



ECONOMY REGENERATION AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

8th March 2023

REPORT TITLE:	DISPOSAL OF THE FORMER MINISTRY OF DEFENCE LAND ON OLD HALL ROAD, BROMBOROUGH.
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to set out a route for the disposal of the former Ministry Of Defence (MOD) land on Old Hall Road Bromborough. The land previously formed part of a portfolio of sites that were bound by an option to purchase in favour of the Wirral Growth Company but under revised arrangements the Council has full unfettered control over the site.

The site has the benefit of an outline residential planning consent which was granted by the Strategic Applications Sub-Committee on 10th November 2022. The use of the MOD land for residential purposes is a change of use from its current employment Unitary Development Plan designation and is aligned with the Council's commitment to use previously used land, where appropriate, to support its Local Plan brown field first aspirations.

The proposal will also play a key part in the Council's ambitious plans for the Borough as set out in the Wirral Plan 2021- 2026, as the redevelopment of brownfield land for new housing development will help to protect Wirral's Green Belt whilst supporting its ambition to create a prosperous inclusive economy where people can get good jobs and fulfil their potential.

The matter is being reported to this Committee as the potential sales receipt is anticipated to be more than the threshold for delegated decisions.

The matter affects the Bromborough Ward and is a key decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee is requested to approve that:

- (1) Policy and Resources Committee be recommended to declare that the former Ministry of Defence, Old Hall Road Bromborough site is surplus to the Council's requirements and that authority be given to the Director of Regeneration and Place to secure its disposal on the best terms achievable; and

- (2) Delegated authority be given to the Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Place, to secure the associated legal documentation that will be required to finalise the disposal of the site.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 The recommendations within this report will enable the sale of the MOD site and will facilitate its development for a residential use as per the outline planning consent that has been granted for the land, subject to any subsequent owner securing appropriate reserved matters approval.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The only other option to be considered is to retain the land for employment purposes. Given the fact that the site has been regularly marketed since 2007 following its acquisition and reclamation from the Ministry of Defence without generating viable developer interest the land has been re-allocated for residential use through the emerging Local Plan to support the Council's brown field first agenda.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The former MOD land in Bromborough was originally acquired and reclaimed by the Council in 2005 using a combination of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and what was then English Partnership grant funding for employment purposes. It later formed part of a portfolio of sites that was to be brought forward for development by Wirral Growth Company. Over the last two years Wirral Growth Company worked up a number of different schemes for the site but given the market failure for employment development across Merseyside, whereby the cost of development is greater than its end value on completion, the projects were unviable without significant grant support. One of the key principles of Wirral Growth Company activity was that profits generated from commercial projects would be recycled back through the company to support sub-commercial projects in other parts of the Borough. Wirral Growth Company applied for outline planning consent for residential use on the site.
- 3.2 On 10th November 2022 the Strategic Applications Sub-Committee granted an outline residential planning consent for up to 248 houses on the land subject to a requirement that any development of the site be accompanied by a section 106 agreement securing amongst other things affordable housing, provision and management of open space enabling highway works and bio-diversity net gain.
- 3.3 The Committee is being asked to give support to declaring the asset surplus to allow it to be sold and re-developed for its consented use.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 If the recommendations within this report are approved a marketing and disposal strategy will be developed for the site to allow a capital receipt to be generated from its sale at the earliest convenience.
- 4.2 As the MOD land was originally acquired using a combination of ERDF and what was then English Partnership, now Homes England, funding a portion of the receipt

will need to be retained to repay clawback to both funding bodies. The exact sums are still being negotiated. A financial sum will also need to be identified from the land sale to fund the Council's Section 106 obligations that have been negotiated as part of the residential planning consent.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The disposal will require the preparation of appropriate legal documentation related to the disposal.
- 5.2 A full marketing exercise will be undertaken by the Council's to be appointed property consultants as this is deemed to be the best way of achieving full market price for the land which satisfies Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.
- 5.3 This report will also require a decision of Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with the Committee's Terms of Reference 1.2 (b)(iv) regarding 'land and property including major acquisition and disposals which includes reserved decision making concerning any purchase, sale or transfer of a value in excess of, or likely to exceed £500,000, unless the Committee has delegated this function in relation to a specified area or business plan as the Committee may determine.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 There are no direct resource implications arising from the disposal of this land.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The risk is that there will not be developer interest in the land. This risk is being managed by the development of a marketing and disposal strategy that will seek to publicise the development opportunity on offer to a UK audience. The Council has already received unsolicited enquiries from a range of developers expressing an interest in the site and so this risk is expected to be minimal.
- 7.2 Members agreeing to declare the MOD asset surplus will help to de-risk the delivery of the Local Plan as it will allow the site to be marketed and disposed of for residential use in a timeframe that evidences the Council's commitment to the re-use of brownfield land for new housing development thereby helping to protect the Borough's greenbelt.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 There are no consultation implications arising from the proposals within this report.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a tool to help Council Services identify steps that they can take to ensure equality for everyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.

- 9.2 A copy of the EIA for Wirral's Economic Strategy, which has been checked and is still valid, can be viewed at:
<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments/equality-impact-assessments-2021-0#overlay-context=communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments/equality-impact-assessments-2021>

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The sale of the MOD land with outline planning consent for a residential use supports the Council's emerging Local Plan aspiration of targeting previously used land to support the Borough's housing needs.
- 10.2 The planning approval secured on the land includes for the provision of new public open space as well as new cycleways and footpaths connecting the site to the wider area including Eastham County Park.
- 10.3 The development will also be required to deliver a bio-diversity net gain either through on-site works or a financial contribution to deliver the provision off-site.
- 10.4 A detailed travel plan is also being developed for the scheme to help reduce residents' reliance on their cars and the Section 106 Agreement will secure a financial contribution to support local transport provision in the area.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The delivery of housing on the former MOD site will help to revitalise Bromborough by ensuring that more wealth is invested and stays in the local area. Attracting and retaining people in the Borough will help to build the wealth of our communities and help the Council to strive to maximise social value activity by encouraging local spend to maximise the Wirral pound.
- 11.2 The travel plan that will be generated as part of the Section 106 agreement linked to the planning consent will help to promote more active travel in the area encouraging less use of the private car thereby helping to reduce local congestion and improve safety for vulnerable road users.

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APPENDICES: Appendix 1: Plan 1

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Wirral Plan 2021-26
Wirral Unitary Development Plan

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee accordance with Section G of its Terms of Reference, 'overseeing the progress of major project (including major building, infrastructure or other projects involving the erection or significant alteration of major structures or landmarks) undertaken by the Council directly or as an enabler, funder or joint enterprise partner, including but not limited to the Wirral Growth Company LLP'.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet sign-off to Partnership Business Plan for Wirral Growth Company	April 2020
Strategic Applications Sub-Committee	10 November 2022