reallocated for use in 2009/10 in connection with the key sites work arising from the decision in (5) above.” (Minute ref:4 Jan 2010 – 113)*

3. Prior to the meeting of this Committee in December 2009 the County Council had expressed an interest in securing an interest in land adjacent to the airfield for use as a waste transfer station for handling waste from this District and Harlow. Transfer stations are an integral part of the adopted Essex Joint Municipal Waste Strategy. Following the withdrawal of the report referred to earlier, the County were informed that no decision would be made on this matter until the outcome of the outcome of the aviation review of the airfield was known.

#### Present situation

4. Since the decision made by Cabinet in January 2010, matters have moved forward and active negotiations are underway with the current owners of the T11 site (adjoining the Depot site) regarding the possibility of a development which encompasses both T11 and the Depot site and which would provide a significant capital receipt/revenue receipt to the Council (see negotiation status later in this report). However, if this proposal is to proceed immediate consideration needs to be given to relocating the waste depot from Langston Road.

5. It is also important to recognise that the redevelopment of the depot site is an important part of the overall redevelopment brief for the Broadway, which includes the commercial properties fronting onto Chigwell Lane and the site of the Winston Churchill Public House. Part of this development brief includes improvements to the connections between Langston Road and The Broadway.

6. Following the Cabinet decision in January, arrangements for the relocation of users away from the Langston Road Depot are progressing, with most users potentially transferring to a new facility to be constructed at Oakwood Hill and the WRVS having been given notice to bring their lease to an end. This then leaves the waste service as the sole depot user/occupier.

7. The contract with Sita UK, the Council's waste service providers states that the Council will provide a depot for Sita's use. The contract states that the current depot is located at Langston Road but it does also provide that the Council might choose to relocate to an alternative location. Any new location must be such that Sita can satisfactorily carry out their contractual duties. The contract runs until November 2012 with an option to extend until November 2014. For a future waste contract to operate efficiently, a service provider will require access to a 'local' depot, since otherwise operational costs will rise significantly. It is very unlikely that an incoming service provider will have local depot facilities, unless they are already providing similar services in an adjoining local authority area and that facility is large enough to accommodate the resources required to service our contract as well.

#### Waste transfer facility

8. Members will recall that within the Essex waste local plan, land on the concrete apron on the airfield is identified as a preferred location for a "major waste disposal facility".

However, this land is used as part of the Saturday market and furthermore is wholly the 500 metre 'restricted use' covenant which was imposed as part of the sale of the Parade Ground site for housing. In effect therefore, irrespective of the waste local plan, this land is not available for a waste purpose.

9. Since the waste local plan was adopted there have been significant changes in the County Council's waste strategy. The County and the Districts/Boroughs have adopted the new Essex Joint Municipal Waste Strategy, which clearly sets out the authorities' aspirations for waste disposal for the next 25 years. The emphasis within the Strategy is for high recycling with the disposal technologies built around mechanical and biological treatment (MBT) and composting. The recently approved PFI bid, and its associated outline business case, does not suggest that a major waste facility be built at the airfield, but does indicate a need for a waste transfer facility in the area to serve this and Harlow District, in order to remove the need to transport residual waste to the MBT plant which will most likely be constructed in Basildon.

10. County officers have visited the airfield with Council officers to look at the land referred to in the appendix. They believe the land to be eminently suitable, although they recognise existing planning constraints which would require an exception to current green belt policy. Whilst they would prefer any facility to be located near to the gymnasium, this will not be possible due to the previously mentioned 500 metre restricted use zone.

11. Public concern in respect of waste facilities is understood. However, a transfer facility is a very basic operation, requiring just a large building, in which waste is deposited, stored and then bulked up for onward transfer. There is no reason why a properly constructed building with appropriate controls over potential nuisances could not be satisfactorily operated in the proposed location. In terms of its impact upon other potential uses/users, the building will look no different to any other large industrial building and would be comparable in size to some of the hangars on the Airfield. It would also be possible, through any planning consent, to require suitable site screening. In order to provide the Committee with some perspective, attached to the agenda are some images of a new transfer station at Haverhill in Sussex. It should be noted that this building is significantly larger since it is able to manage 150,000 tonnes per annum, three times more than envisaged for a facility at North Weald.

12. County officers believe that a site of around 2.5 hectares (4 acres) would be required, to handle in the region of 45,000 to 50,000 tonnes of waste per annum. The actual amount would depend upon the recycling performance of this Council and Harlow Council in order to keep residual waste to a minimum. In terms of potential movement vehicles, this results in an estimated 60 to 65 vehicle movements per day, based upon a refuse freighter having a capacity of 8 tonnes and a bulker, which will take waste from the transfer facility to the MBT, 24 tonnes. Vehicles would be prohibited from routing to the site through North Weald Village itself.

13. Given the nature of the buildings envisaged and the operations undertaken, there is no reason to believe that a decision on a transfer station would compromise the forthcoming aviation intensification study of the airfield. The land is outside of the operational boundaries of the airfield and if properly managed should not conflict with any airside activities.

14. There is a very limited time period available to the County for the acquisition of a suitable site and the construction of a transfer facility, in order to ensure that it is available in time for the start up of the MBT plant. This effectively means that the County need to secure the 'control' of a site by the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2010 at the latest. This is a very short period of time especially since the period between the County's first approach and now has been lost. Recent communication with the County officers dealing with site acquisition states that the

County might be able to accept a written agreement from this Council which provide an assurance that the land will be made available for the purposes of a transfer station. This level of assurance will be required before the County is prepared to commit to a potentially expensive planning application process. If this level of agreement cannot be given, then the County will cease its interest in the site for a transfer facility

### **Resource Implications:**

Financial consequences cannot be firmly established at this time ahead of decisions being made. However, in due consideration will have to be given to the financial merits of service relocation based upon the likely income streams arising from the sale of the Langston Road Depot site and possibly land at North Weald to the County Council against the expenditure associated with the construction and operation of new depot facilities away from Langston Road, whether solely or jointly with other agencies. There will also be potentially positive revenue consequences arising from reduced management costs of new facilities due to, for example, improved thermal efficiencies of new buildings.

### **Legal and Governance Implications:**

In the event that the land is made available for a WTS a binding agreement with the County will be required by 31<sup>st</sup> August 2010.

### **Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

There are a number of implications depending upon decisions made going forward. These will include potential efficiencies for the waste management service and reduced carbon footprint from reductions in vehicle movements and thermal efficiencies at new depot facilities

The provision of a transfer station is a key component of the adopted Essex Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy.

### **Consultation Undertaken:**

Discussions with Essex County Council regarding transfer facilities and the timescales that the County Council is working to.

### **Background Papers:**

Information on the Haverhill WTS attached to the agenda.  
Email from ECC regarding the timescale for the County's consideration of site availability.

### **Impact Assessments:**

#### Risk Management

Recommendation (1) makes reference to the provision of temporary depot facilities. This is based upon the fact that the current waste management contract ceases in November 2012, or, if extended in accordance with the contract, November 2014. As the report states for the effective operation of the contract 'local' depot facilities will be required or else costs will rise and service standards will be put at risk. However, in considering how best to proceed with a replacement contract either for 2012 or 2014, the location of a permanent depot facility is clearly something which could be discussed and the necessity for a permanent facility at North Weald could be offset through, for example, shared facilities with adjoining local authorities.

However, it is important to recognise that in the event a future contract is let on the basis of a

depot facility within the district, the site currently identified will almost certainly remain the only one suitable and therefore at that time a temporary solution may have to be developed into a permanent one, with the associated costs.

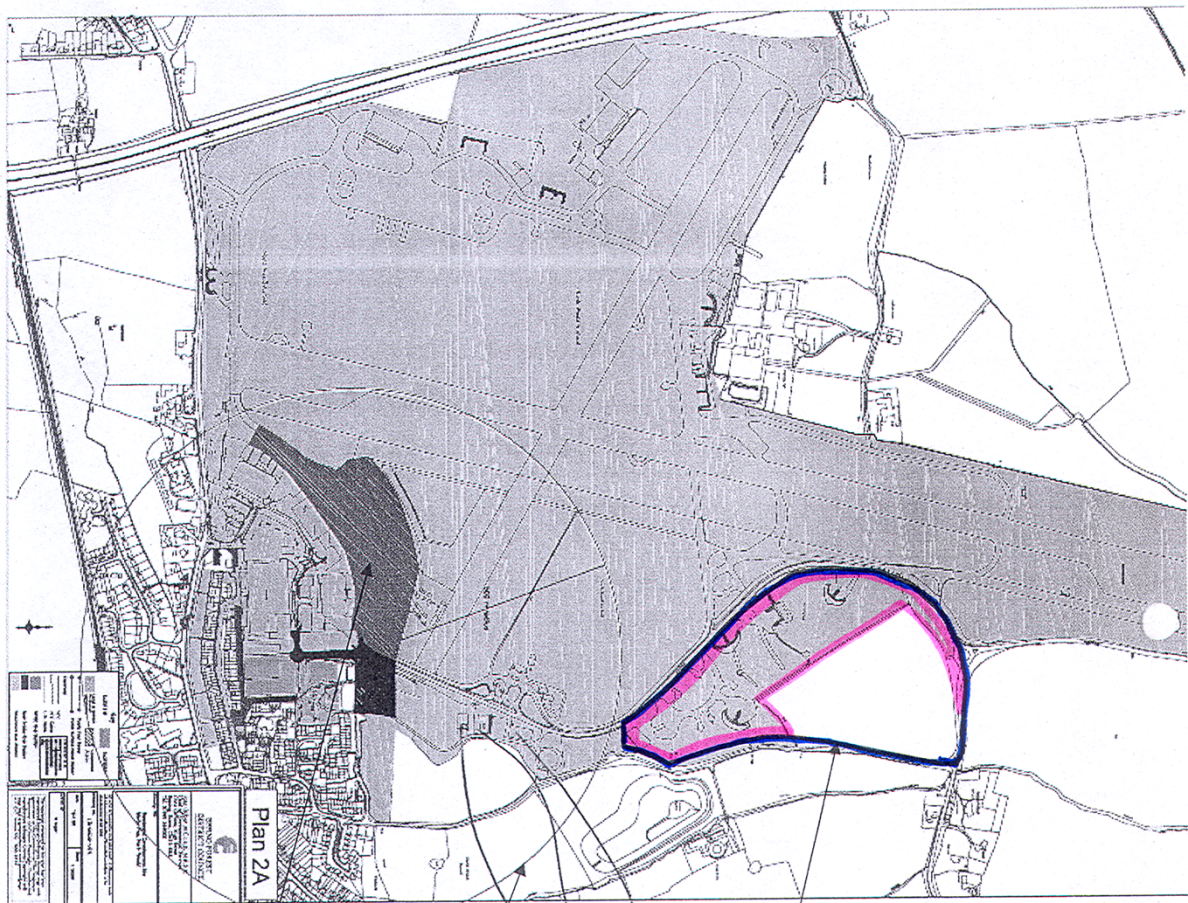
Equality and Diversity:

Did the initial assessment of the proposals contained in this report for relevance to the Council's general equality duties; reveal any potentially adverse equality implications? No

Where equality implications were identified through the initial assessment process, has a formal Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? No

What equality implications were identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process?

How have the equality implications identified through the Equality Impact Assessment been addressed in this report in order to avoid discrimination against any particular group?



WLP Site

Restrictive Covenant

Flaming Path

Chimney

foxes

Alternative site owned by Epping

APPENDIX 1

u/hc  
Hart Management ut