
Meeting: Executive
Date: 27 March 2012
Subject: Stotfold Heritage
Report of: Cllr Ken Matthews, Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Economic Development
Summary: The report provides background information relating to a proposal for the development of a steam heritage museum in Stotfold.

Advising Officer: Gary Alderson, Director of Sustainable Communities
Contact Officer: Liz Wade, Assistant Director, Economic Growth, Skills and Regeneration
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: Stotfold, Arlesey
Function of: Executive
Key Decision No
**Reason for urgency/
exemption from call-in
(if appropriate)** None

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The creation of a new heritage attraction in Stotfold could directly contribute to our vision of making Central Bedfordshire a great place to live and work. This type of attraction would add to the local heritage and tourism offer. The attraction could also create some new employment and could provide opportunities for volunteers in the local area.

Financial:

1. There are no financial implications at this stage arising from the recommendations in this report. Should the proposal be developed further then the financial implications will be fully considered in any subsequent reports to the Executive, in line with Recommendation 3.

Legal:

2. The Council has a number of discrete statutory responsibilities in respect of this proposal and it is important that these are recognised and observed.

As a Landowner

3. The report identifies a parcel of land owned by the Council as a possible site for the location of the steam heritage museum. The first map in Appendix A shows the entire holding of Council land in the area amounting to 44 hectares. The second map shows the part of this site amounting to 7 hectares as an indicative size covered by the proposal.
4. The Council may dispose of land it holds. This is in the context of the adopted Corporate Asset Management Strategy and established land disposal protocol.

As the Local Planning Authority

5. Before this proposal can proceed an application for planning permission will need to be considered by the Council's Development Management Committee. The fact that the Council may own the promoted site must not influence the outcome of any planning application. This must be determined by the Development Management Committee on its merits in accordance with the Local Development Framework (LDF) and any specific planning issues that may be relevant.
6. At present the proposed site is designated 'countryside' in the Council's adopted LDF and the development of a new tourist attraction would need to be considered as an exception to the LDF.
7. The LDF forms part of the Council's Policy Framework. Any decision to take action that is not in line with the Policy Framework requires the approval of the full Council. A decision to proceed with the proposal would therefore require the approval of the full Council.

The Council's Relationship with the Investor

8. The Council must be mindful of the fact that the potential investor is himself an elected Member of the Council. The Council must view this proposal objectively and must not appear to treat a Member of the Council more or less favourably in relation to a commercial transaction than it would treat any one else who came to the Council with a similar proposal. In the circumstances, it is especially important that the decision-making process is transparent.

Risk Management:

9. At this stage there are no risks to be managed as the proposal will be subject to the planning process before a further report would be brought to Executive should the proposal gain planning approval.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

10. Not applicable.

Equalities/Human Rights:

11. Any attraction developed would be required to be publically open for all to access and enjoy.

Public Health

12. Not applicable.

Community Safety:

13. Not applicable.

Sustainability:

14. This will be considered in the planning process.

Procurement:

15. Not applicable.

Overview and Scrutiny:

16. Not as yet requested.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Executive is recommended to note that:

1. **Councillor John Saunders has proposed the development of land owned by the Council for use as a steam heritage museum;**
2. **the proposal will require planning permission which will be determined on its merits by the Development Management Committee should an application be submitted; and**
3. **if planning permission is granted a further report will be submitted to the Executive to consider whether and, if so, on what terms the land would be made available for this use.**

Reason for Recommendation: To advise Executive of a proposed development on Council land.

Executive Summary

17. The Council has been approached regarding a proposed investment to develop a Working Steam Museum and Heritage Attraction formed from the Saunders Steam Collection. The Development Management Committee is responsible for the determination of any planning application for this or any other site. If planning permission is granted a further report will be submitted to the Executive to consider whether and, if so, on what terms the land would be made available.

Background

18. The Council have been approached regarding a proposed investment to develop a Working Steam Museum and Heritage Attraction formed from the Saunders Steam Collection.
19. The Saunders Steam Collection is of national and potentially international significance. It has been built up by the family for more than 50 years and now has outgrown its temporary storage capacity. The collection is unique and includes one of only four Wurlitzer organs and many working steam engines and fairground and show time rides. The collection is owned by Councillor John Saunders and he and his family are keen to find a way of preserving the collection and making it available to the public to view.
20. The collection and associated development of gift shops, restaurant and café could provide an annual programme of events and professional entertainment and could be anticipated to attract interest from across the UK as a visitor day attraction.
21. The Development Management Committee is responsible for the determination of any planning application for this or any other site. The normal process of consideration of the planning application would include consultation on the specific proposals and consideration at a public session of the Development Management Committee.
22. If planning permission is granted a further report will be submitted to the Executive to consider whether and, if so, on what terms the land would be made available.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Maps showing total extent of CBC owned land and smaller part showing the indicative size of the proposal.

Background Papers: None