

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 25 NOVEMBER 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

LAND AT WOODSIDE, BIRKENHEAD

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report advises Cabinet of the position with regard to proposals for the regeneration of land at Woodside.
- 1.2 Cabinet is requested to approve, in principle, Peel Properties leading in respect of the development of the Woodside area. Cabinet is also requested to authorise negotiations of provisional Heads of Terms for a Joint Venture with Peel Properties; the terms to be reported back to a future Cabinet meeting for consideration.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Woodside area is a prime regeneration opportunity for the Borough. It has been the subject of a study, commissioned by the Council in 2004, which was completed in October 2005. Since the take over of the Mersey Docks Company by the Peel Group, the private sector has taken the lead on refreshing this study.
- 2.2. A Peel Group company, Peel Properties, has taken the study to a point where it wishes to clarify the roles of the various landowners in the area, before progressing further with the Master Planning exercise.
- 2.3 The Council's land ownership in the vicinity is split into a number of areas. It principally comprises the former floating roadway area, which is now a hard landscaped area of open space; the pay and display car park near Great Western House; and the piazza and traffic circulation area in front of the Ferry Terminal. The latter area has substantial parts adopted for highway purposes, including the bus terminal. Finally, there are various areas of circulation/promenading space, which are mostly adopted highway. The Council's ownership is shown by hatching on the attached plan. The main areas total 2.82 acres.

3. Present Position

- 3.1 Discussions have been held with Peel Properties to establish a way forward. The Company's proposal is that it continues its role as lead developer, and will procure development of the area sequentially, as the opportunity arises. A development framework agreement would be put in place whereby individual landowners will obtain full development value.

- 3.2 The principle of agreeing to Peel Properties as being the lead developer is felt to have merit. It would enable a 'holistic' approach to be taken to the whole area, rather than various owners trying to progress individual sites on a piecemeal basis. However, any such arrangements would have to satisfy European Procurement rules.
- 3.3 Prior to incurring further expenditure, Peel Properties has requested that Cabinet approve, in principle, the proposed arrangement.
- 3.4 Accordingly, Cabinet is requested to approve, in principle, Peel Properties leading in respect of the development of the Woodside area; and to authorise negotiations of provisional Heads of Terms for a Joint Venture with Peel Properties. Following negotiations with Peel Properties, the provisional Heads of Terms will be reported back to a future Cabinet meeting for consideration.
- 3.5 The Council would not be committed prior to completion of the formal agreement and would be free to withdraw from negotiations at any stage prior to that.

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 Detailed valuations of the Council's landholdings have not been carried out at this stage, but will be included in the report back to Cabinet.

5.0 Staffing implications

- 5.1 None arising directly from this report.

6.0 Equal Opportunities implications/Health Impact Assessment

- 6.1 None arising directly from this report.

7.0 Community Safety implications

- 7.1 None arising directly from this report.

8.0 Local Agenda 21 implications

- 8.1 None arising directly from this report.

9.0 Planning implications

- 9.1 Cabinet resolved that the Woodside Masterplan be approved as a basis for informing the preparation of the emerging Local Development Framework for Wirral in August 2005 (Cabinet, 3 August 2005, Minute 124 refers).

- 9.2 Work has since commenced on preparing the Local Development Framework for Wirral, and Council recently approved for public consultation the Draft Core Strategy Preferred Options Report. (Council, 18 October 2010, Minute 36 refers). Public consultation commenced on 15 November, ending on 7 January 2011.
- 9.3 The Draft Core Strategy Preferred Options Report seeks to promote Woodside as a modern high-density, mixed-use, commercial location that will, over the longer term, deliver the physical and economic transformation of the wider area.
- 9.4 In the meantime, the Council's Unitary Development Plan (UDP), saved by direction of the Secretary of State in September 2007, is the relevant Development Plan for the area.
- 9.5 Urban Regeneration is a consistent theme throughout the UDP and Masterplan and the emerging Core Strategy broadly supports these objectives. The Woodside area itself is designated as a mixture of Primarily Commercial and Primarily Industrial areas in UDP. The Rosebrae site is allocated in the UDP for Housing Development. The Hamilton Square Conservation area takes in the immediate area around the Woodside gyratory.

10.0 Anti-poverty implications

- 10.1 None arising directly from this report.

11.0 Human Rights implications

- 11.1 None arising directly from this report.

12.0 Social Inclusion implications

- 12.1 None arising directly from this report.

13.0 Local Member Support implications

- 13.1 The site is in the Birkenhead and Tranmere Ward.

14.0 Background Papers

- 14.1 Woodside Study by BDP 2007.

15.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 15.1 That Cabinet approves, in principle, Peel Properties leading in respect of the development of the Woodside area.
- 15.2 That authority be granted for the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management to negotiate provisional Heads of Terms for a Joint

Venture with Peel Properties; the terms to be reported back to a future Cabinet meeting for consideration.

Bill Norman

Director of Law, HR and Asset Management