

LATE REPORT TO CABINET

Open		Would any decisions proposed :		
Any especially affected Wards	Discretionary /	Be entirely within Cabinet's powers to decide	YES	
		Need to be recommendations to Council	NO	
		Is it a Key Decision	NO	
Lead Member: Cllr Nick Daubney E-mail: <i>cllr.nick.daubney@west-norfolk.gov.uk</i>		Other Cabinet Members consulted: Cllr Brian Long		
		Other Members consulted:		
Lead Officer: Ray Harding E-mail: <i>ray.harding@west-norfolk.gov.uk</i> Direct Dial:		Other Officers consulted: Management Team, S151 Officer, Property Services Manager		
Financial Implications YES	Policy/Personnel Implications NO	Statutory Implications NO	Equal Impact Assessment NO	Risk Management Implications YES

Date of meeting: 6 May 2014

ASSET MANAGEMENT – ACQUISITION OF INDUSTRIAL SITE – LAND AT THE WILLOWS BUSINESS PARK, WILLOW ROAD, KING'S LYNN

Summary

This report seeks authority for officers to seek agreement for the purchase of the site at Saddlebow previously identified for the building of an incinerator. The site is in the ownership of Norfolk County Council. The report outlines the basis of a proposal for consideration by Norfolk County Council.

Recommendation

1. That Members agree in principle to purchase the site shown in Appendix 1.
2. The authority is granted to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader, Property Services Manager and Section 151 Officer to agree a brief with NCC for the valuation to be carried out by the Valuation Office Agency.
3. That a further report is presented to Cabinet for formal approval to purchase the site.

Reason for Decision

In order to seek to secure agreement for the Borough Council to purchase land at the Willows Business Park.

1 Background - The Site

1.1 The site shown in Appendix 1 is located at the Willows Business Park (to the south of Saddlebow Industrial Estate) which is located approximately 1.1km to the south of the A47. The site is accessed off the Willows Spine Road (which dissects the site) and which in turn is accessed off High Road which links directly to the A47 to the north via the Saddlebow Roundabout. The total site area is approximately 6.4ha (including off site connection routes). The main site is approximately 4.8ha and is made up of two distinct areas (referred to as the north land and the south land).

1.2 The north land occupies an area of approximately 2.6ha and comprises an open area of ground; the topography is relatively flat. To the north of the north land the area comprises a heavy goods vehicles and car park (used by Palm Paper). Beyond this are the various industrial buildings of the Saddlebow Industrial Estate. To the east of the north land is the newly operational Police Investigation Centre; to the west lies an area of open undeveloped land and beyond that lies land that has permission for an extension to the existing Centrica power station. An Anglian Water pumping station is located adjacent to the north land's southern boundary.

1.3 The south land occupies an area of approximately 2.2ha and again comprises an open area of ground; the topography is relatively flat. A drainage ditch runs along the southern boundary of the south land to the south of which runs High Road. The site and High Road are separated by a mature hedgerow which according to the applicant contains 13 mature oak trees. A large earth bund is present within the eastern area (approximately 3-4 metres in height) and traversing the length of the south land on a north/south axis. An electricity pylon with overhead cables is present. To the west of the south land is a household waste recycling centre (HWRC).

1.4 Within the Local Plan Proposals Map the site is shown as an Employment site. The site is also allocated within the Norfolk Waste Core Strategy as a waste disposal site.

1.5 Members will of course be aware that the site was designated for the proposed Saddlebow Incinerator prior to the decision by NCC not to renew the contract with Cory Wheelabrator. The report to NCC's Council meeting which led to the decision not to renew the contract identified the potential for the sale of the site as a means of helping to finance the costs of contract termination. Consequently, officers from the Borough Council made informal approaches to NCC to establish whether there was an appetite for an early sale of the land. Based on these informal soundings and the press comment from NCC following the recent debate at the Borough's Council meeting, the Chief Executive has now formally written to the County Council confirming that the Borough Council would, subject to Cabinet agreement, wish to secure ownership of the land.

2 Proposition

2.1 In light of the past controversy in relation to the incinerator, there is considerable merit in proceeding on the basis of an independent valuation of

the site carried out by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA). Such an approach would be likely to reduce the risk of the two parties becoming entangled in protracted negotiations.

2.2 If Members are willing to support this approach it would be appropriate to propose to Norfolk County Council that agreement is sought for the two parties to jointly commission the VOA to value the site at a price which reflects its current designations as an employment site and allocated waste disposal site. If agreement to this can be reached with NCC it would be sensible to give delegated authority to the Chief Executive to agree the basis upon which the valuation is to be carried out with officers from NCC.

2.3 Cabinet and Council approval would of course still be required to proceed with the sale at the price identified in the valuation report.

3 Future Use of the Site

3.1 In the event that the Borough Council is successful in acquiring the site, it would be added to the Council's portfolio of employment land with a view to its future sale for an appropriate employment use. It is clearly understood that this would exclude mass burn incineration or other similar uses but could include for example recycling, industrial or commercial uses.

4 Alternative Options Considered

4.1 There are really only the two options available to the Borough Council, either to seek to purchase the site or not to do so. This report is based on the premise that the Borough Council would wish to control the future use of the site and to add land to its portfolio of employment land for sale or development.

5 Policy/Personnel Implications

5.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

5.2 The report does directly contribute to the achievement of the Council's policy aims with respect to the proposed incinerator. Whilst NCC have determined to terminate their contract with Cory Wheelabrator the company have not withdrawn their planning application and the possibility remains that the Secretary of State could grant planning approval. In the event that the Borough Council were to secure ownership of the site it would then be in a position to determine the future use of the site through conditions attached to any future sale of all or part of the land.

6 Financial Implications

6.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising from the recommendations contained in the report other than the shared cost of commissioning the valuation report from the VOA. There are quite clearly though financial implications from the ultimate purchase of the site which will be set out in detail in the subsequent report to Cabinet once a valuation report has been produced.

7 Statutory Considerations

7.1 There are no statutory implications associated with this report other than the duty to ensure that any acquisition of the site represents value for money and that the site is not acquired at an inflated price. The proposal to transact at a price based on the VOA's assessment of the value of the site should ensure that this does not occur.

8 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

8.1 There are no equal opportunity applications in relation to this report.

9 Risk Management Implications

9.1 There is a risk that if the Council does not acquire the site, that it could be purchased by another party for a thermal treatment plant which would conflict directly with the Council's policy and aspirations for this site.

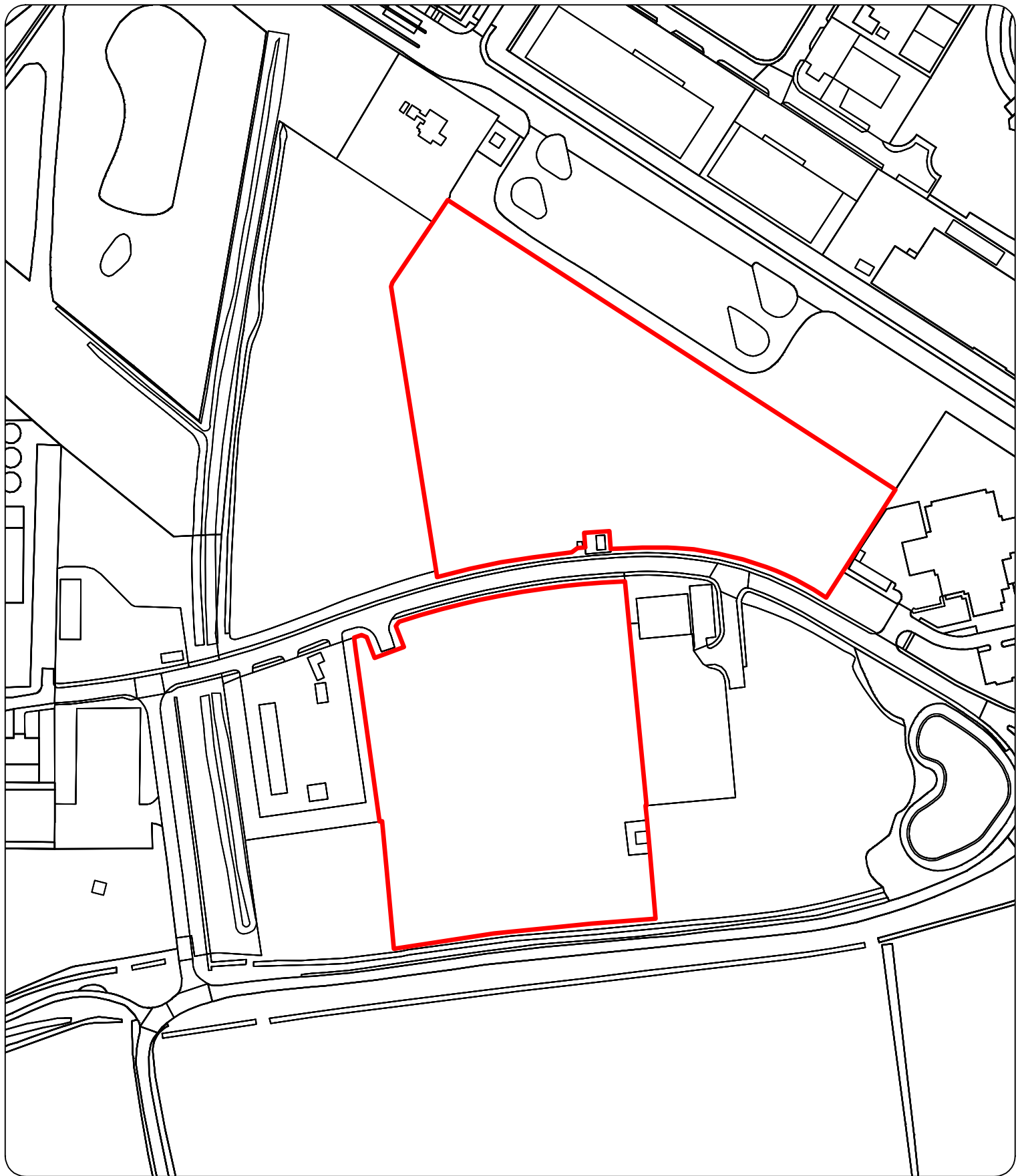
9.2 Any risk of the Council being asked to pay an inflated price for the site is mitigated by the proposal to base the price on a report by the VOA.

10 Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted

None

11 Background Papers

County Council Cabinet papers



**Borough Council of
King's Lynn &
West Norfolk**



Tel: (01553) 616200 Fax: (01553) 616682
Email: EDandP@west-norfolk.gov.uk

Title
Site Identification Plan
(Subject to Survey)



Scale
1/2500 @ A4

Date
02 April 2014

Project / Details
The Willows

Drawn by
JG

Drawing / Reference Number
Option 2