

This Report will be made public on 11 December 2012

Folkestone

Hythe & Romney Marsh
Shepway District Council



www.shepway.gov.uk

Report Number

C/12/52

To: Cabinet
Date: 19 December 2012
Status: Key Decision
Head of Service: Jeremy Chambers, Strategic Projects
Cabinet Member: Councillor Robert Bliss, Leader of the Council

SUBJECT: PRINCES PARADE PROJECT INITIAL STUDY

SUMMARY: This report outlines the progress made regarding the Princes Parade project. It provides Cabinet with the results of the baseline environmental report by URS and the baseline consultation report prepared by GVA, URS and Allies & Morrison Urban Practitioners.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cabinet is asked to agree the recommendations as set out below because:

- a) It is an appropriate stage in the project for Cabinet to be updated;
- b) It is an appropriate stage in the project for Cabinet to confirm that the project should continue.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note report C/12/52.
2. To authorise the Head of Strategic Projects to continue with the project as outlined in section 7 of this report;
3. That the Head of Strategic Projects provides a further report to Cabinet at the next appropriate stage in the project.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Princes Parade comprises approximately 7.2 hectares (17.9 acres). It is approximately 1,250 metres long and varies in width between approximately 80 metres at the eastern end to 180 metres at the western end. The site is located between Princes Parade and the Hythe Royal Military Canal and is abutted by a children's play area to the east and the Hotel Imperial Golf course to the west.
- 1.2 Following successfully defeating a costly and time consuming village green application for the site, consideration was given to fencing the site in order to protect the site from further attempts to restrict its future use and potential value. The cost of fencing the site would have been considerable and officers were asked, as an alternative to fencing, to commission a study to clarify the potential for meeting community needs, including leisure facilities, education, the range of natural, formal and play related public open spaces and any housing or commercial activities at the site.
- 1.3 A budget of £160,000 was made available for the project study and approved by council as part of the budget on 22 February 2012 (report A/11/22 refers). Initially the budget was split as follows: -

2011/12 = £60k
2012/13 = £80k
2013/14 = £20k
- 1.4 No expenditure was incurred against the budget in 2011/12. Consequently the £60k for 2011/12 was added to the 2012/13 budget meaning the total budget for the current year is now £140k. The £20k for 2013/14 remains unchanged.

2. THE PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

- 2.1 The council's vision is to link the coastal strip between Battery Point in the east and the Hythe Imperial golf course to the west, to the Royal Military Canal by providing a linear strip of parkland akin to the Coastal Park in neighbouring Folkestone. Additional community benefits for the redevelopment could include housing, a new swimming pool and a replacement school for Seabrook Primary. Additional community benefits include publicly accessible open space at other locations across the site.
- 2.2 The principle objectives of the project are as follows:
 - Secure an allocation for residential use in the Shepway Site Allocation DPD;
 - Improve the setting for the Royal Military Canal;
 - New public park;
 - New water sports facility;
 - Enhance the promenade and beach for public use;
 - Possible site for replacement public swimming pool;
 - Possible site for the relocation of Seabrook Primary School.

3. APPOINTMENT OF GVA LTD

- 3.1 Three tenders were received with costs ranging from £33,893 to £87,298. The tender appraisal process was carried out in two stages, namely a desk top appraisal of the written submissions and secondly further appraisal following presentations and interviews.
- 3.2 The consultant was requested to provide quotations for each of the identified activities and following submission of quotations attend an interview with the project team to discuss the quotation in more detail.
- 3.3 The tender was to be awarded in accordance with the Procurement Guidance Document for the appointment of Consultants and Contractors, published by HM Treasury with a quality/price split of 60%/40% respectively. The quality of the submission was assessed against the following criteria:
- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| Methodology | (10% weighting) |
| Experience of similar consultancy work | (25% weighting) |
| Personnel | (20% weighting) |
| References | (15% weighting) |

The final 30% was awarded for innovation and flexibility following the presentation and interview process.

- 3.4 The tender list was compiled by writing to known planning consultants (nine in total) who had provided a masterplanning service to public organisations (including Shepway District Council) in the recent past.
- 3.5 The assessment concluded that GVA Ltd submitted the most advantageous tender in terms of price and quality combined and as a result offered best value. GVA Ltd as lead consultant with expertise in town planning, regeneration and project delivery expertise, put together a consultant team with Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners (with urban design, placemaking and consultation expertise) and URS (with environmental, technical and site conditions expertise).

4. INITIAL STUDIES

- 4.1 Cabinet will receive a 10 minute presentation from representatives of the consultant team at the meeting.
- 4.2 Initial public consultations held over the summer have been linked to technical review and investigations. A baseline environmental report and a consultation report have been prepared. The baseline environmental report has gathered the most recent and available information regarding the site to establish a current and relevant basis for future scenario development and decision making.
- 4.3 Sections 5 and 6 of this report summarise the two consultation team reports. A copy of both reports in full can be accessed on the council's website at the following address:

<http://www.shepway.gov.uk/content/view/201481/54/>

5. BASELINE ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

- 5.1 This report has been produced to document the understood and observable environmental conditions of the site at Princes Parade. It identifies the principal factors and constraints to any possible future development at the site, and is considered suitable for the purposes of assessing the potential for a site allocation by Shepway District Council.
- 5.2 **Ground Conditions.** Historic mineral extraction and use of the site as a landfill have led to the ground conditions at the site being a mix of natural and man-made materials. There is a presence of contaminated land, particularly at the centre of the site, which would require further investigation and treatment, although it is considered that addition of clean top soil could allow domestic or community infrastructure use, given the nature of these conditions. Historically the site was excavated for gravels. The site has also operated as a landfill for a variety of materials, and as a storage facility for highway maintenance. It has most recently hosted canal dredgings. The ground now includes a range of man made materials. Prior studies have included borings, excavations and analysis of 70 soil samples from across the site.
- 5.3 Potentially toxic material has been recorded in low concentrations at shallow depths close to the surface. More elevated concentrations were found at greater depths, particularly in the central area of the site.
- 5.4 Recommended responses to contamination include: passive gas control measures; the placement of clean imported topsoil in domestic gardens; installation of a sub-surface membrane and the application of standard health and safety measures during construction.
- 5.5 Therefore, presence of toxic material is limited but can be addressed.
- 5.6 The underlying geotechnical conditions suggest a robust piling approach to foundations would be required.
- 5.7 **Flood Risk and Drainage.** The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (carried out in 2009) determines the site is in Flood Zone 1 (based on risk of breach of existing defences and extreme tide event), although the EA still designate the site as Flood Zone 3. This is based on an assumption of no defences and extreme tide event. It is likely that the sequential test will be applied to any future application. Work to reconcile the designations could proceed in advance. Waves overtopping the existing sea defences have been recorded locally in the past, so it is recommended at this stage to maintain a set back buffer along the coastal edge. Surface water flood risk management would be required should any development occur at the site, and it is recommended that Sustainable Drainage Systems (swales, etc.) be included within any future proposals. These are likely to require impervious linings to prevent spread of underlying contamination. The Royal Military Canal is 'a main watercourse' and therefore requires an 8m buffer along the canal from the top of its bank to be left.

- 5.8 **Ecology.** The site is not a statutorily designated ecological or wildlife conservation site, and there has been fairly recent establishment of mostly scrub vegetation across much of the site. The canal corridor provides diverse vegetation, and there is evidence of bird life and insects. No protected species have been observed during the Phase 1 habitat survey undertaken by URS, nor have they been recorded in previous known surveys. Any potential future development would be required to mitigate loss, enhance and manage the most valuable habitat. A wildlife corridor along the canal is suggested.
- 5.9 **Heritage.** The Royal Military Canal adjacent to the site is a Scheduled Monument, and potential development will be required to not adversely affect this, its setting, or other heritage assets. In particular, views along the canal, to the beach and to Martello Towers are considered particularly important. Any development would require enhancement of the use and setting of the Scheduled Monument, such as through lowering ground levels to reveal currently obstructed views (such as those to the beach), and improve public information and interpretation.
- 5.10 **Transport.** The site has a long extent of straight frontage along Princes Parade which is relatively unconstrained. Any potential development would need at least two points of access, and can be safely accommodated in accordance with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges. The surrounding road network has been examined and it is recommended that 'ghost island' junctions be provided should development take place. The pedestrian environment is also important, and it is recommended that any potential development would have footpaths integrated within the wider framework and new pedestrian crossings on Seabrook Road.

6. CONSULTATION REPORT

- 6.1 The Council wishes to clarify the potential for meeting community needs, including leisure facilities, education, the range of natural, formal and play related public open spaces and any housing or commercial activities at the site. The consultant team was retained to bring together site information and to consult with key stakeholders and the community on the future of Princes Parade.
- 6.2 Key feedback has been:
- Enhance open space and public use
 - Improve access to site and landscape
 - Include a variety of open spaces
 - Leave the site as it is
 - Improve canoe club facilities
 - Swimming pool location – opposed and support
 - Potential for café or restaurant
 - Opposition to housing at site
 - Opposition to flats or high value homes
 - Focus on local residents for any homes
 - Low density and heights for any homes

- Respect the heritage setting
- High quality design and materials

7. POTENTIAL NEXT STAGES

7.1 The next stages of the project are:

Initial Options Stage

- Scenarios that explore the range of possibilities for Princes Parade;
- Principles, components, and outcomes of each scenario identified and communicated through summary written description and clear planning diagrams;
- Consultation with stakeholders and the public via meetings and exhibitions.

Preferred Option Stage

- Identification of a preferred scenario by the consultant team and a recommendation to the council;
- Rationale for the recommendation;
- Further evolution of the proposal, with further information on relevant open space, community infrastructure, leisure, housing or commercial proposals;
- A further round of consultation with stakeholders and the public for comments on this direction.

Final Reporting

- A final report documenting the consultant team rationale and recommendation for the future of Princes Parade;
- Recommended next steps as they relate to the planning policy making process.

Outcome

- A clear base of current and relevant information regarding conditions, opportunities and constraints at Princes Parade
- Rationale for and description of a recommended scenario for future use and activities at the site
- Clear next steps for the council.

7.2 Scenarios would consider different options for new public open spaces, new public access, potential new swimming pool locations, and the potential for a new primary school on the site as well as options for housing and a café. Scenarios range from no change, to an open space strategy to various mixes of community infrastructure and, or housing. Scenarios also encompass different extents of the site being allocated for community infrastructure and, or, housing.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Details of the project budget are detailed in sections 1.3 and 1.4 of this report. There is insufficient detail at this stage to comment further on the potential financial implications of this project. Further detailed financial work will be required as part of the project, if and when it advances.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 This report is prepared to update Cabinet on the work carried out so far as part of the overall project.

9.2 Cabinet is asked to note the contents of this report and to confirm that work on the project continues to the next stage, as detailed in section 7 of this report.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

10.1 A summary of the perceived risks follows:

Perceived Risk	Seriousness	Likelihood	Preventative measures
Initial range of options not compatible with public opinion.	High	Medium	Further consultation with public to inform options appraisal. All possible options to be considered. Clear and robust decision making associated with each option.
Public opinion becomes entrenched in its opposition to any form of development on the site.	High	Medium	Known objectors to be actively involved during consultation.
Preferred option is not accepted by stakeholders.	High	Medium	Clear rationale and evidence base for preferred option.

One or more environmental conditions (ground conditions, flood risk, ecology, heritage and transport) are 'show stoppers' and prevent or significantly delay progress to the next stage.	High	Low	Detailed risk register (including mitigation measures required) to be produced covering all environmental conditions.
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11. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

11.1 Legal Officer's Comments (PW)

All the legal issues that arise have been addressed in the main body of the report.

11.2 Finance Officer's Comments (MF)

Financial implications are considered in section 8 of the report.

11.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications (JC)

There are no diversity or equality implications within the report.

12. CONTACT OFFICER AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officers prior to the meeting:

Jeremy Chambers, Head of Strategic Projects
 Tel: 01303 247385
 E-mail: jeremy.chambers@shepway.gov.uk

The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report;

None

Appendices:

None