

CABINET

20 October 2022

STRATEGIC LAND IN BISHOPSTOKE

Report of the Corporate Director

Recommendation

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (1) **approve consultation with stakeholders on proposals to enhance the environment including appropriate public access on the strategic land recently purchased by the Council in Bishopstoke;**
 - (2) **endorse the continued tenancy on the site of the fish farm whilst committing to work with the business to improve environmental impacts from its operation.**
-

Summary

As part of the Council's strategic land acquisition policy, 103.44 hectares of agricultural land were purchased at Stoke Park Farm in Bishopstoke in April 2022. The land was bought with the primary purpose of generating credits to be purchased by developers or other agencies to offset nutrient outputs. In addition to the offset scheme, the benefits of the land should be maximised with potential additional uses such as Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace or tree planting schemes, as long as these do not negate the number of available nitrate credits.

In order to determine the future uses of this land it is recommended that options outlined within this report are developed into a consultation for local residents and stakeholders. The intention is to develop a scheme to enhance the local environment within Bishopstoke whilst maintaining the commercial benefits of the current fishery tenancy and seeking to improve environmental impacts from its operation.

Statutory Powers

S1 Localism Act 2011

Strategic Implications

1. The development of land uses at Stoke Park Farm, Bishopstoke will help meet the objectives in the Council's Corporate Plan (2015 – 2025) to develop green infrastructure and deliver an excellent environment for all.

Introduction

2. Stoke Park Farm was recently acquired by Eastleigh Borough Council (EBC) as part of their broader strategic land acquisitions that equate to 243.23 hectares of agricultural land. The strategic land was purchased to take out of agricultural use in order to generate credits that developers or other agencies could purchase in order to offset their nutrient outputs.
3. In addition to the offset scheme, the Council is exploring additional uses of the strategic land such as generation of further mitigation credits, Solar PV, Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and tree planting schemes.
4. To ensure that the benefits of the strategic land owned at Stoke Park Farm are maximised, it is proposed that a consultation exercise with all stakeholders is carried out to run for three calendar months from 1 December 2022.

Detail of Initial Proposals

5. In order to facilitate effective consultation, draft proposals are to be drawn up looking at options for the land at Stoke Park Farm. Appendix A to this report sets out details on the location and composition of the land along with proposals for indicative land uses.
6. A significant commercial tenancy on the site is the 14-acre fishery which farms ornamental fish. This is a well-established business with strong community links. It is recommended (recommendation 2) that Cabinet endorse the continued tenancy on the site of the fish farm whilst committing to work with the business to improve environmental impacts from its operation.

Consultation

7. Appendix A provides Cabinet with initial proposals for land use at Stoke Park Farm, Bishopstoke. It is intended to reflect this document, and any comments feedback from Cabinet, within a consultation document. This consultation will begin by 1 December 2022 and end after three calendar months and will involve Bishopstoke, Fair Oak and Horton Heath Local Area Committee and relevant Parish Councils. Relevant internal Council teams will also feedback on the consultation as appropriate including, but not limited to: Development Management, Countryside, Ecology and Land Management.
8. Feedback from the consultation will be collated and presented to Cabinet as part of a report for consideration.

9. Once direction has been received from Cabinet on the preferred land use option(s) a project will be initiated with a business case and delivery timescales for Cabinet to review and approve.

Financial Implications

10. There are no financial implications arising from this report. The cost of consultation will be met from within existing resources. Any scheme resulting from the consultation feedback will be subject to a full business case to be approved by Cabinet.

Risk Assessment

11. There are few risks surrounding the proposal to consult on the most appropriate uses of the land at Stoke Park Farm, Bishopstoke. By carrying out a consultation exercise alongside full surveys the risk of implementing inappropriate land uses is mitigated.
12. It is important that the nutrient credit use of the land is preserved, and any other land uses will be assessed to ensure that there is no risk of these credits being eroded.

Equality and Diversity Implications

13. The Equality Act is not relevant to the decision in this report because the decision does not relate to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, or fostering good relations between different people. Therefore, it is considered that for this decision the Equality Duty does not need to be addressed and an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has not been carried out.

Climate Change and Environmental Implications

14. There is no direct impact, positive or negative, to climate change or the environment from carrying out a consultation exercise. However, it is anticipated that the resultant scheme will have a positive impact on the environment.

Conclusion

15. It is recommended that Cabinet endorse the opportunity to maximise the land use benefits that arise from the purchase of Stoke Park Farm, Bishopstoke. This includes the intention to work with the tenanted fishery on site to improve environmental impacts from a business which is key to the area.

SARAH KING
Chief Financial Officer

Date: 10 October 2022

Contact Officer: Rory Watson-Newman
e-mail: Rory.Watson-Newman@eastleigh.gov.uk
Appendices Attached: 1

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - SECTION 100D

The following is a list of documents which disclose facts or matters on which this report or an important part of it is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. This list does not include any published works or documents which would disclose exempt or confidential information.

None.