

Central Bedfordshire Council

Corporate Accommodation Plan

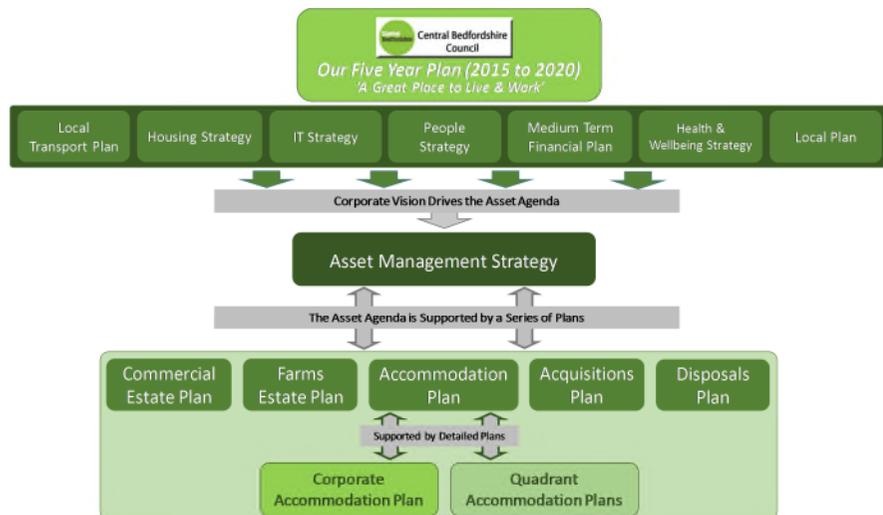


Contents

1. Introduction
2. The Asset Management Strategy – Setting the Corporate Accommodation Plan in context
3. The Council's current corporate accommodation
4. The need for change
5. The plan for change
6. Principal Corporate Office – Priory House
7. Dunstable / Houghton Regis base
8. Conclusions and Implementation Plan

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This document, Central Bedfordshire Council's (the Council's) Corporate Accommodation Plan (CAP), is part of a new suite of documents developed by the Council, to establish and articulate its holistic approach to asset management.
- 1.2. The purpose of this suite of documents is to establish how the Council's asset portfolio will become better aligned to support the delivery of its corporate aims and objectives.
- 1.3. The CAP is a specific element of Central Bedfordshire's Accommodation Plan and articulates the Council's approach to its corporate accommodation. It sits alongside plans for all four quadrants of the Council's area and explains how it accommodates its staff and services in a co-ordinated manner across the region to best support the delivery of its outcomes.



- 1.4. The purpose of the CAP is to rationalise to ensure that the Authority's corporate accommodation:
 - Is of the appropriate scale, in the right location and in the right condition for the delivery of services;
 - Is flexible enough to manage future changes in requirements resulting from changing workforce needs;
 - Aligns with and facilitates the implementation of the Working Smarter project;
 - Delivers the best value for money solution considering both quality and cost.
- 1.5. When reviewing the accommodation options as part of the development of this plan a number of elements needed to be considered including:
 - Does the asset allow staff to work in a modern and effective way?
 - Do assets hold greater value to CBC being used in ways other than office accommodation?
- 1.6. Flexibility is important and the Council's corporate accommodation must be able to adapt to and support the possible introduction of different operating models over time.

2. The Asset Management Strategy [AMS] - Setting the Corporate Accommodation Plan in context

- 2.1. When corporate accommodation is referred to this means the large office buildings where most of our back office functions are based. This means Priory House, Watling House, Stephenson Court and Houghton Lodge. There are other office facilities but these are smaller in scale and will be addressed when CBC considers its plans for points of presence in market towns in each quadrant plan.
- 2.2. The Council has developed an Asset Management Strategy to provide a template and framework for how the Council will seek to utilise its property and land assets as a corporate resource.
- 2.3. Property is expensive to procure, run and maintain, especially when budgets are under ever increasing pressure. As a result, assets need to be carefully managed over their lives to ensure best value in terms of use, maintenance and financial return, whilst still ensuring quality in service delivery.
- 2.4. This AMS provides an overarching asset management approach enabling delivery of the corporate priorities and service objectives, whilst ensuring the Council remains compliant with legislative requirements.
- 2.5. The AMS incorporates the Council's key principles, which guide the corporate approach to asset management generally. How the property portfolio will play a vital role in the provision of these services is the key output of the AMS. This incorporates the Council's approach to its corporate accommodation.

AMS Objectives

- 2.6. The Council's asset portfolio plays a key role in supporting the delivery of the Council's vision and key priorities. The Council's overriding aim for its asset base is:
- 'To promote the best use of the Council's assets for service delivery, deliver an optimum return from our commercial and agricultural investments, and facilitate regeneration and development'*
- 2.7. Through the development and successful implementation of the AMS, the Council's asset portfolio is assessed and reviewed such that balanced and strategic decisions can be made on its future composition.
- 2.8. Reflecting the Council's asset management aim, eight asset management objectives are proposed:
1. Develop a five-year vision and strategic approach to managing the Council's property assets that supports the Council's Corporate Plan;
 2. Review and revise the Council's operational estate to optimise ways of working, optimise operational space, achieve revenue savings and focus on service provision;
 3. Ensure that operational properties are appropriately located, fit for purpose, provide flexible accommodation, in good condition, within an efficient cost envelope that is appropriately accessible to customers;
 4. Deliver cost effective and efficient acquisition, disposal and management of property and land to meet safe service delivery, community benefit and investment needs.

5. Maximise the delivery of capital returns from the disposal of property and land to support the Council's capital programme (this may include the Council acting as a promoter and/or developer of its sites in order to maximise receipts and income);
6. Where appropriate utilise assets to kick start, enhance or underpin economic regeneration;
7. Actively consider and implement innovative use of assets to address specific financial, housing, service and development challenges, building on innovative models being developed across the local government sector; and
8. Maximise revenue income from the rents, leases and 'traded' services.

2.9. These AMS objectives are key in shaping the Council's approach to its accommodation requirements and underpin the approach to its corporate accommodation and the operational properties situated within the 4 quadrants of the Council.

Strategy for Corporate Accommodation

2.10. The key commitments articulated in objectives 2 and 3 above are crucial in underpinning the CAP, to ensure that the Council's operational estate is optimised to deliver Council services as efficiently as possible in the challenging financial environment in which the Council operates, and to ensure that the Council is accessible to its varied customers.

Corporate Accommodation and Quadrants

2.11. The Council is approaching its operational assets portfolio in a holistic way across the Council area through this CAP and via

Quadrant Accommodation Plans (QAPs) within four defined geographical quadrants of Central Bedfordshire (based upon Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group Localities):

- West Mid Bedfordshire
- Ivel Valley
- Leighton Linlade
- Chiltern Vale

2.12. The QAPs seek to develop an approach where the Council works with relevant stakeholders collaboratively and creatively both internally across directorates, and with the broader public sector to deliver local customer facing service hubs.

2.13. The QAPs will complement the CAP and relevant local masterplans to ensure a joined up approach in each quadrant. Achieving this may require targeted investment by the Council in the local area and involves maximising the potential of its own land and property assets in each quadrant.

2.14. The Council is seeking to utilise accommodation within an efficient and effective corporate function delivered from appropriate locations and hubs located within each of the quadrants that are tailored to the local needs of its customers in these localities.

3. The Council's Current Corporate Accommodation

Overview

3.1. The Council currently operates from two main corporate office locations, Priory House in Chicksands and Watling House in Dunstable. There are also some key functions undertaken at Houghton Lodge in Ampthill and Stephenson Court in Bedford, and as a result these buildings are also included within the scope of the CAP.

3.2. Occupancy studies have been carried out within the last 12 months for all of these key sites. These studies have looked at the current utilisation of each office space by measuring occupancy over a 4 week period and have also considered desk/staff ratios that are applicable at each of the sites based on the nature of the accommodation. Some office buildings are able to accommodate a greater number of staff than the number of desks available due to the presence of flexible working areas and meeting spaces, as a result each site has its own ratio assigned as set out below.

Specific Buildings

Priory House, Chicksands

3.3. Priory House is a CBC owned modern office building occupied exclusively by the Council. Built in 2006, it is the main Civic location for the Council and incorporates the Council Chamber where all key Council meetings are held, an elected Members' suite, office of The Lord Lieutenant and High Sheriff of Bedfordshire, and is the main location for the Council's corporate offices. It also incorporates a walk-in customer service centre.



3.4. The office extends across 5,800 sq. metres and is in good condition. It houses 515 workstations from which Council staff work and has a theoretical capacity to support 685 full time equivalent (FTE) staff¹. There are 473 parking spaces available on the site of which 28 are allocated to visitors and 14 to disabled drivers.

3.5. Recent studies have demonstrated that the office has a peak occupancy rate of 75% and as a result it currently only supports 515 FTE staff. Assuming a theoretical capacity of 685, this gives a potential spare capacity to support a further 170 FTEs with the current office configuration.

3.6. The number of parking spaces is a major limiting factor at Priory House. In order to maximise the use of the Priory House site, parking capacity would need to be increased by a further 156 spaces (assuming the same ratio of spaces to staff as at current

¹ Based on the Council's assumption that the current desk ratio is 7.5 desks for every 10 FTEs

peak usage) or alternative measures need to be considered for travel to and from the site (a mixed approach is most feasible).

Watling House, Dunstable

- 3.7. Watling House is a c7, 000 sq. metre 1990s office building on three storeys owned by CBC. The building requires significant investment including replacing the gutters and downpipes, the boilers, heating systems and ventilation and requires decoration to much of the interior. The building is sited in an old railway siding, with a gas holder on adjacent land. Part of the car park is known to have contaminated ground.



- 3.8. The building is the second location for the Council’s corporate staff and incorporates a significant number of back office and front of house functions including the Council’s housing teams,

elements of Children’s and Adults services, the Council’s main customer contact centre and CCTV facility.

- 3.9. The building houses 606 workstations from which Council staff work and therefore has the theoretical capacity to support 808 staff² from this office environment.
- 3.10. Recent studies have demonstrated that the office has a peak occupancy rate of 50% and as a result it currently only supports 404 full time equivalent (FTE) staff. Assuming a theoretical capacity of 808, this gives a spare capacity to support a further 404 FTEs with the current office configuration.
- 3.11. There are currently 465 parking spaces available at the site including Brewers Hill car park which suggests spare capacity compared to the current office space utilisation. In order to maximise the use of the Watling House site, parking capacity would need to be increased by a further 262 spaces (assuming 0.9 space per FTE reflecting current usage) or alternative measures need to be considered for travel to and from the site (a mixed approach is most feasible).

Houghton Lodge, Ampthill

- 3.12. Unlike Priory House and Watling House, Houghton Lodge is not principally a corporate office location for the Council. It is a large CBC owned site occupied predominantly by Adult Social Care. It does however also act as an office rather than an operational location for a number of staff; as such it is included within the

² Based on the Council’s assumption that the current desk ratio is 7.5 desks for every 10 FTEs

CAP. Built c1977, it incorporates a variety of functions including the Council's 24-hour emergency response team.



- 3.13. The office extends across 1,341 sq. m. and is in poor condition with significant backlog of maintenance required and a need to upgrade elements of the building. It houses 137 workstations from which Council staff work and has the capacity to support 152 office based staff³.
- 3.14. Recent studies have demonstrated that the office has peak occupancy of 60% and therefore currently supports 91 FTE staff.
- 3.15. There are currently 90 parking spaces on the site.

³ Based on the Council's assumption that the current desk ratio is 9 desks for every 10 FTEs. This is substantially more than the other locations due to the cellular nature of the office

Stephenson Court, Bedford

- 3.16. Like Houghton Lodge, Stephenson Court is not principally a corporate office location for the Council. It is however a significant site in terms of the number of staff operating from the premises. Stephenson Court is located in Bedford and is leased by the Council. It houses staff from the Children's Services directorate managing adoption, fostering and asylum.



- 3.17. As this accommodation is leased the capital maintenance implications are limited compared to sites owned wholly by CBC. However there are significant revenue implications associated with the annual rental and provision of utilities to the site as well as the specific costs of providing office space for CBC staff such as IT infrastructure.

3.18. The office houses 70 workstations over 2 floors and currently supports 79 FTE staff⁴. There are 62 allocated parking spaces.

Building Capacity

3.19. The table below summarises the potential capacity of the existing buildings and the actual staff supported by the buildings. To be prudent a contingency has been added to the number of FTEs supported of 10% to ensure enough space is provided at peak times.

	Priory House	Watling House	Houghton Lodge	Stephenson Court	Total FTEs in major offices
Peak occupancy	75%	52%	60%	85% (est)	
No of desks	515	606	137	70	1328
Assumed desk ratio	7.5:10	7.5:10	9:10	9:10	
Current FTE supported	515	420	91	67	1093
10% contingency	51	42	9	7	109
Total FTE supported	566	462	100	74	1202
Theoretical capacity	686	808	152	79	1725
Spare capacity	120	346	52	5	523

Table 1: Existing Accommodation Capacity

⁴ Based on the Council’s assumption that the current desk ratio is 9 desks for every 10 FTEs. This is substantially more than the other locations due to the cellular nature of the office

3.20. Table 1 demonstrates that the current accommodation is underutilised. As a result of this there is an opportunity to reduce the overall amount of corporate accommodation and to use the remaining accommodation more efficiently and intensively. In the process the potential for revenue savings by minimising the maintenance liabilities will be pursued. Both Priory House and Watling House have spare capacity to support additional staff (120 + 346) even at peak periods. This spare capacity (466) is in excess of the current requirements of Houghton Lodge and Stephenson Court (174).

Total Repairs and Maintenance Costs

3.21. The table below brings together all of the net running costs, repairs and maintenance costs, and known defect backlog costs, for the three buildings in scope.

Building	2013/14		2014/15		At 31/03/16
	Revenue £000's	Capital £000's	Revenue £000's	Capital £000's	Defects £000s
Priory House	660	530	686	530	121
Watling House	521	573	634	826	1,486
Houghton Lodge	132	117	142	8	345
Stephenson Court	135	0	167	0	TBC
Total	1,448	1,220	1,629	1,364	1,952

Table 2: Capital and Revenue costs per site.

4. The need for change

4.1. The Council has conducted a review of its asset base, and part of this review has focussed on the existing configuration of its corporate office locations. The use of the four separate locations included in the CAP is a product of the history of the Council.

4.2. In the years since Central Bedfordshire Council was created reviews of the Asset base have centred on accommodating staff previously occupied in Bedford within CBC owned assets. A fundamental review of this asset base has now been undertaken.

4.3. This review of the asset base has highlighted the need to address a number of issues. The most significant are highlighted below:

- The corporate office estate is significantly underutilised with Watling House having only approximately 50% of the available capacity utilised on average and Priory House 75%;
- There are operational inefficiencies with having four separate office locations. This is highlighted by the significant running costs and maintenance costs of the four buildings;
- The maintenance requirements of Watling House are significant. There are costs of approximately £1.5m to bring the building up to an appropriate standard for long term occupational use;
- As the Council adopts new operating models for its services with fewer and more mobile locality based staff its corporate accommodation needs to be able to flex to suit.
- There is a need for more modern work spaces to provide staff with the ability to work in a way that reflects changes in technology since the existing offices were designed.

4.4. The case for change from an operational perspective is therefore significant. However, whilst any change must be consistent with and influenced by financial and internal operational requirements, the fundamental driver should be the way the Council intends to serve its customers in the future.

4.5. In addition to the above issues, there is also a need to consider the best use of the Authority's assets in terms of service delivery. For example where an asset is currently used as office space and could be better utilised facilitating frontline service delivery.

4.6. Watling House is a crucial public interface for the Council. Dunstable / Houghton Regis is a key urban location for the Council and its customers utilise the customer service centre situated in this building significantly more than the secondary service centre at Priory House. As such, the Council is focussed on ensuring that its customer interface is a significant consideration in the development of its operational locations.

4.7. As explained, the CAP and Quadrant Accommodation Plans strongly interact with each other to put the customer first in developing the Council's approach to its operational locations. This will therefore be a key part of the CAP going forward.

Working Smarter Programme

4.8. The Council has commenced a major programme to examine the way in which it works and uses its space to support the delivery of its services. This programme, 'Working Smarter', seeks to develop and implement a corporate approach to agile working in order to provide clarity on the potential size of the Council in the future, and how changes in work styles and practices will adapt its office requirements.

- 4.9. The outcomes of this programme are key inputs into the medium to long term vision for the corporate estate. The main purposes of 'Working Smarter' are articulated as follows:
- Review and develop policies and protocols that support new ways of working and cultural change;
 - Deliver essential technology solutions that enable modern workplaces, mobile working, paper reduction and smarter working across the CBC estate;
 - Make more effective use of the Council's staff accommodation to create modern workplaces that are fit for purpose and will enable cultural change; and
 - Facilitate the optimisation of existing CBC assets to create capacity to support property rationalisation activities and delivery of services in localities.
- 4.10. The Council has already commenced a pilot in Priory House of the 'Working Smarter' programme, having adapted two floors of the building to a new office environment, in order to support these new working practices. The findings of this exercise will be used to shape the future roll out of the programme.
- 4.11. The Project reports to the Corporate Management Team as part of the "Making it Happen" programme and seeks to provide a set of solutions which reflect the Council's needs over the next five years.

5. Corporate Accommodation plan for change

5.1. The Council has considered the issues highlighted above and developed a plan for change in its corporate accommodation estate. In doing so the option of complete transformation by moving to a new corporate HQ was considered. However, as the ownership of the Priory House site is subject to a 50% overage clause from the MOD, so CBC is unable to extract the full sale value from the site over the medium term. As a result alternative options have been considered.

5.2. The preferred plan is to:

- Close the offices at Houghton Lodge and re-locate staff to other CBC office locations.
- Terminate the lease on Stephenson Court and re-locate staff to other CBC office locations.
- Intensify the use of the Priory House facility to accommodate a significant proportion of the 636 FTEs that are currently supported through Watling House, Houghton Lodge and Stephenson Court. Priory House becomes the principal corporate office building that more efficiently accommodates Council staff as a result of the successful delivery of the working smarter programme and physical changes to the building.
- Develop an office to accommodate appropriate service based and back office staff in the Dunstable / Houghton Regis Area and any additional staff that cannot be accommodated within the Priory House facility. In the short term Watling House will be utilised as this office with further assessment to take place during the development of the Chiltern Vale Quadrant Plan.

5.3. The key reasons for this four stage plan are as follows:

Houghton Lodge Closure

5.4. Houghton Lodge is a dated building and is unable to provide flexible office accommodation going forward without significant refurbishment. As a result the site does not offer a value for money long term office solution. In addition, the site has potential for alternative uses which offer greater value, and options for an extra care facility are being developed.

Stephenson Court Lease Termination

5.5. As spare capacity has been identified within the accommodation stock that is within the Authority's ownership the Stephenson Court site has been identified as surplus to requirements. The Council currently spends around £140k per annum on rent and other costs for the site which would largely be saved if staff are relocated to other CBC owned locations.

Priory House Intensification

5.6. The Priory House facility has been selected as the principal corporate office location for a variety of reasons, these can be summarised as follows:

- Due to spare capacity it is anticipated that more CBC staff will be able to be based from the Chicksands area;
- Priory House is already the dominant office in the Council's corporate estate;
- The potential to adapt the facility is significant both to intensify the existing floor plan and to make amendments to

the building to provide additional space and adapt to the Working Smarter principals; and

- There is the potential to add additional car parking within the grounds of the building to support this intensification.

Dunstable / Houghton Regis office

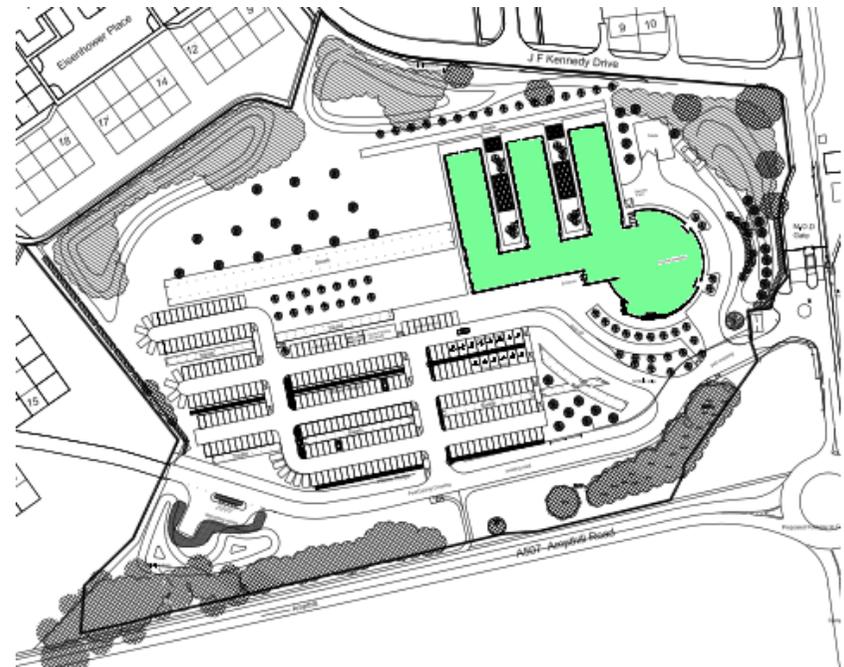
5.7. The analysis of the corporate estate and behaviours of staff and customers have demonstrated the importance of the Dunstable / Houghton Regis area. As such the Council will develop an office in this location, the principal reasons for this include:

- The principal customer contact centre is currently located in Watling House in Dunstable. This is the most important customer interface the Council currently has. There is therefore a need to maintain, or improve, this service within the Urban environment of Dunstable / Houghton Regis;
- There are a significant number of Council staff who currently work within the Dunstable / Houghton Regis area and the Council wishes to maintain this both for lifestyle reasons for staff and the important economic impact these staff have on the Dunstable area;
- The Council's housing stock is principally located in the South, there is therefore a need to locate support for these services within this area;
- There is a greater proportion of customer facing services based at Watling House than at Priory and as such there is more scope for these to be based in the Hub accommodation being developed as part of the Quadrant plans.

6. Principal Corporate Accommodation Detail – Priory House

Current size

- 6.1. Priory House is the main civic location incorporating key facilities for the elected officials and senior offices of the Authority as well as a small customer service centre.
- 6.2. The current configuration of the office is as a traditional office workspace dominated by banks of workstations occupying the majority of floors within the building and dedicated meeting spaces. It houses 515 workstations from which Council staff work and can support 686 full time equivalent (FTE) staff⁵.
- 6.3. The office extends across 5,800 sq. metres in the green shaded area on the plan above, and is serviced by 473 parking spaces. This is the limiting factor for staff using the building, peak occupancy of Priory House (when all parking bays are occupied) relates to the 75% of workstations being used. It is extremely difficult attain the maximum theoretical 686 staff on site because there is insufficient parking.
- 6.4. The Council has undertaken occupancy study surveys of the building to establish how intensively these workspaces are used. This analysis has shown that on average there is 32% spare capacity with 25% un utilised at peak periods



Plan view above of the Priory House site.

- 6.5. Council estimates show that currently there are 7.5 desks provided for every 10 staff based within the building. The Working Smarter programme is being piloted in certain areas within Priory House. The findings from these pilot studies will, in part, inform workspace discussions and decisions across the Council's buildings.

⁵ Based on the Council's assumption that the current desk ratio is 7.5 desks for every 10 FTEs

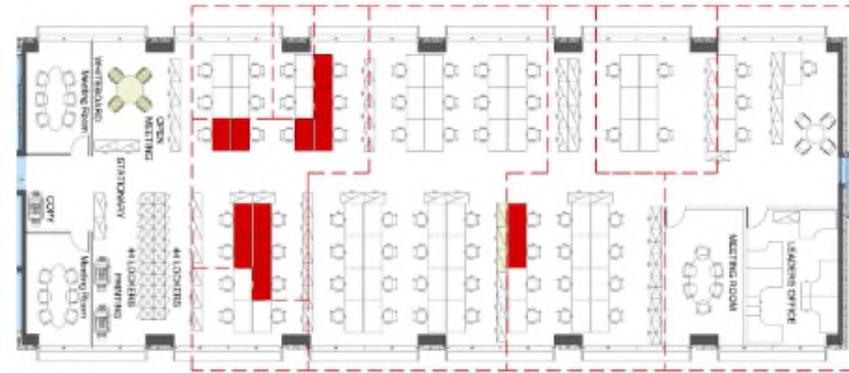
Proposed Changes to Priory House

Implementing Working Smarter

6.6. The Working Smarter programme is supporting the Council in changing the working practices of its staff. The key changes proposed for Priory House being:

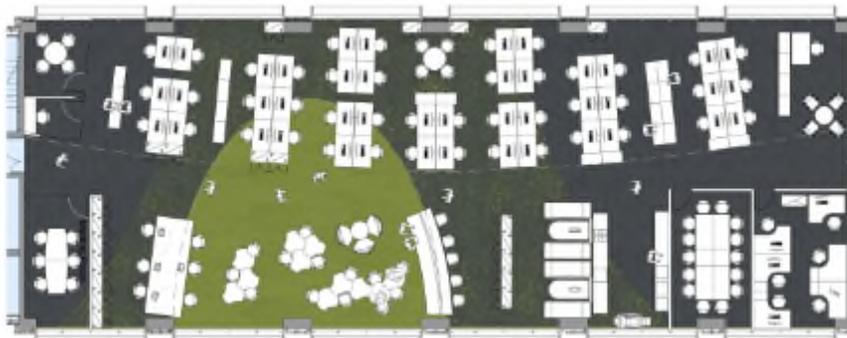
- Optimising the use of office based workstation activity;
- Utilising alternative working environments within the building including dedicated project spaces, touchdown spaces and breakout spaces;
- Enabling working from alternative locations, such as Quadrant hubs, home or alternative environments; and
- Upgrading IT services to support a truly mobile workforce.

6.7. Implementing Working Smarter requires a significant change in the physical space within Priory House. The current layout contains floors dominated by banks of traditional desks providing an environment where staff are encouraged to work from individual workstations without alternative working styles being accommodated. This is highlighted in the diagram to the right of this page of the current configuration of one of the ground floor wings within the building (Ground Floor West).



Above figure of Ground floor West wing before Working Smarter

- 6.8. Working Smarter has piloted a new working style incorporating a variety of working environments to more efficiently match the working requirements of a modern office, task appropriate work spaces.
- 6.9. Were this pilot to be extended across the building this would provide an effective modern working environment for staff. The diagrams below show how this space is adapted following these changes being applied.



Above and below figures of ground floor West after working smarter



- 6.10. A study was undertaken to examine the potential capacity of the building ahead of any major adaptations being undertaken. The potential options that were examined included:
- All general office space is converted to the new Working Smarter environment in line with the pilot areas that have been implemented which includes a potential ratio change for staff and desks to further increase the number of staff supported by the building;
 - A review of meeting space needs to create the opportunity to access confidential space for those services that need it. The booking systems for meeting rooms also require review in order to make the best use of meeting rooms.
- 6.11. These amendments would change the office environment to more appropriately match the requirements of a modern workforce and should therefore have knock on effects in improving efficiency and quality; whilst also facilitating the relocation of staff to Priory House from other offices.
- 6.12. The costs associated with these changes have been modelled and will be considered as part of the Working Smarter Project.

Physical Changes to the Building Fabric

- 6.13. The Council has also been examining the potential to alter the configuration of the building, and therefore its potential capacity. A number of capital projects have been developed and their relative costs and impact evaluated. These have included:
- Various options for extensions to the front of the building extending from the windows across the covered area to the pillars outside;

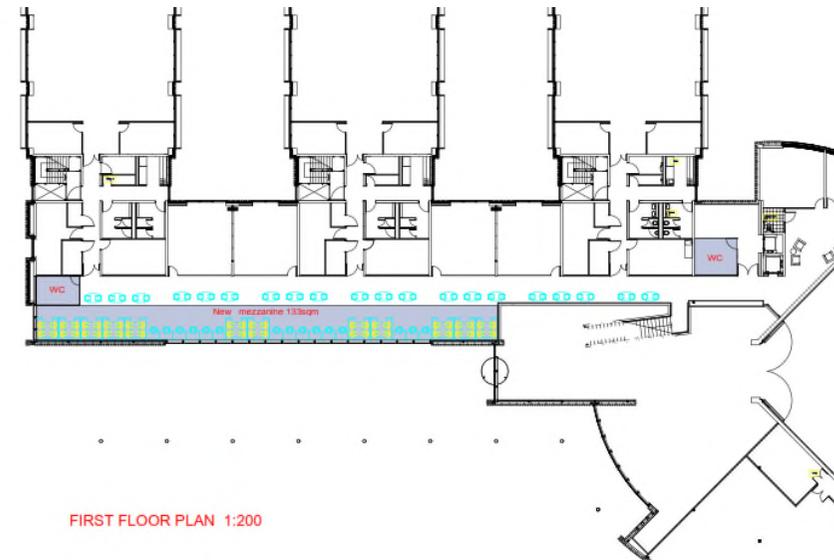
- Various options for an extension to the mezzanine area within the fabric of the existing structure to the windows;
- Various options for an extension within the fabric of the existing structure over the café; and
- Various options to increase the number of car parking spaces.

6.14. This analysis has demonstrated that the most cost effective solution, that delivers significant increases in capacity of the building, is the potential extension to the mezzanine level within the fabric of the building. The extension that has been selected is detailed below.

Mezzanine Walkway Extension

6.15. There is the potential to extend the walkway between the office wings and the outside window to the front of the building to deliver a new Mezzanine level that could accommodate significant space for new workstations and related flexible working space. In addition, this option also enables delivery of new bathroom facilities.

6.16. The detail of this is shown in the blue shaded area on the plan below:



Plan view of proposed Priory House Mezzanine Extension

6.17. It is estimated that this extension would provide an additional 66 breakout spaces increasing the operational capacity of the building and further assisting the move of staff to Priory House from other CBC office locations.

Parking Provision

6.18. Priory House is located at Chicksands, close to Shefford. The site is accessible by road but is not strongly linked for public transport or pedestrian access, as such most people access the building by car.

6.19. The site currently has 473 car parking spaces to accommodate Council staff, members and the public. This provision is

significant but is very well used, particularly Tuesday to Thursday, as such any increase in numbers of people within the building would require additional car parking space.

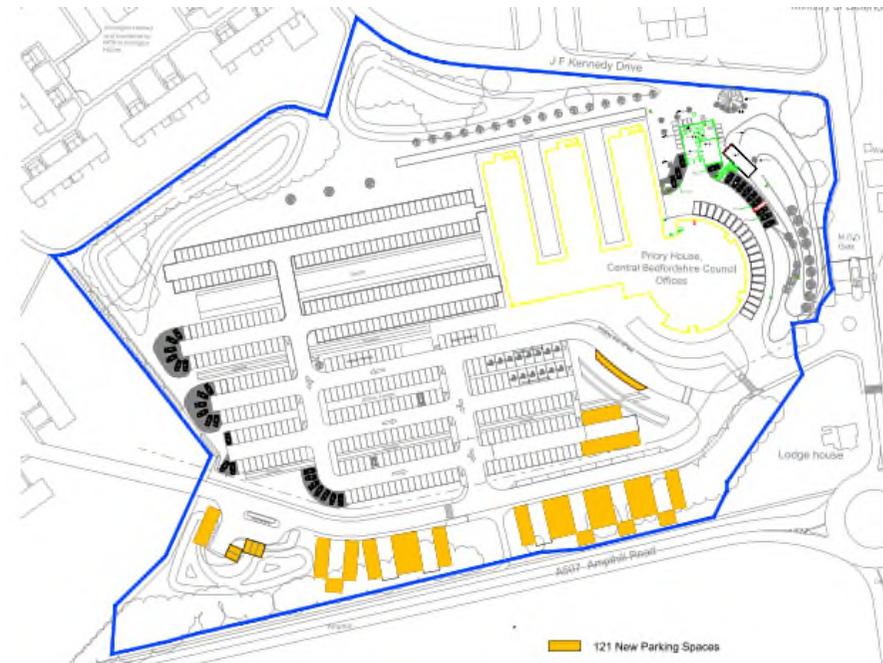
6.20. The Council have examined a number of schemes to provide this additional space, including:

- Multi story car park structures;
- Purchase or lease of adjacent farm land;
- Decked car park structures;
- Additional allocations for parking at ground level; and
- Managing car usage to limit requirements.

6.21. These options have been compared and shortlisted on a cost and impact basis in order to develop the most appropriate options to take forward as detailed below.

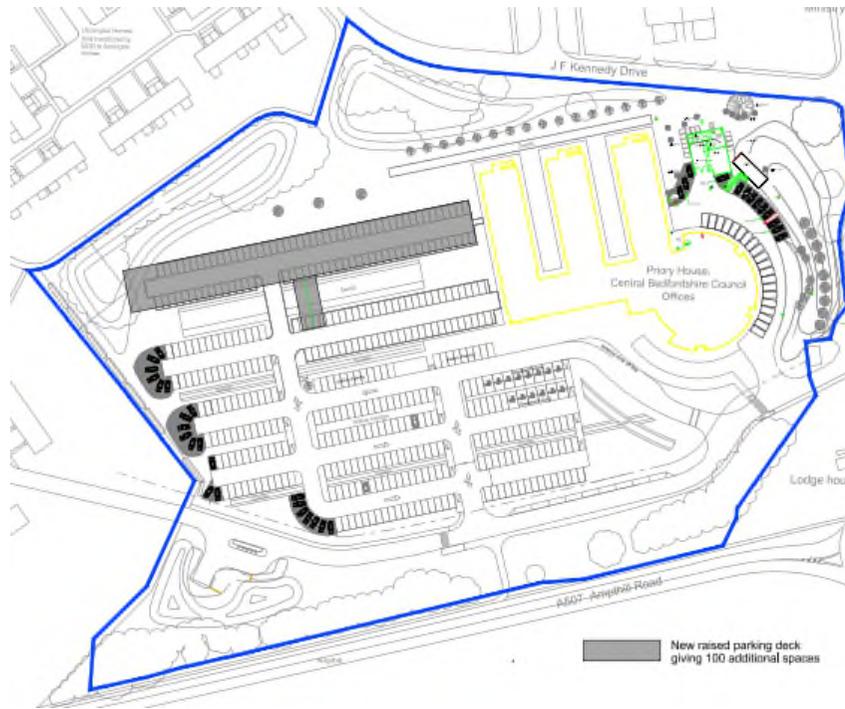
6.22. Option 1: This scheme provides additional 70-80 spaces on site and is judged to be the maximum that could be placed on site without significant capital works.

6.23. Option 2: This scheme seeks to place a raised parking deck over the existing parking area to the North of the site as shown in the attached plan below on page 19. This would provide an additional 100 spaces but would be a more capital intensive project requiring capital investment of £1m.



Plan view above of the Priory House site [Option 1].

6.24. Option 3: Reduce the number of cars being brought to site in order to create additional space within the existing car parks through a range of measures. Potential measures include promoting/incentivising car sharing, providing public transport options and improving facilities on site for those cycling/walking or running to work.



Plan view above of the Priory House site [Option2].

- 6.25. A blend of options 1 and 3 provide the best value solution to accommodate the additional vehicles on site that are likely to result from the increased utilisation of this building. This offers a lower cost approach that does not require the very significant investment associated with Option 2.

7. Dunstable / Houghton Regis Office

7.1. The corporate accommodation plan for change, articulated in section 5 above, requires the development of a secondary location or “Hub” to accommodate appropriate service based and back office staff in the Dunstable / Houghton Regis Area and any additional staff that cannot be accommodated within the Priory House facility.

Short Term Solution

7.2. In the short term, as stated in section 5, Watling House will be utilised to provide the necessary office space in the Dunstable / Houghton Regis area. The rationale for utilising Watling House in the short term is:

- It is an existing asset under the ownership of CBC and requires minimal work to accommodate additional staff;
- The building currently has spare capacity;
- Parking on site is not currently at capacity; and
- Many of the high cost capital repair items can be postponed pending the outcome of the Quadrant Accommodation Plan.

Medium / Long Term Solution

7.3. The analysis in section 3 above has shown that around 220 workstations would be required within this location. However, in order to develop the options available to the Authority in this area, an office that provides circa 200 workstations will be used to appraise the different options available.

7.4. The Council has initially examined a number of potential options

taking in to account that the result must be both financially and socially advantageous. Options must seek to balance service user requirements, staff preference and cost elements to arrive at a balanced solution.

7.5. The options that have been considered at this stage and are subject to more detailed assessment as part of the development of the Chiltern Vale Quadrant Accommodation Plan are as follows:

- Dunstable Leisure Centre – New build office building adjacent to new Leisure Centre;
- Watling House – Adaptation and use of existing facility creating a smaller CBC office and a commercial office space for lease;
- Vernon Place – Development of new mixed use facility on the site; and
- Lease Model – Lease existing space within the area.

7.6. Taking more time to develop the solution for Dunstable / Houghton Regis will allow us to factor in the impact of other known reviews, such as the Children’s Service Transformation plan and the operating model for the telephone Contact Centre as these are crystallised.

8. Conclusions and Implementation Plan

Conclusions

- 8.1. Adapting the Council's corporate accommodation to meet the needs of a workforce that operates significantly differently to when the buildings were designed coupled with the continuous drive for efficiency and quality of services provide the back drop for the Council's review of its corporate estate.
- 8.2. The CAP has developed a strategy for significant changes to the Council's corporate accommodation estate as it also reviews its broader asset base across the region.
- 8.3. The key conclusions from this process are as follows
- Close the offices at Houghton Lodge as they are no longer fit for purpose and do not provide value for money. The site has also been identified as having potential to provide better value uses through redevelopment. Staff to be re-located to other CBC office locations.
 - Terminate the lease on Stephenson Court as it does not offer a value for money solution for CBC and alternative office space is available within the Authority's ownership. Staff to be re-located to other CBC office locations.
 - Intensify the use of the Priory House facility to accommodate a significant proportion of the 641 FTEs that are currently supported through Watling House, Houghton Lodge and Stephenson Court. Priory House then to become the principal corporate office building.
 - In the short term – continue to utilise Watling House to act as the Dunstable / Houghton Regis Hub and also to

accommodate any staff that cannot be accommodated in Priory House.

- Undertake a comprehensive review of accommodation opportunities in the Dunstable/Houghton Regis area as part of the development of the Chiltern Vale Quadrant Plan.

Implementation Plan

- 8.4. The Implementation Plan for this programme is in two phases for delivery over the next 24 months and is detailed, at a headline level, below.

Phase 1: [Dec 2016 – March 2018]

- 8.5. Intensify the use of Priory House and relocate those staff based in Stephenson Court by:
- Improving and increasing the use of technology;
 - Implementing the principals of the Working Smarter project,
 - Undertaking capital works to the Priory House facility including a mezzanine extension and additional toilets, changes to parking provision creating more spaces;
 - Relocating appropriate staff from Stephenson Court to Priory House or Watling House;
 - Reviewing the space standards being achieved through this phase of the work and developing a key outcome assessment from phase 1 to clarify the space requirements for the Dunstable / Houghton Regis office.

Phase 2: [April 2017- March 2018]

- Deliver the Quadrant Accommodation Plans to determine the most efficient use of the Authority's assets within each of the quadrant areas and importantly to determine the best solution for the Dunstable / Houghton Regis office.
- Closure of Houghton Lodge resulting in a capital receipt, and relocation of affected staff to available office space in Priory House or the Dunstable / Houghton Regis Hub;

Programme Alignment

8.6. The CAP is a significant work stream that fits with the Council's corporate strategy as laid out in the Five Year Plan. It is designed to align with a series of other programmes.

- The Working Smarter Programme will act as the project lead for the implementation of the accommodation plan;
- Opportunities to deliver alternative priority outcomes from the Council's estate such as the potential to redevelop Houghton Lodge to deliver Older People's Accommodation;
- Continued development of the Quadrant Accommodation Plans to bring together the Council's accommodation plans with its broader aspirations from its assets as laid out in the Asset Management Strategy (AMS).

8.7. The key deliverables from this programme are detailed below:

- A fit for purpose primary corporate head office at Priory House, maximising available space;
- An second office in the Dunstable / Houghton Regis area;
- The implementation of the Working Smarter principals to enable staff to adopt new ways of working;

- Revenue costs savings for the Houghton lodge and Stephenson Court sites.