

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C/082/2007-08.

Date of meeting: 12 November 2007.



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Leader of the Council.

Subject: Langston Road Depot, Loughton – Planning Application for Industrial Development

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Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992-564470).

Recommendations:

(1) That a Planning Consultant be appointed to submit a planning application for Class B1 (Office/Light Industrial), Class B2 (General Industry) and Class B8 (Storage and Distribution) on the Council Depot site at Langston Road in Loughton; and

(2) That, for the planning consultancy, site surveys and other necessary reports for the planning application, a revenue DDF supplementary estimate in the sum of £20,000 for 2007-08 be recommended to the Council for approval.

Langston Road Industrial Estate:

1. The Council completed the sale of the 2.6 acre/1.05 hectare T11 industrial development site at Langston Road, Loughton on 28 August 2007 at a purchase price of £6,050,000. The site has the benefit of an outline planning consent for Class B1 (Office/Light Industrial), Class B2 (General Industry) and 20% Class B8 (Storage and Distribution) subject to a Section 106 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Legal Agreement for infrastructure works.

2. Given the progressive development of this estate and developers' interest in acquiring further land for development, Cabinet members have requested that the future use and development potential of the Council Depot be investigated. Recent developments include the Britannia Centre warehouses; BMW, Mercedes and VW vehicle showrooms; Sterling House offices refurbishment; Higgins Group and Kier Group headquarters office buildings; the Loughton Business Centre under construction and planned business units on the T11 and former Essex County Council sites. These developments are identified on the Ordnance Survey plan attached at Appendix 1.

Council Depot

3. Constructed in the mid 1980's, the Council Depot provides offices, stores and workshop facilities for a range of Council services and external contractors. The total floor space amounts to 32,633 square feet/3032 square metres upon a site having an area of 2.8 acres/1.8 hectares.

4. Council services occupying the Depot include:

(a) Fleet Maintenance – workshops including MOT facility;

(b) Grounds Maintenance DSO – workshops and offices;

- (c) Museum Service – storage of artefacts; and
- (d) Environmental Services – office accommodation in connection with the Waste Management Contract.

5. External contractors in occupation include:

- (a) Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS) – Meals-on-Wheels service; and
- (b) Cory Environmental – refuse collection service (offices, workshop and parking).

6. The WRVS accommodation is let on the terms of a lease excluding renewal rights and incorporating a rolling 12-month break clause. Cory Environmental occupy their floor space by virtue of the management contract granted by the District Council.

Planning and Development Potential:

7. The Council Depot is identified in the Local Plan as suitable for employment development – Class B1 (Light Industry/Offices), Class B2 (General Industry) and Class B8 (Storage and Distribution) subject to a restriction on the proportion of the total development of the site. In addition, having a good frontage to Langston Road, the site is suitable for retail warehouse development. However, the present formal planning policy position is that such a proposal would be contrary to the Local Plan and Government advice. As the landowner, if the Council wanted to support retail warehousing it would be likely to lead to any planning application being called into a Public Inquiry.

Statement in Support of Recommended Action:

8. Whilst a strategic review of Council depot accommodation across the District is considered, the grant of planning consent for industrial development on the Langston Road Depot will assist preparations for its possible disposal on the open market.

Other Options for Action:

9. To approve or not proceed with the submission of an outline planning application to establish the site's development potential.

Consultation Undertaken:

10. Planning Officers have been consulted on the proposed planning application and appropriate development schemes. Preliminary work has also commenced on plans for the refurbishment or redevelopment of the Town Mead Depot at Orchard Gardens, Waltham Abbey for possible relocation of some services resulting from a district-wide review of depot accommodation.

Resource implications:

Budget provision: No current budget allocation, a supplementary DDF estimate of £20,000 is necessary for planning consultancy, the planning application and supporting site studies.

Personnel: Valuation and Estate Management and Planning Consultancy.

Land: Depot (2.8 acre/1.80 hectare) Langston Road Industrial Estate, Loughton.

Community Plan/BVPP reference: FPM1 – maximise capital receipts.

Relevant statutory powers: Section 123 Local Government Act 1972 – best consideration for land and property assets.

Background papers: Property File EV/973.

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: N/A.

Key Decision Reference (if required): Not a key decision.