

North Weald Airfield and Asset Management Cabinet Committee - Situation

Report dated 25 October 2011

Note of the Asset Management Working Group – 28 July 2011

1. Pyrles Lane Nursery Site

There have been positive meetings with Essex County Council highway officers. There were issues regarding legal title to parts of the land in question which needed to be resolved.

2. Langston Road Depot Site Loughton

Continuing issues and delays with Essex County Highways have meant that the planning application would not be ready for consideration by the special District Development Committee as originally scheduled. It was hoped that the special meeting could be re-arranged to take place early in the New Year.

There was a possible need for more consultation on the Highways proposals as part of the planning application consideration process. A further meeting had taken place on the Heads of Terms for a development agreement.

3. New Depot at Oakwood Hill

Further design meetings had taken place between service users and Norfolk Property Services the result of which was that subject to some further alterations to the proposed parking layout an outline design for the new depot had been agreed. This would now enable NPS to develop the design for planning application purposes.

In taking note of the Council's desire for the new building to incorporate energy efficiency and carbon reduction measures NPS had proposed to carry out an energy survey at an additional fee of £1,000. There was sufficient money in the consultancy budget to pay for this survey.

As a concurrent exercise officers were looking at an alternative option of relocating Fleet Operations to vacant industrial premises elsewhere in Langston Road. It was too early to say whether it was a viable option but it would be more beneficial for Fleet Operations to remain in Langston Road and could be a financially cheaper option for the Council in that it would reduce the construction costs for the new depot.

The Group agreed that the alternative option should be fully explored and the energy survey be undertaken by NPS at an additional fee of £1,000.

4. New Depot at North Weald

Negotiations to enable an agreement to be signed were continuing with NPS. Once the agreement had been signed feasibility design work on the depot would commence.

5. Briefing Paper for Joint Management Board/Cabinet Meeting

With the progress made to date on the redevelopment of the Langston Road Depot Site, the new depot sites at Oakwood Hill and North Weald Airfield and the Pyrles Lane Nursery site it would be opportune to present a briefing paper to the next joint Management Board/Cabinet Meeting on 14 September explaining how these sites interrelate and providing financial information as is currently known. The link to 148 Brooker Road should also be included.

6. North Weald Airfield

Two informal meetings with organisations who wished to discuss the approach the Council was taking with regard to the future of the Airfield had taken place. One involved an aviation based organisation looking to find a location(s) in the UK to develop commercial operations. The other was a development-based organisation which considered that an aviation led development would not be the most effective use of the Council's asset. See more detailed update in the Appendix.

7. St John's Road/Epping Depot Site

A meeting had been held between local Councillors and the Council's consultants. As a result more work was required to be undertaken on the financial appraisal of the various design options before a public consultation is arranged. The traffic survey had now been undertaken by Inter Modal and their report was awaited.

8. Former Red Cross Hall Site Roundhills Waltham Abbey

The Cabinet had agreed to the development of this site for affordable housing in conjunction with a Housing Association following a tender exercise.

9. Lindsey House Epping

A formal response was awaited from the long leaseholder as to whether they were prepared to surrender the remaining part of the lease back to the Council at no cost. This was being reviewed as to whether further action was required of the Council.

10. Torrington Drive Development Site, Loughton

No progress had been made since the last meeting. Various discussions were taking place between interested parties outside of the Council and progress will be reviewed.

11. Merlin Way North Weald – Residential Development Site

The decision at the last meeting to market the site at an appropriate time had not been progressed to date.

12. Merlin Way Business Park

The site is being held in abeyance as estimated profitability is marginal at this time.

13. Winston Churchill Public House Site

No progress to report.

14. Brooker Road, Waltham Abbey

The museum store was not likely to move to 148 Brooker Road as the bid for lottery funding to part finance the refurbishment had not been successful. Community Services were seeking alternative premises closer to the museum but it was not known what progress had been made. Confirmation on whether the relocation to Brooker Road would take place or not was still required. If not required, the future of 148 Brooker Road would need to be reviewed.

15. The Broadway Car Parks/Burton Road Depot Site

It was reported that two meetings with appropriate officers had been held to look at taking forward various aspects of The Broadway redevelopment proposals as set out in Urban Practitioners' report. These proposals would be presented to Management Board. Concern was expressed about the potential for an overall loss of parking spaces and the resultant loss of revenue which should be recognised as part of future considerations.

16. Town Mead Depot Site

Peter Brett Associates had submitted their flood risk analysis which suggested the site was mainly in flood zone 2 and not 3a. A further meeting was to be arranged with the Environment Agency to discuss these findings.

17. Church Hill (Former Car Park Site) Loughton

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development had agreed in principle to a short letting on this site provided it would not cost too much to make the site usable and to any proposed use being on the basis of not causing local complaints.

18. Difficult to Let Garage Sites

It was noted that the Cabinet had agreed in principle to pursue housing development on appropriate sites.

19. Vacant Office Premises at Centre Drive Epping

A member of the Council had drawn attention to these vacant premises and was suggesting they be considered as a suitable location to house a furniture exchange. It was noted that these were substantial premises, far larger than might be required for a furniture exchange. No immediate use could be thought of for the rest of the premises which cast doubt on the financial viability of the member proposal.

20. Budgets

Consideration would be given to further District Development Fund budget provision in 2012/13 to take forward and progress the various development schemes the group was working on. Not all the budget provision for 2011/12 had been spent but that this was probably insufficient to meet the potential demands for next year.

North Weald Airfield – Update report

Olympic Games

1. Negotiations with the London Organising Committee have been satisfactorily concluded for the park and ride facility at the Airfield. This will function for the five days of the white water events at Broxbourne (29th July to 2nd of August inclusive). However, the arrangements would be set up and reinstated during the weeks before and after these dates.
2. It has been suggested that Olympic staff engaged in marshalling and other duties at the Stratford site and associated park and ride facilities could be accommodated in temporary accommodation at the Airfield. Whilst officers were willing to consider that and negotiate accordingly, the organisers eventually concluded that such an arrangement would not be necessary.
3. As part of the Olympic experience it is intended that the park and ride suite itself and the access roads leading to it will be dressed as part of the “Look and Feel” plan. Details of this have yet to be concluded. The Committee will be updated verbally if more information is available by its next meeting.
4. As part of security arrangements for the Games as a whole there will be stricter controls over airspace above London and the South East in general. This will result in constraints for pilots wishing to bring aircraft to the Airfield or transit through the airspace above. Each flight must file a flight plan with the relevant aviation authorities and with the Airfield. This will increase aircraft monitoring workload for the Airfield operations team.

Depot Relocation etc

5. Work is continuing to develop proposals for the relocation of the Council’s waste depot from Langston Road to North Weald Airfield. The site currently under consideration is on the land adjacent to the tower. This location would allow the office accommodation in the tower to be used for the Council’s client team, thereby reducing the footprint of the depot facility and its overall cost. Norfolk Property Services have been engaged to work up a design and seek planning approval. The location falls within the Green belt and therefore obtaining planning consent could have significant hurdles.

Aviation intensification etc

8. At the last meeting of this Committee (8th of March 2011), Halcrow presented their final report on aviation intensification. Three options were presented and discussed:
 - (a) do nothing;
 - (b) allow organic growth; and or
 - (c) pursue active development

9. The Cabinet Committee had resolved:

“(1) That the North Weald Aviation Intensification Study Final Report be noted; and

(2) That the following recommendations be made to Cabinet:

(a) that the option of active development be pursued;

(b) that market testing be undertaken with fixed base operators in order to provide more information on potential risks, investments and benefits”

The Cabinet, at its meeting in April 2011, accepted these recommendations (Minute ref: 146 – 18 April 2011).

10. Since April officers have held informal discussions with an airport operator who is considering a location(s) for a significant business aviation centre. Officers were approached by and have also had a meeting with a large UK based developer, who expressed a view that aviation intensification did not offer the best way forward for the Council and that a mixed development brief was preferable to a sole focus on aviation. It was explained that their interest was noted but the Council would need to decide the best option and any potential future partner would be sought by open competition.

11. A meeting has also taken place with the property management company which oversees Luton Airport on behalf of its owners. They were able to provide an interesting insight into how to potentially take intensification forward but also advised that the Council might wish to keep all development options available.

12. As part of a corporate review process, Ernst and Young have also been requested to review the way the Council makes use of its assets including options relating to the Airfield. They have been requested to:

(a) review existing work in respect of aviation intensification;

(b) gather data on current plans and options; and

(c) assess the possible options available for future development

An update on progress will be provided at the meeting.