

**REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE MEETING OF 7th NOVEMBER
2011**

Status: **DECISION**
Title: **Property Review**
Originator: **Kamal Mehta, Deputy Chief Executive**
 Peter Ridley, Property Advisor
Where from: **Council Offices Project Board**
Where to
next: **Implementation**

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report sets out the findings and recommendations of the Council's Offices Project Board (Project Board), following an independent review by an experienced chartered surveyor working under the instructions and guidance of the Project Board.
- 1.2 The Project Board comprises the Leader of the Council, Finance & Asset Management Portfolio Holder, Shadow Asset Management, Portfolio Holder, Interim Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Community Services – supported by an external Property Advisor.
- 1.3 The overarching objectives of the report are to take actions to enable the Council to:
- provide fit for purposes office and civic accommodation
 - secure a fully funded scheme
 - secures best value use of all of its town centre properties and land holding
 - takes into account the proposals of the Future Options Review
 - if possible generates an on-going income for the Council
 - release surplus accommodation
- 1.4 Whilst there has been significant public speculation about the future of the Market Hall, this report does not recommend closure. It proposes a review of all the key town centre sites including the Market Hall. The Market Hall is a valuable asset located on a key gateway into Harborough, it is used on a part time basis and secures only a fraction of potential income. The proposals set out in this report will enable all the town centre sites to be reviewed and for the Council to make informed decisions, having regard to the above overarching objectives

2 Recommendations:

The Council Offices Project Board recommends that:

- 2.1 To shorten the timescales and save on cost of procurement it is suggested that either the Scape national or regional framework is used to appoint Willmott Dixon to act as lead developer to work with the Council to develop proposals to release surplus accommodation to secure a fully funded scheme to provide fit for purposes office and civic accommodation that will also generate income and which takes into account the proposals of the Future Options Review. The proposals to include the following buildings: Council Offices, Settling Rooms and the Market Hall.**
- 2.2 In the event that it is not possible to formulate proposals acceptable to the Council under recommendation 2.1 above, action be taken to invite market offers for: the Council Office Building and the adjacent car parks in Roman Way and Mill Hill Road, the Market Hall and Settling Rooms. The offers to be on the basis of:**
- outright sale; and**
 - outright sale subject to the re-provision of suitable fit for purpose offices and civic accommodation.**
 - proposals for the Market Hall acceptable to the Council**
 - proposals for the Settling Rooms acceptable to the Council**
- the Council being able to action one or a combination of the above options.**
- R 2.3 In the context of paragraph 2.1 it is recommended to Council that it includes the Property Review within the Terms of Reference of the Transformation Board so that the Future Options and the Property Review are complementary with the Interim Chief Executive as the lead officer.**
- 2.4 In the context of 2.1 above and 9.3 below reports be submitted as follows:**
- (i) on the initial findings and evaluations of the work undertaken under the Scape framework by Willmott Dixon in December 2011**
 - (ii) final proposals and recommendation in March 2012**
- 2.5 A project management budget allocation of £100,000 from General Reserves is approved to progress the decision of the Executive.**

3 Summary of Reasons for the Recommendations

3.1 At a meeting of the Executive held on the 28 June 2010, it was resolved that:

- The Deputy Chief Executive be authorised to appoint an independent external valuer to undertake a market valuation including a condition survey of the Council Offices, Adam & Eve Street, Market Harborough.
- The Executive approves and authorises the Deputy Chief Executive to advertise in OJEU to ascertain market interest and possible potential developer partner to develop options in respect of the future of the building including the potential relocation of the Council.
- That the Executive authorises officers to explore the potential of co-location alongside the Primary Care Trust (PCT).

3.2 The first and the last resolutions above have been completed:

- Strutt and Parker LLP of Market Harborough was appointed and undertook the market valuation and through them E C Harris was appointed and undertook the condition survey of the Council Offices in Adam and Eve Street (Headquarters). The work was completed in February 2011 and the findings in the reports provide the basis of the key information used by the Project Board to formulate its recommendations to the Executive.
- The potential for co-location alongside the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland PCT (LLRPCT) at the St. Luke's Hospital site in Market Harborough was tested through a joint OJEU procurement process. All bids received at stage one of the tender process were financially unviable for the Council.

3.3 With respect to the second resolution above action to advertise in the OJEU to seek a developer partner was delayed in order to undertake a space utilization study of the council offices to inform the OJEU brief and also due to the lack of internal resources to progress the matter within an accelerated timeframe, the Council Office Project Board appointed a Property Advisor in July 2011 to give the Council additional capacity to undertake a snapshot review of the Headquarters and to provide support to the Project Board to develop its proposals for consideration by the Executive.

3.4 The Project Board appointed Peter Ridley – an experience chartered building surveyor with specialist expertise in local authority asset management as Property Advisor, to undertake a snapshot review of

the Council's office accommodation located within the Headquarters in Adam and Eve Street. A copy of the Project Brief is at Appendix A.

4 Impact on Communities

- 4.1 There is no direct impact on communities arising from this report. However, depending on the final decisions on the future location and type of office accommodation and the design of and access to services delivery there may be an impact on the communities in the future.

5 Key Facts

- 5.1 Following an initial review by the Property Advisor, it was recommended that a potential solution for replacement offices could include the provision of some, or all the Council's requirements, within the Market Hall building and also within the Settling Rooms. A worthwhile review of the Council's accommodation needs was not possible without also considering these important town centre property holdings. After consideration the Board supported the recommendation to include the Market Hall and Settling Rooms.

- 5.2 Set out below are key facts that have been taken into account in formulating the recommendations to the Executive:

- The Council's Headquarters Building provides 5,353 sq.m. of accommodation. Based on a planning assumption that the current need is for up to 2000 sq.m. of office space – the Council has more than twice the space it requires.
- The accommodation is not in good condition, and requires up to £500k to be spent on essential repairs over the next 5 years and up to £1.863m in total to bring the building up to a reasonable condition.
- Office space and civic space is poorly configured and some areas of the building are hot in the summer and cold in the winter. Internal partitions that have been introduced since the Council took up occupation of the building, limiting the opportunity for reasonable levels of passive cross ventilation.
- There is potential to release part or all of the headquarters building for, commercial, retail or housing use.
- Existing planning policies provide for substantially reduced car parking requirements for town centre offices. Given the number of staff currently employed, the current parking requirement would be in the order of only 40 car spaces. At present the Staff/Public car park provides 90 spaces and the Council's adjacent car park provides 98 and 8 disabled spaces.

All of the car parking requirement could fit into Fox' Yard or elsewhere in the town.

- Priority must be given to the delivery of the Council's own primary services and services which are the responsibility of the County Council such as the provision of a Library and Museum will be considered as secondary priorities.
- The Library occupies potentially valuable commercial space within the ground floor of the building. This service is the responsibility of the County Council. The County's lease on the building expired in 2006 albeit a rent of £24,900 continues to be paid. The Library floor area of 632 sq.m. accounts for over 10% of the total floor area of the building.

If this area was in good condition and rented out for commercial purposes a rent in the order of £126,000 could be achieved.

- The Museum Service is a concurrent service that can be provided by the County Council as well as the District Council. It is not a statutory service for the District Council. However, in co-operation with the County Council and the Market Harborough Historical Society, the Council participates in the provision of the Harborough Museum by funding four staff posts and provides the accommodation for the Museum in the Council Offices.
- The Market Hall is well located in the St Mary's shopping centre it provides approximately 1347 sq.m. of ground floor space about 1/3 of the space is taken up by a food hall and there is 489 sq.m. at first floor level, with adjacent car parking. This valuable commercial space is open on, 4 days of the week in respect of the food hall, 3 days for a general market and Sunday trading in respect of the antiques market.

The gross income for the market in 2009/10 amounted to £242,668, which appears to be a reasonable income but this is offset by Council expenditure and depreciation costs amounting to £207,278 giving a net income of £35,390. In 2004/5 the net income was £59,500 (Roger Tym report see below)

Ground floor commercial retail space in the town can secure rents in the order of £20 sq.ft./year and the potential full market rent for just the ground floor space amounts to approximately £269,000.

- 5.3 In 2006, a developer expressed an interest in acquiring a lease in the Market Hall for a capital sum in the order of £1.5m and paying a proportion of the rent back to the Council amounting to £50k/year. This was not pursued further by the developer due to the downturn in the property market.

5.4 A study of the Market Hall by Roger Tym and Partners in 2005 stated:

- *‘Markets are struggling generally*
- *New traders are not coming into the business*
- *Food is the best performing area*
- *Successful markets are speciality/farmer and car boot type markets*
- *The market use is fragile and it ‘needs to be recognised that the market hall may not be required at some point in the future’.*
- *Remove the first floor preparation and storage areas and offer this area for restaurant use that could generate an income of £45k per year.’*

5.5 However, it is recognised that the Study is now six years old. Therefore any decision in the future on the Market Hall will be informed by appraisal and evaluations of the options which will take full account of all the current information regarding the performance at the time such as occupancy levels and financial returns both of the market and the Sunday antiques market.

5.6 The Settling Rooms provide in the order of 220 sq.m. of accommodation over two floors. This building is located in the large car park area adjacent to St Mary’s shopping centre. The accommodation is currently used by Voluntary Action South Leicestershire (VASL), who pay a lease of £7,000 per year - running cost for the Council total £5k per year. VASL wish to relocate into surplus space in the Headquarters office building.

5.7 Planning Position

5.7.1 The planning framework for the Harborough town centre dictates the current and potential alternative uses that could be considered for the Headquarters building. Set out below is a statement of the current planning position:

- The building is in a conservation area and is Grade 2 listed.
- The front external elevation must be retained together with the ornate staircase leading to the Council Chamber.
- Consideration could be given to reduce the current level of Council office car parking given the town centre location and the requirements of Green Transport Planning.
- There is a requirement for more housing in the district amounting to 1200 properties and the car parks could be considered for housing.
- The Airfield site is a major site for housing but there is a potential requirement for town centre accommodation.

- The Council needs to formally identify sites that could be considered for housing as part of the LDF review and the National Planning Policy Framework.
- There is a minimal car parking requirement for sheltered housing schemes that could be considered for the site.
- The Roger Tym Planning Study – October 2007, identifies a demand for more retail development within the town centre and the ground floor of the current office building would be suitable for retail use.
- There is a preference for the Market Hall to be used for retail purposes. However, alternative uses could be considered, including, Library, Museum or office accommodation.
- The Settling Rooms are Grade 2 listed and currently used by VASL for office accommodation.

Immediately before issuing this report, the planning implications set out above were reviewed by a planning expert – provided by Melton Council. The findings of the planning expert’s report are provided in Appendix B. However, the planning position is favourable to facilitate the use of the Headquarters building for, commercial, retail, office and housing uses. There is scope to release some of the existing car parking to generate capital or a development scheme that could generate future income and for a range of uses of the Market Hall. The nature of the Settling Rooms does to an extent limit alternative uses.

6 Legal Issues

- 6.1 There will be legal agreements and contracts that the Council will need to enter into arising from the recommendations. It will be essential to obtain specialist external legal advice specific to property and works contracts
- 6.2 The use of the SCAPE National framework is a legitimate way for the Council to appoint a developer for this project without going through a full OJEU process, as the framework arrangement has already been through an OJEU process. However, in accordance with the Council’s Financial Procedures Rules this approach will need to be approved by the Executive.
- 6.3 If the Council decides to use this route it will need to enter into an Access Agreement to allow it to access the Framework arrangements. There is no cost involved with this and no obligation placed upon the Council to use the Framework arrangements.

7 Resource Issues

- 7.1 The provision of any alternative accommodation or refurbishment/alteration costs including fees, physical move(s) and infrastructure works, furniture and fit out arising as a result of implementing any of the recommendations presented will have to be self financing. By this it is meant that the value in the Council's assets identified to be included in the review either through realisation as a capital receipt or through long term rental streams must pay for the capital cost of the option followed.
- 7.2 In order to progress the project to implementation following the decision of the Executive at this meeting, there will be a continuing need for the services of a Property Advisor and Project Manager.
- 7.3 The Property Advisor will be required on a one/two day(s) a week basis to act as the Project Sponsor overseeing the Project Manager and reporting through the Deputy Chief Executive to the Council Offices Project Board.
- 7.4 The Project Manager will be required on a two and a half days per week basis and work to the Project Sponsor (the Property Advisor).
- 7.5 It is suggested that a project management budget allocation of £100,000 be set aside from General Reserves for the cost of the Property Advisor and the Project Manager.

8 Equality Impact Assessment Implications/Outcomes

- 8.1 There are no equality impact issues arising directly from this report. Any detailed options that are agreed and followed will be assessed at the time.

9 Impact on the Organisation

- 9.1 It is a requirement of the Board that any proposals must:
- Be self financing
 - If possible will provide an income to the Council
 - Provide fit for purpose (not 'gold plated') accommodation taking into account the requirements of the Future Options initiative.
- 9.2 As the decisions on the office accommodation and location will be closely linked to the eventual outcome of the future options work it is suggested that the Property Review is also overseen by the Transformation Board, subject to it being agreed to being set up by Council at its special meeting on 31st October 2011, to oversee the Future Options project.

- 9.3 With respect to the initial feasibility work by the proposed developer Willmott Dixon, it is intended that a report is submitted on the initial findings and evaluations in December 2011 to the Executive (if 9.2 is not relevant) or to the Transformation Board (if 9.2 above is operative.) and a report on the final proposals and recommendation in March 2012.
- 10 Community Safety Implications
- 10.1 There are no community safety implications arising directly from this report.
11. Carbon Management Implications
- 11.1 Carbon reduction will be an integral consideration amongst others of any of the options.
12. Risk Management Implications
- 12.1 The Council's property strategy must be driven by service requirements and re-shaping of service provision arising from the Future Options initiative. The Council's accommodation needs to have a degree of flexibility to enable services to grow or shrink (take on shared services for other councils/commission service work to other bodies)
- 12.2 If the Council can raise additional capital it could refurbish the headquarters building and possibly release space for commercial use. If this route is adopted it will in effect be taking on the developer role and will carry the risk that some of the accommodation is not fully occupied to secure a return on the investment made.
- 12.3 The Council does not have the in-house expertise to manage this complex and high value project. Action will be required to put in place arrangements to effectively manage the office accommodation project should a commercially viable scheme be developed or, to provide capacity to develop selling particulars and a brief for replacement accommodation - should the Headquarters building be sold.
- 12.4 An open market sale through specialist agents could be arranged reasonably quickly.
- 12.5 The Council has an existing decision to appoint a developer by tender through the OJEU process. This was a good decision but it will take time to make the appointment and it is likely to take over 1 year to complete the tender process and appoint a developer to formulate proposals for the Council to consider.
- 12.6 The Consortium of Local Authorities Special Projects – CLASP established the Scape company, which is local authority owned. Scape has established national and regional Framework contracts that have been subject to an OJEU tender.

Contracts awarded to Willmott Dixon would enable the Council to appoint the company immediately to act as a development partner.

The Frameworks operates through a series of gateway review stages, with the viability of the project being tested at each stage. The first stage is to establish a facilitated workshop where all the parties jointly establish:

- the project brief and
- the outcomes and output requirements for the Council.

12.7 If the scheme does not appear to be commercially viable/deliverable - taking the interests of all the parties into account, there is no financial or other commitment to proceed.

12.8 An observation made by Willmott Dixon staff at an information meeting was, 'Developers appetite will not always match council aspirations and the reverse also applies'

12.9 A report on the viability of the Market Hall by Roger Tym in 2005 does raise the questions as to the long term viability of the market in its present form. Consideration could be given to operate a predominately outdoor market arrangement. The Market Hall site could hold the key to enable the Council to release its current Headquarters building.

12.10 Negotiations will need to be undertaken with the County Council as to alternative arrangements for the provision/re-provision of the Museum and Library facilities It is essential to obtain a brief from the County setting out requirements - should it be decided to relocate the existing facilities or to find other ways of service delivery.

13 Consultation

13.1 The broad proposal set out in this report have been considered by the Project Board and a cross cutting staff group - by way of a questionnaire survey and facilitated meeting. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix C. At the facilitated meeting, the unanimous view of the Staff Consultation Group was that, 'The Council should relocate to fit for purpose offices'.

13.2 As a result of press releases by the council on the ongoing considerations in respect of the property review and the inclusion of the Market Hall within it, a petition was presented to the Council at its meeting on the 19th September 2011 on behalf of the market traders. The Council took a vote and resolved to debate the matter at the meeting. The representatives of the market traders were in attendance throughout the debate. The debate was not of a 'for/against' nature as no decisions have yet been made on the Market Hall. That is yet to be determined.

13.3 Attached at Appendix D is a summary of comments and views that have been expressed by the public either in the local press or directly to the Council. Where the comment or view received directly by the Council has been expressed by an individual i.e. not in an official capacity the name has been changed to 'Individual' on data protection grounds.

14 Options to be Considered

14.1 Appendix E of this report sets out a longer list of options considered by the Council Offices Project Board.

14.2 This section of the report looks at issue and the preferred options short listed by the Board.

- Due to, the poor working environment, general condition of the building and the need to spend at least £500k on the building over the next 5 years, **do nothing is not an option.**
- The revenue pressures on the Council would enable up to £1m of capital funding to be secured, which is insufficient to provide fit for purpose offices, for this reason **a directly funded scheme has been ruled out.**
- The decision of the Executive in June 2010, to invite an OJEU tender to appoint a development partner was a good decision.

However, it will take up to one year to complete this process and the Board is aware that at least one London council adopted this approach on 3 separate occasions without securing a viable scheme.

For these reasons, **action is not to be taken to pursue an OJEU tender to appoint a developer – at this time**

- Time is of the essence in respect of this project. The Council has been planning to take action for some time and needs to secure a viable scheme in the shortest time possible.
- It is possible to appoint a lead developer/contract using a national framework for public sector bodies that has been subject to OJEU competitive tendering.
- **Either the Scape national or regional framework for public sectors bodies can be used to appoint Scape/Willmott Dixon to act as lead developer/contractor to work with the Council to develop a commercially viable scheme to:**
 - release surplus accommodation
 - secure a fully funded scheme

- provide fit for purposes office and civic accommodation
- takes into account the proposals of the Future Options Review
- if possible generates an ongoing income for the Council
- secures best value use of all of its town centre land holding
- A commitment is only made to undertake a workshop review with Scape/Willmott Dixon to establish the commercial viability of the Council's proposals and to formally agree the Council's objectives and outcomes arising from the scheme.
- **In the event that it is not possible to identify a commercial viable scheme, action to be taken to immediately invite open market offers for the Headquarters Building and adjacent car parks.**
- In taking the above action interest parties be required to make two offers:
 - For an outright sale
 - For a sale subject to the purchaser providing fit for purpose offices and civic facilities
- A planning brief for alternative uses of the Headquarters building and Market Hall will be required to inform discussions of viable commercial options.

14.3 Negotiations will need to be undertaken with the County Council as to alternative arrangements for the provision/re-provision of the Museum and Library facilities. The Settling Rooms could be used for, Library, Museum, Community or Council use. The Rooms provide 220 sq.m. of accommodation and could accommodate up to 20 staff. The County has a requirement for a Registrars Office and the Settling Rooms could be considered for this purpose.

14.4 If the option includes an alternative use for the Market Hall to maximise returns from the asset or for office use, it will inevitably be an unpopular decision. However, it is important to stress that the existence of a market in Market Harborough is not in any doubt. It is the form and the location that will be under consideration. An outdoor market or possibly, a limited amount of lock-up undercover units, or even a re-provision of the undercover market stalls as part of the Headquarters scheme are all considerations to be evaluated.

15 Background Papers

15.1 Strutt and Parker Confidential report due to commercially sensitive information – Market Appraisal of Council Offices – February 2011

15.2 Roger Tym Planning Study – October 2007.

15.3 Roger Tym Review of Market Hall 12 May 2005

15.4 Various papers to the Council Offices Project Board – Confidential due to commercially sensitive information.

Previous report(s): Report to the Special Executive meeting – 28 June 2010

Information Issued Under Sensitive Issue Procedure: ~~Y~~/N

Ward Members Notified: Not applicable

Appendices:

- A. Council Office Project Brief
- B. Planning Expert's Report
- C. Staff questionnaire
- D. Comments and Views from the Public on Property Review Project
- E. Long List of Options

Council Offices Project Brief

Background

The Council Offices have been the main administrative base for Harborough District Council since the early 1980's. The building was converted from an old corset factory with many original features remaining.

For several years the Council has been considering whether it should move to a more "purpose built" facility as the current layout/configuration of the building has its limitations.

In addition, the Council has undertaken a Condition Survey of the building. This identified that a large amount of investment is required in order to keep the building operational in its current form. The building is considered to have poor energy efficiency and this reflects on the Council's expenditure for utilities.

The Council has a diminishing requirement for office space as a result of recent shared services projects and staffing cuts. Some areas of the business have also begun to trial home based working. The current perception is that the building is too big for HDC operations. Sharing the building with other partners may reduce the floor space occupied.

The Council Offices house Market Harborough Library on the ground floor (service provided by Leicestershire County Council) with a lease being in place for xxx years. The town's Museum is also located on 1st floor and is run as a partnership between HDC, LCC and Market Harborough Historical Society.

A small number of relocation options have been explored in the past. These have been based upon opportunities that have arisen at certain times.

Project Objectives

The project will deliver a report on a range of costed accommodation options in order to inform elected members decisions as to whether to remain in the current accommodation, or move to an alternative location.

The Council needs to consider:

- Whether to relocate to new purpose built offices that are modern, energy efficient and fit for purpose in terms of size and cost.
- To stay in the current building and commit to the significant investment required, which will always have limitations due to its age and design. This option should include the costs of bringing the building up to modern levels of energy efficiency.

- Any other option that provides fit for purpose accommodation (e.g. using the building as collateral in engaging a developer partner).

Deliverables

- The project should provide a full report with a clear recommendation by 14th September 2011 to the Project Board.
- The project should provide a final report to the Executive Meeting of 7th November 2011.

Scope

The scope should cover:

- Whether to relocate within the Harborough District to new purpose built offices that are modern, energy efficient in terms of cost and size.
- To stay in the current building and commit to the significant investment required, which will always have limitations due to its age and design. This option to include sharing the building with partners. The viability of partners should be taken into account when considering this option.
- Any other option that provides fit for purpose accommodation (e.g. using the building as collateral in engaging a developer partner).
- The report should consider changes to working arrangements and how this might impact on the size and type of accommodation required.

Exclusions/Constraints

- Any Council relocation should be based with the Harborough District.
- The recommendations should all be financially viable, taking into account the Councils diminishing funding allocations.

Interfaces

The report should interface with;

- The CEO's work on HDC future options
- Existing lease arrangements
- Ongoing conversations with partners (LCC, VASL etc)

Governance

The Council has set up a Council Offices Project Board. This comprises of 3 elected members Cllr Rook (Leader), Cllr Spendlove-Mason (Portfolio Holder for Asset Management and Finance) and Cllr Dr Hill (Shadow Portfolio Holder for Asset Management and Finance) and supported by 3 officers, Anna Graves (Interim Chief Executive), Kamal Mehta (Deputy Chief Executive) and Matthew Bradford (Head of Environment and Leisure Services).

The Project Board reports the Council's Executive Committee, which in turn reports the Full Council.

Indicative Timescales

Interim Expert Lead	18 th July to 29 th Aug	Interim Experts research and report drafting
	29 th Aug 2011	Interim Experts Draft Report delivered.
	29 th Aug to 5 th Sept	Comments back from HDC
	14 th Sept	Interim Experts final report delivered.
	16 th Sept	Interim Experts contract ends
HDC Lead	14 th Sept to 7 th Oct	Internal discussion officers/members
	7 th Oct to 14 th Oct	Drafting of Exec report
	14 th Oct	Exec Report submitted
	7 th Nov	Executive considers report.
	14 th Nov	Full Council

Meeting Dates

27 th July	Project sign off
12 th August	Progress review
1 st September	Progress review
14 th September	Final report presented by interim expert

Risks

- Possible lack of Development Partners
- Market conditions
- Time scales – Link to HDC Future Options Work
- Political sensitivity
- Requirements of Partners (Library and Museum)

Supporting Documents to be provided

Council's Constitution
DDA Accessibility Audit
Democratic Space Requirements
Medium Term Financial Strategy
Establishment Numbers
Political Structure
Officer Structure
Lease for Library
Floor Plan
Condition Survey
Budget Info
Asset Management Plan
Health and Safety Report
Market Harborough Planning Regs (Land Use)
Land Allocations (land use map)
Relevant Committee Reports (regarding St. Luke's)
Harborough Innovation Centre (options for Council Offices info)
List of conversations with potential partners

REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE

OCTOBER 2011

OFFICE ACCOMMODATION REVIEW - PLANNING INFLUENCES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. This report aims to set out the Planning implications of the Council's property review, the opportunities and constraints that arise from the planning considerations and to present them in context of each of the properties concerned.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION.

2.1. Brief:

The Planning Advisor is required to provide a 'planning brief' for the above buildings that has a regard to the following:

1. Requirement to establish the development potential of each of the sites and to form part of the project briefing document to the appointed developer.
2. In the event that the Council cannot establish a viable commercial scheme with a development partner – to provide a 'planning brief' that will form part of the sales particular
3. To achieve the maximum value that can be secured for each of the sites.

2.2 Planning Assumptions

The following planning assumptions have been provided which will be critically reviewed and taken into account in formulating recommendations:

- § The Headquarters building is in a conservation area and is Grade 2 listed.
- § The front external elevation must be retained together with the ornate staircase leading to the Council Chamber.
- § Consideration could be given to reduce the current level of Council office car parking given the town centre location and the requirements of Green Transport Planning.
- § There is a requirement for more housing in the district amounting to 1,200 properties and the car parks could be considered for housing.
- § Most housing will go on to The Airfield site, which is a major site for housing but there is a potential requirement for town centre accommodation.
- § The Council needs to formally identify sites that could be considered for housing as part of the LDF planning review and the National Planning Policy Framework.
- § There is a minimal car parking requirement for sheltered housing schemes that could be considered for the site.
- § The Roger Tym Planning Study – October 2007, identifies a demand for more retail development within the town centre and the ground floor of the current office building would be suitable for retail use.
- § There is a preference for the Market Hall to be used for retail purposes. However, alternative uses could be considered, including, Library, Museum or office accommodation.
- § The Settling Rooms are Grade 2 listed and currently used by Voluntary Action South Leicestershire (VASL) for office accommodation.

3 PREMISES

3.1 COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS, ADAM AND EVE ST

3.1.1 Planning Policy

The premises lies in the identified Town Centre ('Shopping and Business Area') in the Harborough Local Plan. As such Policy SH/1 supports use for retail purposes and this is not restricted to the ground floor.

The Core Strategy, supported by evidence within the 2007 Retail Study establishes the need for a growth of retail floorspace in the town centre of Market Harborough and the site would meet with this ambition and contribute to fulfilling this identified demand. The core strategy is clear about the role of the Town Centre as a focus for retail, office and leisure activity (e.g. at Policy 6 and Policy 13d). As a town centre site it is likely to meet the criteria of the subsequent LDF documents and would have the added benefit of mitigating to an extent any pressure experienced for edge of, or out of, town centre retail pressures.

PPS4 encourages a focusing of retail, office and major leisure use in recognized town centres and this reinforces the Local Planning policy position set out above. As a town centre site, the supporting information required under policy EC 15 would be limited and, with the retail study in place*, capacity is established and there is no requirements for a sequential or impact test, thus avoiding these often contentious elements of the planning process.

The Draft NPPF proposes to amend PPS4 by removing office development from the 'town centre first' approach. However, this is not to suggest a town centre is regarded any less favourable for office development, simply that other locations can be more readily promoted. It is considered that the NPPF, in its draft form, does not present an impediment to the use of the premises for retail or office purposes.

3.1.2 Physical attributes, listing and conservation status

As set out in the assumptions above, the premises are listed and a major feature in the heart of Market Harborough that contributes significantly to its heritage and local distinctiveness. It is undoubtedly a 'heritage asset' in PPS5 terms. I concur with the assumptions that a significant degree of degradation has taken place and as such the conservation value of the building is diminished. However, I would consider that the architectural and historic value of the building extends beyond the façade and staircase identified in the assumptions, and should include the fenestration in the north wing, the exposed timber construction beams in the upper floors and the general form which retains reference to its original use and its history. However, the internal divisions appear to be recent additions and do not merit protection, allowing relatively unconstrained 'wall to wall' floorspace in which the internal arrangements could be remodeled. The external features do not mean that development need be impaired, but that it would need to be of a form and scale that reflect the original building and retain it as the dominant feature.

3.1.3 Car parking

The building is accompanied by a staff car park with a capacity of around 80. By modern planning standards that level of parking is excessive in a town centre location - PPG13 (as amended) provides the most recent policy guidance on this subject and significantly post dates the Local Plan. PPG13 has itself been re-asserted by PPS4 policy EC18 and advises **maximum** standards of 1 space per 14-20m for retail (depending on which type) and 1 per 2500m for office. However, as maximum standards, and in a highly accessible, town centre, location there is no imperative for planning reasons for any provision of car parking (operational requirements may of course be entirely different).

PPG13 also requires regard to be paid to the impact of development on public car parking provision and in this respect the Harborough Parking strategy provides some useful insight and evidence. Beneath the 'headline' figures regarding usage, the detail reveal that car parks in the vicinity of the Council Offices are generally under used (short and long stay) and this evidence would mitigate against arguments that the loss of the staff car park would place undue strain on overall parking provision.

3.1.4 Extensions

Subject to design considerations, there are limited constraints in principle to how the existing building could be extended. The Adam and Eve St elevations are both the most prominent and sensitive but the scope for alteration of these elevations is extremely limited in any event as they front the Highway directly. The rear elevations, facing Fox Yard, show signs of alterations and could be a good location to link extensions.

3.1.5 Development of the Staff Car Park

Founded on the above, it is considered that the staff car park could be declared surplus either with or without redevelopment of the current offices. The site is relatively constrained and would present a difficult design challenge, particularly in respect of complementing the adjacent office. However, in common with the commentary above, as a town centre site the range of uses for which it could be developed are broad and could include retail, office leisure and residential (or a amalgamation of these). The opportunities related to this car park would complement the 'green travel' agenda and for the building it currently serves, whether occupied by HDC or developed for alternative purposes, which inevitably would include measures to discourage large scale on site car parking.

3.1.6 Development of Symington Way Car Parks (inc. Fox Yard)

No specific policies have been identified that protect the use of the land as a car park. Accordingly, in common with the adjacent building and surrounding area, the policy framework is supportive of development under the generality of policy HS/8 and the lead provided by SH/1, a range of development could be considered, to include all 'town centre uses', housing or community use.

The site is significant in scale (especially if combined with development including the Council Offices or adjacent staff car park) and the ideal approach would be to consider an ideal use(s) and form of development through the LDF process, as a specific site allocation. However, it is not considered to be of such a scale as to be regarded as 'strategic' (i.e. critical to the delivery of the objectives of the LDF) and the question of 'prematurity' is unlikely to arise if an application of a speculative nature was received.

In view of the policy background and the identified needs of the LDF Core Strategy, it is considered that the site could be considered as a site allocation to meet identified needs for housing, leisure, retail and office use (or a combination of these).

However, the impact of parking provision will inevitably form a consideration of some prominence and care would be needed in terms of the effect of the removal of spaces on the overall capacity and pattern of use of the public car parking. Indeed, this reflects the provision of Policy MH/1 which cites the need to produce replacement parking if car parks are developed for shopping purposes. The Car Parking Strategy is of assistance in this respect in terms of the occupancy levels it reveals for this car park and would be a useful evidence base on which to demonstrate that the loss of the car park would not reduce capacity for the entire town centre below identified levels of demand and/or that compensatory parking need not be on a full 'like for like' (numerically) basis. This is consistent with the findings and recommendations of the Car Parking strategy which recommended reviews of the 'oversized' car parks (CP7) and for this to be done in conjunction with the review of need for retail expansion demand (CP12).

Finally, it should be recognized that the site is physically constrained by its neighbours, both the listed status of the Council Offices and the low rise housing on the north side of Symington Way. Careful design considerations will apply, similar in nature to those described in respect to the staff car park above, but also in respect of impact on Symington Way residences, which are likely to limit the capacity of redevelopment potential.

3.1.7 Summary and Concluding Remarks

- **The existing building benefits from a planning policy regime at all levels that is supportive of a wide range of uses**
- **The staff car park could be released as part of a redevelopment proposal and could similarly be developed for a wide range of uses**

- **There are difficult, but not insurmountable, design and conservation issues associated with both the re-use of the existing building and the development of the staff car park**
- **The Symington Way car parks could be redeveloped for a range of uses and, ideally selected through the LDF process.**
- **Design, layout and replacement car parking issues would need to be full and detailed consideration in any development proposals for the Symington Way car park.**

3.2 MARKET HALL

3.2.1 Planning Policy

In common with the Council Offices, the premises also lies in the identified Town Centre the Harborough Local Plan and retail development is also supported by Policy SH/1 of the Local Plan, the Core Strategy, existing and emerging National Policy in PPS4 and the Draft NPPF. No special designation for the market hall nor has any specific protection been identified. Accordingly, the range of uses described in respect for the Council Offices above (retail, leisure, office or a mix of any or all of these) would be acceptable in planning policy terms for the building.

The support for town centre uses explained above would use for community or library purposes would not conflict with policy provisions.

Policy LR21 of the Harborough Local Plan provides protection for 'community facilities' and, whilst this is not likely to be the type of facility that the policy was designed for, there may be an argument in opposition that this policy should apply. Accordingly, any re-use would perform better against this policy if it could be directly linked to alternative forms of provision of a market, addressing the question of 'loss'. The need for a holistic approach to any proposals for the market hall is reinforced by the local sensitivities already being played out publically.

3.2.2 Physical attributes

The Market Hall is self contained, regularly shaped and benefits from a generally open interior, which should allow for relatively easy conversion. Externally, it has an attractive frontage to Northampton Rd which is derived from its overall form but has relatively few architectural features that define the quality of its appearance and, again, should not provide insurmountable barriers to conversion.

3.2.2 Car parking

In common with commentary on the Council Offices above, there is no planning imperative for the provision of car parking and the site has public car parking in the immediate vicinity.

3.2.3 Extension/Development into adjacent car park

The car park to the south of the Market Hall is relatively unconstrained and could accommodate an extension to the Market Hall. The policy framework is supportive of development. Under policy SH/1, a range of development could be considered, to include all 'town centre uses' or community use. Design will be important given the prominence of the site especially from Northampton Rd and the design coherence of the building at present. The site would be the subject of the same provisions as described in respect of Symington Way (para 3.1.6 above) but in this location the Car Parking Strategy presents a different scenario, as it shows the car park is used to capacity even at current levels. Accordingly, any proposals for redevelopment would be assisted by the incorporation replacement or retention of car parking at a level equal or similar to the existing provision. This could be in the form of replacement facilities elsewhere, or possibly on site if an 'undercroft' approach to an extension was proposed, subject to design quality.

3.2.4 Summary and Concluding Remarks

- **The existing building benefits from a planning policy regime at all levels that is supportive of a wide range uses**
- **There are limited design and layout issues associated with the re-use of the building**
- **Proposals for alternative uses are likely to be controversial and present political and reputational risks which may require intensive management.**

3.3 THE SETTLING ROOMS

3.3.1 Planning Policy

This premises also lies in the identified Town Centre the Harborough Local Plan and retail development is also supported by Policy SH/1 of the Local Plan, the Core Strategy, existing and emerging National Policy in PPS4 and the Draft NPPF. No special designation for the market hall nor has any specific protection been identified. Accordingly, the range of uses described in respect for the Council Offices above (retail, leisure, office or a mix of any or all of these) would be acceptable in planning policy terms for the building. Other uses (community or museum etc) would also be acceptable.

It is understood the building is limited by covenants and s106 obligations that constrain its use (conformation awaited). If this is the case, its removal/variation could be undertaken by agreement with those parties who have an interest, under s106A. However, in terms of planning policy there are no such constraint and as with the Council Offices and Market Hall, a range of 'town centre uses' would be policy compliant.

3.3.2 Physical attributes

The building is listed and has an ornate and regular form. It is unlikely that any significant external extension or alteration could be achieved.

3.3.3 Car parking

In common with commentary on the Council Offices above, there is no planning imperative for the provision of car parking and the site has public car parking in the immediate vicinity.

3.3.4 Summary and Concluding Remarks

- **The existing building benefits from a planning policy regime at all levels that is supportive of a wide range uses**
- **There is limited scope for physical alteration or extension.**

Harborough Office Rationalisation Project.

Staff Group Questionnaire.

Dear Colleague

The Council's Headquarter Offices occupy an important space in the town centre and represent a landmark feature. The building has been recognised to be of special interest and has been 'listed' to preserve for future generations. The front of the building, and feature staircase, leading to the Council Chamber are rated as important elements requiring special protection.

The interior of the building is not in good condition and requires a substantial amount of money to be spent over the next 5 years - to deal with essential repairs. Due to staff changes in terms of shared services, for example the relocation of the Revenues and Benefits Team and home working, there is now too much space. In fact we have double the floor area required. The building currently does not provide good working conditions but could be improved to provide excellent office accommodation.

It is important to obtain the views of a representative cross section of staff on 'accommodation issues'. There are no wrong or right answers, and we are looking for your views as people who work and deliver services to and from this building. You have been nominated to help Peter Ridley our Property Advisor to look at the challenge of resolving the problem of too much space and to put forward ideas for making good use of surplus space. Set out below are a number of questions that will form the agenda for the discussion group meeting to be held shortly.

Thanks for taking part.

Anna Graves
Interim Chief Executive

Question	Answer	
<p>1. The Council has 5300 sq.m. of space in the current headquarters building. But, based on current staff numbers of about 230, we require in the order of only 2000.sq.m. for office accommodation.</p> <p>Should we stay in the existing building and refurbish to a good standard or should we move out into more suitable offices?</p>		
<p>2. In commercial terms the lower floors of the building tend to be more valuable than the upper floors. Would it make sense to try to get the best value from the building by reconfiguring the internal space to release some of the lower floors for commercial use?</p> <p>Can you foresee any issues with doing this?</p>		
<p>3. Good practice in other locations indicates that well designed (and ventilated) offices should be provided in open plan form. How would you feel about our staff working predominately in open plan arrangements with only a limited amount of individual office space?</p>		
<p>4. Good practice in other locations indicates that new ways of working should be adopted to make best use of available space. Hot desking is one option. For example, the Council could elect to provide permanent desk space for people who spend the majority of their time in the office and drop in hot-desking space for people who are out of the office most of the time? How would you feel about that and what would be the implications?</p>		
<p>5. The Council did consider relocating part of its service provision to new offices, which would have been constructed as a joint venture with the PCT. This proposal was not viable but the principle of moving to rented offices appears to have been established. What is your view about moving out of Council owned offices into refurbished or new rented offices?</p>		
<p>6. The planning requirements for car parking are enforced by this Council. The Council also has a responsibility to promote 'green transport'. This often means discouraging individual car travel and promoting cycling walking and car sharing.</p> <p>Should the council develop a green travel plan?</p>		
<p>7. At face value the following options need to be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay in present accommodation and refurbish. As above but seek to fill surplus space by sub letting part of the building to other public and private sector users As above but release surplus accommodation by reconfiguring the space to release the most valuable commercial space – on the lower floors Sell the existing accommodation to a developer and lease back refurbished space 	Rank in order	

<p>Move out of the building into new or refurbished offices Construct new offices on land within Council ownership or acquire a suitable site Other options please suggest.</p> <p>Please rank the above in order 1 to 7 according to how appropriate you feel each approach would be, with 1 being the most appropriate and 7 the least appropriate.</p>		
<p>8. In 5 years time what do you think the Council should/will have in terms of its headquarters facilities?</p>		
<p>9. Do you consider that current public access arrangements are satisfactory? Or should we be making changes. For example by creating a single one stop shop for all public services?</p> <p>Is the location of the public contact facilities OK or should we have a contact point say in the shopping precinct? For example we own Market Hall.</p> <p>We get a number of enquiries about planning issues and there needs to be somewhere for people to meet officers on these issues. Should this provision be made in the current offices or should we have an appointment system or other arrangement to deal with planning matters?</p>		
<p>10. Are there any key issues/questions that should be raised with the Chief Executive and Members in relation to property issues?</p>		

If you have any questions about completing this questionnaire please contact me on 07785702045 or e mail to p.ridley@harborough.gov.uk

Peter Ridley
Property Advisor to Harborough Council
5 August 2011

Appendix D

Comments and Views from the Public on Property Review Project

Up to and including: 13th October 2011

Petition

A 4,700 plus signature petition was received by the Council meeting of 19th September 2011.

"I would strongly oppose any plans to shut or move the Market Harborough Indoor Market. It provides invaluable service to the people of Market Harborough and its surrounding areas"

The petition was debated by the council on the same night. A record of the meeting is available at;

<http://cmispublic.harborough.gov.uk/cmis5/Meetings/tabid/73/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/410/Meeting/3663/Committee/732/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>

Press Articles

Publication	Date	Title	Response
Harborough Mail	1 st September 2011	Traders: "Leave our Market Alone"	None to date

Letters to the Press

Publication	Date	Title	Response
Harborough Mail	1 st September 2011	Make Market A Lock-Up Hall And Preserve Town Tradition- <i>Mr G Wainwright</i>	None
Harborough Mail	1 st September 2011	Council Should Listen To The Traders And Residents Who Elected Then To Do A Job <i>L Hayward</i>	None
Harborough Mail	8 th September 2011	Outdoor Facility Would Be Positive Move	None

		And Add Vibrancy To The Town Centre <i>Mrs J Martin</i>	
Harborough Mail	8 th September 2011	Use Unsold Cinema Building For Offices, Not Market <i>Jim Knights</i>	None
Harborough Mail	15 th September 2011	Is Relocation Really Necessary? <i>Sean Smith</i>	None
Harborough Mail	15 th September 2011	Important To Invest In The Market <i>Darren Harris</i>	None
Harborough Mail	6 th October 2011	Market Traders are protesting at leaving there building – and it's not before time. <i>David Johnson</i>	None

Letters to the Council

Author	Date Received	Theme	Response
Individual	7 th September 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council shouldn't close the Market. It is an important amenity for OAP's. It's a place to chat and have a meal. Shops will suffer 	None to date
John Cleaver, Vice Chair, Indoor Market Traders	7 th October 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of earnings due to roadworks. Market Hall being considered at Nov Exec. Lack of Communication. Damage to xmas trade. Request for an 	Response Issued. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council need to review property holdings. Committed to a market in the

		apology and compensation	town. • Timescales are years not months.
Individual	No date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can't have Market Harborough without a Market Should go to an industrial estate with a one stop shop in town 	None to date
Individual	Received 11.10.11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move the Council to the Market Hall is a poor concept. Works would be expensive. What would happen to the Museum and Library? Why can't the Council stay and let parts of the building to business. 	None to date

Broadcast Media

Cllr Mike Rook, Leader of the Council has given several interviews to local radio and TV stations.

Social Media

There has been information suggesting that a Facebook Page will be established to gather support for the Market Hall. As at 13th October 2011 this had not been established.

HDC has launched its own Twitter page. Tweets have been made about the Market Hall, however, when compiling this report they appear to have been deleted.

Twitter Comment	Response

Facebook Comment	Response

Public Emails

Email	Response
<p>I don't have a problem in principle with HDC moving its offices into a more suitable location, though I am not sure that this is the time to be using valuable resources on this issue when so many other important concerns are pressing.</p> <p>However if the Council is to consider a move to other premises in the town, then it is only fair and democratic to consult the residents beforehand. Market Harborough contains a quarter of the district's electorate, so this also means in practice consulting the ten town members whose remit is to represent their electors. Better still, a subcommittee made up of both town and rural members, of both Conservative and Liberal Democrats, should be responsible for drawing up agreed options. For this decision to be made by an executive of 8 members, of one party and none of whom represents a town ward, is not only undemocratic but is also insensitive and insulting to the people.</p> <p>Market Harborough is regarded as one of the finest market towns in country. It is the jewel in the district's crown and potentially the most valuable. Every weekend it is visited by shoppers and tourists from all parts of the country and abroad. There is massive tourism potential and very significant marketing opportunities for town traders and shopkeepers. You as a council constantly underestimate its attractive power. The almost total lack of engagement with tourism is breathtaking (compare Ashby de la Zouch).</p> <p>The Market Hall is the latest and most up-to-date manifestation of over 800 years of markets in the town. Its modern facilities are the envy of many other towns and cities, a fact well recognized by its traders. It should be developed and promoted rather than being seen as a failing facility ripe for take over. It should be used seven days a week. The traders do not wish to be turned out, and its customers (4,700 and rising) do not wish to lose this facility.</p> <p>Turning your back on Market Harborough's history and heritage is tantamount to saying to the people of the town, "We, the members of your</p>	

district council, have no real interest in the town, its visitors, or its heritage.” It would be a spectacular own goal.

These concerns are most definitely not premature. Once the market hall was mentioned as a possible location for the council, it was and is absolutely right that those who feel that this particular option is wrong and inappropriate should express their concerns, and that councillors should be aware of this unease.

Appendix E

Council Office Project Board Long List of Options.

Ref.	Option	Observations /Description	Suggested Action	Deliverability /Timescale
A	Status Quo	<p>Continue to operate with surplus space within the existing configuration.</p> <p>Large amount of wasted space, poor working conditions and failure to achieve value by leaving large parts of the building unoccupied. If parts of the building were parcelled up for letting, say as offices, rent would only be in the order of £3.50 sq.ft compared to other town rents, which are in the order of £7.73 to £10 sq.ft</p>	Not an option	N/A
B	Renovate building but release surplus space for commercial use. The most valuable space is on the ground floor of the building.	<p>Not affordable as the conversion costs exceed available budget of £1m</p> <p>Unless the Council can raise in the order of £4.0m an additional £3.0m</p>	Not an option	N/A
C	Dispose of the headquarter offices to developer as open market sale with requirement to provide fit for purpose replacement Council facilities	<p>Through open market sale enter into agreement to sell at tendered price subject to specified replacement Council facilities being provided.</p> <p>This is a property sale and not a service or works contract and therefore falls outside the OJEU tendering requirements for goods services and works.</p> <p>Need to establish clear planning brief for alternative uses of current sites to form part of the sales particulars. However, planning presumptions are favourable in terms of A1 (shops)</p>	<p>Possible option – invite market offers for the Headquarters building and adjacent car parks.</p> <p>This will quickly determine market interest and will secure commercial view.</p>	Possibly up to 6 months to secure offers taking into account the need to determine core accommodation requirements and to prepare, a planning brief and sales particulars.

		A3(restaurants and cafes), offices and residential		
D	<p>Dispose of headquarters and car parks but retain Market Hall for council offices/one stop shop/shared service hub and democratic purposes. Lease appropriate backroom accommodation elsewhere.</p> <p>Possibly provide a mezzanine or full second floor above the Market Hall. This could secure just under 2700 sq. m of space and could provide the majority of the office and democratic space required – based on current staff numbers.</p>	<p>Market to operate as an outdoor facility only.</p> <p>Changing the Market to operate as an outdoor facility will be an unpopular decision.</p> <p>The justification for taking action is that a valuable commercial space in the shopping precinct is only used on a part time basis, which is not sustainable in the current economic climate unless the Council wishes to give priority to the market and to effectively subsidise the retention of the present facility.</p> <p>The current net income of the Market Hall taking into account expenditure and depreciation is £35,390</p> <p>Council to work with purchaser of headquarters to provide replacement accommodation for market traders preferring to operate under cover</p>	<p>Possible option – to be subject to further review and Market Traders to be given notice that consideration is being given to use the Market Hall for other purposes.</p>	<p>To be considered as part of the development partners brief.</p> <p>Would require early indication of viability of this option for Council offices say early 2012.</p>
E	<p>Finalise brief requirements and seek to appoint a developer partner – through the OJEU process - to work with the Council to secure the best outcome. There is an Executive Committee resolution 28 June 2010 supporting this action.</p>	<p>From start to appointment of the developer will take in the order of 200 days. Taking into account the need to develop a scheme and secure a planning consent, will take in excess of one year</p> <p>Clear demonstration that an open procurement process has been followed.</p> <p>By short-listing say 3 developers the Council is exposed to more than one potential solution</p>	<p>Potential option –</p>	<p>OJEU process will mean that it will take up to 1 year to appoint development partner</p>
F	<p>Finalise brief requirements and appoint Willmott Dixon as the development partner using the Scape National</p>	<p>Works packages are subject to competitive tender.</p>	<p>Potential option – and offers the quickest route to resolve the Council's</p>	<p>This framework could be used immediately - but subject to</p>

	<p>Framework for public sector bodies. This framework is suitable for schemes up to £20m and has been subject to an OJEU process.</p> <p>This framework has been in place since 2000 and was set up by the Consortium of Local Authorities - CLASP to enable primarily councils to fast track major building projects through the OJEU process.</p> <p>The framework is being used by a number of councils to resolve accommodation issues and the need to provide facilities using existing property assets and private funding to raise capital.</p>	<p>Will bring in commercial expertise and very little up front costs associated with developing scheme proposals.</p> <p>The framework operates a series of gateway reviews. The first is to establish the brief and outputs and objectives for the Council. This is at no cost. If the scheme does not appear commercially viable this can be identified at the earliest stage.</p> <p>The framework includes the option to privately finance a scheme. The advantage is that the Council could work closely with the developer to look at a number of options.</p> <p>It would be possible to work with other local developers by using the Scape framework.</p>	<p>accommodation problems and Council remains in control until such time that an acceptable scheme has been secured.</p>	<p>Scape/Willmott Dixon wishing to take the project on board.</p>
H	<p>Investigate whether the Settling Rooms could provide some or all of a reconfigured Library and Museum. Alternatively use for office space for up to 20 staff.</p>	<p>Settling Rooms provide only 220 sq.m. of floor space over 2 floors. Needs to be the subject of a feasibility study and issue of floor loadings.</p>	<p>Discuss with County their proposals for the provision of the Library and Museum Service.</p>	<p>Undertake discussions with County in August/September 2011</p>