

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-017-2009/10

Date of meeting: 19 July 2010



**Epping Forest
District Council**

**Portfolio: Leader
Legal & Estates**

Subject: Making a joint application for planning permission with adjoining owner for development of Langston Road Depot as a retail park.

Responsible Officer: Chris Pasterfield (01992 564124).

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

Decisions Required:

(1) To enter into negotiations with Polofind Ltd, the owners of the T11 site which adjoins Langston Road Depot, for a joint development of both sites for a retail park of approximately 10,000 square metres;

(2) To recommend to the Council for approval a supplementary estimate for expenditure of half of the cost, estimated at £16,587.50 (Total £33,175 + vat), of JMP Consultants Ltd preparing a highways modelling, traffic impact assessment and negotiating solutions with Essex County Highway Authority for the upgrading of the A1168 Chigwell Lane in relation to the proposed development of Langston Road Depot; and

(3) To recommend to the Council for approval a supplementary estimate for expenditure of half of the cost of a joint outline planning application for the redevelopment of the Langston Road Depot and adjoining T11 site provided the negotiations with Essex Highways Authority in recommendations (2) above are successful.

Executive Summary:

For any development to proceed at Langston Road Depot it will be necessary to satisfy Essex Highways Authority over traffic on the A1168 Chigwell Lane and only once this requirement has been satisfied will it be worth the expense of making a planning application for development of the Depot site.

If the planning application is successful for a retail park then the Council will have a very valuable site which together with the T11 site is likely to have a gross development value in excess of £30,000,000. The value of the Depot site for this development is likely to be comparable or in excess of the price received for the T11 site.

The development of the Depot site for retail warehousing would provide a wide range of comparison retail goods that are not currently available in the District and would prevent leakage of spend from the District that is currently at a high level for comparison goods.

The development of the Depot site would provide a high level of new employment in the

District whilst it is being constructed and once completed would provide a large increase in employment opportunities in the Debden area.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To achieve best value and most efficient use of Council property assets.

Other Options for Action:

The Council could develop the Depot site unilaterally without the T11 site for retail warehouse use or light industrial use.

Report:

1. At the 21 December 2009 Cabinet Meeting it was agreed in principal that investigations would be made into the relocation of the existing users of Langston Road Depot to alternative sites to obtain vacant possession of the depot for future redevelopment.
2. At the 1 February 2010 Cabinet Meeting it was agreed to sanction a DDF bid of up to £195,000 to cover consultant's feasibility costs for twelve Council properties.
3. The total estimated cost of submitting the planning application is set out in a letter dated 12 May 2010 from Nigel Lawrence Partnership(copy attached) at £158,910 + vat and plus disbursements which includes the £33,175 for JMP Consultants Highways modelling.. Estimated additional cost is therefore £62,867.50 + vat.
4. There is currently only one retail park within Epping District at Highbridge in Waltham Abbey which has four units and a McDonalds and there is a Sainsbury Homebase at Church Hill, Loughton. The draft Roger Tym & Partners Retail Study shows that Comparison Goods Spending Patterns in Epping District have a very low retention level of only 14.4% with 85.6% leaking out of the District to other centres, in particular Harlow, Romford, Ilford and Brentwood. Comparison goods are clothes, furniture, carpets, DIY goods, electrical and sports. It does not include food which is classed as convenience shopping and it is not intended that the retail park would include a supermarket but may include smaller food outlets such as fast food and coffee shops to refresh shoppers.
5. Highway considerations are a major factor in this area as Chigwell Lane is already heavily congested and any further development will have an impact. Essex County Highways have indicated that even without further development the situation will become worse and by 2015 the road could be at full capacity and an initial meeting was held with them on 15 June 2010. It is proposed that as part of the retail park scheme a widening of Chigwell Lane would be funded to allow for two lanes of traffic to continue under the railway bridge up to The Broadway where the mini roundabouts would be replaced with traffic lights. Essex County Highways have confirmed that they do not have any current proposals or budget to improve traffic congestion in this area.
6. A formal consultation with EFDC Planning Department was jointly undertaken at a meeting on 27 April 2010 and the scheme was discussed in outline. It was noted that the proposal would be contrary to the current Local development Plan as a change of use from light industrial to retail would be required. It was acknowledged however that the area has changed significantly in recent years with planning approval having been granted for Volkswagon, BMW/Mini and Mercedes car dealerships, also for office developments such as Kier, Higgins and Galliford Homes. It was recognised that employment would be an issue and that the retail park might provide a considerable number of local jobs. The T11 site which was sold by the Council in July 2007 to Polofind Ltd for £6,050,000 has obtained planning

approval for a large data centre but have not been able find a suitable tenant and has not therefore proceeded with the development. The data centre would have provided very little in the way of local employment. Traffic generation would be a major issue that would need to be resolved with Essex County Highways but it was noted that it would generate different peaks to local business traffic as customers would come more at the weekends and not during normal rush hour. A retail impact assessment would also need to be satisfied although it was noted that the retail park would supply more bulky goods than local shops. It is thought therefore that there would not be a significant impact on The Broadway Shopping Centre. Overall it was felt that the proposal had some merit worth investigating but the traffic issue would have to be satisfied first.

7. The proposed development of Langston Road depot has implications for other sites which are linked which includes Oakwood Hill new depot, Pyrles Lane Nursery, North Weald Airfield temporary site for Sita, Torrington Drive redevelopment including BP petrol station, Church Hill Car Park next to Esso petrol station and Sir Winston Churchill Public House. It is intended to appoint a consultant to assist the Estates & Valuation Section with project programming from the budget approved in 2 above.

Resource Implications:

Combined resources of internal Estates & Valuation Section using external consultants as required.

Legal and Governance Implications:

Section 123 Local Government Act 1972 – best consideration for the land and property assets.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

The development will need to comply with building regulations. Any improvement to the traffic flow system will lead to a safer environment for local workers and members of the public.

Consultation Undertaken:

Asset Management Co-ordination Group and North Weald Airfield & Asset Management Strategy Committee.

Background Papers:

As attached at Appendix 1.

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

Abortive costs if planning application unsuccessful.

If scheme does not proceed then Essex County Council do not currently have funds to carryout road improvements to A1168 Chigwell Lane.

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? N/A

What equality implications were identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process?
No implications at this time.

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?
N/A