

To: City Executive Board

Date: 6th October 2010 **Item No: 6**

Report of: Interim Head of Corporate Assets

Title of Report: Land at South Horspath – Revised option area for the siting of a Wind Turbine at South Horspath.

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To allow Members to consider a proposal to revise the option granted to PfR for the site at South Horspath.

Key decision: No

Executive lead Member: Councillor Ed Turner - Finance, Housing and Strategic Planning Board Member
Councillor John Tanner – Cleaner, Greener Oxford Board Member

Report to be approved by: Mel Barrett, Executive Director City Regeneration
(Law and Governance)
(Finance)

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan 2008-2011 – Tackle Climate Change & Promote Environmental Resource Management, target of reducing CO2 emissions in Oxford City by 15% by March 2011, compared to 2005 levels.

Recommendation(s): That City Executive Board approves:

1. The grant of a revised option to PfR at South Horspath and otherwise on terms to be approved by the Interim Head of Corporate Assets.

Background

1. At its meeting held on 17th March 2008 the Executive Board authorised officers to negotiate with Partnerships for Renewables (“PfR”) in respect of the entering into of option agreements to allow for investigations into the locating of wind turbines at sites throughout Oxford, which included South Horspath.
2. Subsequently the City Executive Board at its meeting held on 18th February 2009, approved the entering into of a lease option on terms as detailed in that report in respect of the site at South Horspath.
3. By way of a reminder, the option agreement provides a period of exclusivity for 3 years with an ability to extend this for a further 3 years if the planning application process has commenced. Once planning permission has been granted PfR can then draw down on a 25 year lease for a smaller part of the site.
4. The current completed option area is hatched at Appendix 1.

Report

4. Following the entering into of the option agreement at South Horspath which was completed on 31st July 2009, we are now in a position where it is necessary to amend the previously approved option area in order to accommodate operational matters in the locality.
5. The reason for this is that as a consequence of ongoing dialogue with BMW, they now have concerns that the siting of the turbine might be prejudicial to the future operation of Plant Oxford, to the extent that it is possible they could object to a planning application for the siting of a permanent turbine in its currently proposed location.
6. Rather than enter into protracted dialogue on this, and to obviate the risk of any planning application being refused, on the basis that the revised option area has, subject to CEB approval, been approved by PfR as hatched at Appendix 2, it is proposed to proceed with this revision. On that basis the existing option agreement would be terminated.
7. It can be seen from the plans that the proposed revised option area is not too dissimilar. Part of the option is to be removed from the South West of the site and in turn the East part of the site will be extended slightly. Access will now be at the middle of the site rather than the East side. PfR have confirmed that the change will not impact upon their proposals for the turbine at the site.

8. Subject to the proposals in this report being approved, PfR will commence the next stages of their process, including the submission of a planning application for the met mast.
9. During the rest of October and November, PfR will conclude the required bird monitoring and gain the necessary further information required to prepare the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) which is an important part of the planning process. A met mast, which is the structure which assists in gaining data on wind speed, will also be erected at the site to conclude the wind data already received from anemometers already in place. PfR subject to the above being successfully concluded are on course to submit a full planning application in March 2011.
10. Subject to CEB approval to the revised option area being obtained, a new option agreement will be completed without delay and this will provide for the continued exclusive arrangement with PfR.

Financial Implications

11. There are no additional direct financial implications arising out of the contents of this report.

Equalities

12. None arising for the purposes of this report.

Legal Implications

13. The Council's powers to dispose of land comprised within the General Fund are contained within Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 at best consideration.

Sustainability/Climate Change Considerations

14. Facilitating renewable energy generation has obvious beneficial impacts on climate change due to the large reduction in carbon compared to conventional energy generation. It also has a wider impact by demonstrating community, regional and national leadership by Oxford City Council tackling climate change.
15. The amount of electricity generated by each turbine erected is equivalent to the electricity needs of 1100 houses. There are benefits to Oxford's performance against the NI186 (per capita carbon emissions from LA area) from enabling wind energy generation on OCC land.

Risk Register

16. A risk assessment has been carried out and no further risks have been identified to be arising from this report.

Recommendation

17. City Executive Board approves:
 1. The grant of a revised option to PfR at South Horspath and otherwise on terms to be approved by the Interim Head of Corporate Assets.

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Background papers:

Report - 17th March 2008 - Renewable Energy project: Community-scale commercial wind turbines on OCC land

Report - 21st April 2008 - Renewable Energy Project: Community-scale commercial wind turbines on OCC land - Lease Options

Report - 18th February 2009 - Renewable Energy Project: Community Scale Commercial Wind Turbines on OCC land – Lease Options

Not for Publication Appendix:

Appendix 1 – Plan of existing South Horspath option area.

Appendix 2 – Plan of proposed South Horspath option area.

Version number: 1.0