
Helensburgh Park and Ride – Gasometer Site Land Purchase

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Argyll and Bute Council have had a long standing aspiration to develop a park and ride facility serving Helensburgh Town Centre to cater for commuter parking and free up town centre parking spaces. The Council has been awarded £80k from SPT's 2016/17 Capital Programme to purchase the former gasometer site adjacent to Grant Street to deliver a park and ride car park and we are seeking approval from the Policy and Resources Committee to proceed with the purchase of the site.

The Gasometer site is located adjacent to Grant Street in Helensburgh Town Centre (see Appendix 1) and is a former gas holder site currently owned by Scottish Gas Networks (SGN). Following extensive negotiations with SGN a fee of £60k has been agreed for the site. The remaining £20k of the budget has been allocated to progress detailed designs and associated survey work. SPT's grant funding requires to be spent by 31st March 2017 in line with financial year end deadlines.

As the project has progressed a number of risks have been identified that are associated with the purchase of the gasometer site. Officers have however taken steps to mitigate these risks. A summary of the risks and recommendations is set out in the table below with further details provided in Section 4.0:-

| Risk | Comments / Recommendations |
|--|--|
| Grant funding deadline (31/03/207) | The land purchase can be completed in 4-6 weeks following necessary approval from P&R Committee. |
| Contaminated ground on site | Council's Environmental Protection officer has been consulted and is satisfied the level contamination is low risk given intended use of site as a car park. |
| Unknown ground conditions due to flooding on site. | A proportion of the site is flooded and it has not been possible to survey this area. Upon purchasing the site flood water will require to be pumped from the flooded area and water disposed of appropriately given potential contamination. The flooding is not considered to be a high risk to the development proposals as it is likely this is being caused by impermeable concrete foundations from the former gas holder which will limit potential ground water contamination. |

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| Securing Future Grant funding. | SPT have indicated they are supportive of the proposals and a funding bid for £300k has been submitted to their 2017/18 Capital Programme. Scotrail have advised that they can potentially provide up to £2k per space in match funding which would equate to approximately £100k. |
| Achieving a cost effective drainage scheme for the site. | Atkins is currently progressing designs for the drainage infrastructure required working with Council Roads and Amenity staff. The designers are confident a suitable cost effective drainage connection can be made to the existing drainage infrastructure on Grant Street. |
| Securing planning consent for a park and ride facility on the site | Pre-application discussions have been undertaken with ABC Planning and Roads who have indicated that they are comfortable with the development proposals. |
| Re-payment of grant funding to SPT if the site is unviable to develop. | SPT are fully aware of the risks and mitigation undertaken to date and have confirmed they are happy for the Council to progress with the purchase of the site based on the risks identified to date. As with all grants provided by SPT they can potentially seek repayment of grant funding if the site proves to be unviable to develop as a park and ride facility. |
| No alternative sites identified for a park and ride facility. | The Gasometer Site is the only viable site in Helensburgh currently identified for a park and ride facility that can provide an additional 50 car parking spaces in close proximity to Helensburgh Central. |

Officers have taken steps to mitigate the risks outlined above by undertaking consultation and pre-construction survey work. The design of the car park and a bill of quantities are currently being progressed and a funding bid totalling £300k has been submitted to SPT's 2017/18 Capital Programme to cover the anticipated costs of construction (decision anticipated in February 2017). In addition, Scotrail have previously indicated their support for the project and suggested that they could provide funding of up to £2k per space to develop the site. Scotrail have a limited budget available and this is on a first come first served basis therefore it would be beneficial to secure the site as soon as possible to maximise the opportunity of securing additional funding from Scotrail.

Upon completion it is intended that Scotrail will manage the ticketing of the facility to ensure that it is used for park and ride. From initial discussions with Scotrail it is likely that this will involve installing pay and display ticket machines with the cost of parking being refundable against rail fares.

There was considerable delay receiving the ground condition survey from Scottish Gas Networks due in part to the requirement for a confidentiality agreement to be signed prior to this document being circulated. Following this further survey work was required prior to reaching agreement with SGN over the purchase price and agreement in principle to sell to the Council. Due to the above it is only now that officers are able to make a recommendation to members.

Based on the above it is recommended that the Policy and Resources committee approve the purchase of the site from SGN using the grant funded allocated from SPT.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This report provides a briefing on the Council's proposals to purchase the former Gasometer Site in Helensburgh for a park and ride facility serving both the Town Centre and Helensburgh Central. SPT have provided £80k grant funding from their 2016/17 Capital Programme to purchase the site and undertake the design and associated survey work with a view to securing further funding from SPT and Scotrail in 2017/18 to construct a park and ride car park with an additional 50 spaces.
- 2.2 Argyll and Bute Council have had a long standing aspiration to develop a park and ride facility serving Helensburgh Town Centre to cater for commuter parking and free up Town Centre parking spaces and facilitating the use of Helensburgh Central. This project is also supported by SPT and Scotrail.
- 2.3 The grant funding allocated by SPT must be spent by 31st March 2017 in line with financial year end deadlines and, as such, it will be necessary to secure approvals imminently given the time required to conclude the land purchase (minimum 4 weeks).
- 2.3 There was considerable delay receiving the ground condition survey from Scottish Gas Networks due in part to the requirement for a confidentiality agreement to be signed prior to this document being circulated. Following this further survey work was required prior to reaching agreement with SGN over the purchase price and agreement in principle to sell to the Council. Due to the above it is only now that officers are able to make a recommendation to members.
- 2.4 This report sets out the risks associated with purchasing the Gasometer site and the measures taken to date to mitigate these with a view to securing approval from the Policy and Resources Committee to proceed with the purchase of the site.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Policy and Resources Committee approve the proposed purchase of the site by Argyll and Bute Council using SPT capital grant funding.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 The Gasometer site is located adjacent to Grant Street in Helensburgh Town Centre (see Appendix 1) and is a former gas holder site currently owned by Scottish Gas Networks (SGN). Following extensive negotiations with SGN a fee of £60k has been agreed for the site and SPT have provided funding totalling £80k from their 2016/17 Capital Programme to enable Argyll and Bute Council to purchase the site. The remaining £20k of the budget has been allocated to progress detailed designs and associated survey work.
- 4.2 There are a number of risks associated with purchasing the Gasometer site however, considerable work has been undertaken by Argyll and Bute Council to mitigate these where possible. A summary of the risks and associated measures taken is set out below;-
- **Grant funding deadlines** – It is essential that the purchase of the site is concluded by 31st March 2017 in line with financial year end funding deadlines. Failure to do this will result in grant funding being downturned by SPT. We have been advised that following approval to proceed with the purchase of the site the date of entry would be 4 weeks after necessary conditions have been met or satisfied in full. It is considered that there is sufficient time remaining this financial year to conclude the land purchase and undertake grant claims to SPT.
 - **Contaminated ground** – Given the former use of the site, a factual ground condition survey was commissioned by SGN and this has identified the presence of hydrocarbons and asbestos on the site. The presence of contaminants on the site is considered to be a risk and, as such, the Councils Environmental Protection Officer has been consulted. We have been advised that given the intended use of the site as a car park the level of contaminants and risk to future users is deemed to be low risk. Measures will be taken as part of the construction process to ensure appropriate disposal of contaminated material from the site. It is anticipated that this can be accommodated within the funding that is being sourced from SPT.
 - **Unknown ground conditions due to flooding** - A proportion of the site is flooded and it has not been possible to survey this area. Upon purchasing the site flood water will require to be pumped from the flooded area and water disposed of appropriately given potential contamination. The flooding is not considered to be a high risk to the development proposals as it is likely this is being caused by impermeable concrete foundations from the former gas holder which will limit potential ground water contamination.
 - **Securing future grant funding** – It will be necessary to secure future grant funding from SPT and Scotrail to fund the construction of a park and ride facility on the Gasometer site as the Council have no capital funding identified for this. SPT have indicated their support for the proposals and a funding bid totaling £300k has been submitted to their 2017/18 Capital Programme. As SPT are funding the purchase of the site it is considered likely that the 2017/18 funding bid for construction works will be successful. Scotrail have also advised that they can potentially provide up to £2k match funding per space which would equate to approximately £100k for the intended 50 space car park. Scotrail have a limited capital budget available and funding is on a first come first served basis therefore it will be prudent to conclude the land purchase as soon as

possible in order to maximise the opportunity to secure funding from Scotrail.

- **Achieving a cost effective drainage scheme for the site-** Given Scottish Water's reluctance to permit any new water discharge into their infrastructure achieving a viable drainage solution for the site was a high risk. The designers are however confident that it will be possible to connect to the existing drainage infrastructure for the Civic Centre Car Park on Grant Street. Atkins are currently progressing the drainage designs however their initial observations are that the new car park will require its own attenuation tank (or to be formed with permeable paving), interceptor and the existing manhole will require to be served by a hydrobrake. This is considered to be deliverable on the site although designs are still in the process of being finalised.
- **Securing planning consent for a park and ride facility-** Pre-application discussions have been undertaken with officers from Argyll and Bute Council's Planning and Roads Services who have indicated that they are comfortable with the development proposals. Planning and Roads will continue to be consulted throughout the design process.
- **Potential Re-payment of grant funding to SPT** – There is a risk that if the site turns out to be cost prohibitive to develop as a park and ride facility the grant funding provided to purchase the land will require to be repaid to SPT. SPT have been fully briefed on the potential risks and they have given approval to proceed with the purchase of the site. Based on the risks identified to date this scenario is considered unlikely.
- **No alternative sites identified for a park and ride facility** – The Gasometer site is currently the only suitable site in Helensburgh identified for a park and ride facility in close proximity to Helensburgh Central. As such, there is a risk that it will not be able to deliver a park and ride serving Helensburgh if the Council do not proceed with the purchase of this site.

4.3 Despite the risks outlined above, based on the consultation and pre-construction work undertaken to date the officers are still of the view that a park and ride facility with approximately 50 spaces is deliverable on the Gasometer site. This will be subject to securing future grant funding from SPT and Scotrail and discussions to date have been positive.

4.4 Upon completion it is intended that Scotrail will manage the ticketing of the park and ride facility. From initial discussions with Scotrail it is likely that this will involve installing pay and display ticket machines with the cost of parking being refundable against rail fares.

4.5 It is intended to progress the planning application imminently to secure planning permission at the earliest opportunity.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 This report provides a summary of the risks associated with purchasing the former Gasometer site in Helensburgh for use as a park and ride facility.

5.3 From the consultation and pre-construction works undertaken to date, it is considered that it will be feasible to construct a park and ride facility on the site subject to securing necessary grant funding from SPT and Scotrail.

5.4 It is recommended that the Policy and Resources Committee approve the proposed purchase of the site by Argyll and Bute Council using SPT capital grant funding.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policy Consistent with national, regional and local transport policy.

6.2 Financial Land purchase and associated costs including design and gaining planning consent are 100% funded by SPT Capital grant. The construction of the park and Ride will only proceed following receipt of capital funding from SPT and Scotrail.

6.3 Legal Land purchase has legal implications.

6.4 HR None

6.5 Equalities All infrastructure will be DDA compliant.

6.6 Risk As set out above

6.7 Customer Services None

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Site Location Plan

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