

## **REGENERATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**6 JULY 2010**

### **THE FUTURE OF THE STROOD ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT SCHEME**

Report from: Robin Cooper, Director of Regeneration Community & Culture.

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#### **Summary**

This report informs overview and scrutiny of the recommendation that the Strood Environmental Enhancement scheme is abandoned and recommends that, subject to the abandonment of the scheme, most of the land, which is held for the scheme, is declared surplus with the remainder being held for a possible small scale road improvement and a new library site.

#### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

- 1.1 The Strood Environmental Enhancement Scheme (referred to in this report as 'the Scheme') is included in the Local Transport Plan and its abandonment will therefore need to be considered by full Council as a variation of the Local Transport Plan.
- 1.2 The value of each asset is likely to be above £100,000, but below £1,000,000, which will therefore be a matter for Cabinet.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 The scheme was originally conceived as a smaller scale replacement for a previous major road proposal known as Strood Ring Road. This latter proposal involved very large areas of land, large roundabouts and dual carriageways, which would have altered large areas in the centre of Strood. The current proposal will allow the abandonment of the ring road scheme which releases many blighted properties. A number were retained for the original scheme and, since then, other properties have been acquired to put together the land needed for delivery of the scheme. The relevant properties are listed below.

- 2.2 Since adoption of the scheme, no design has been progressed in the absence of a funding stream. With traffic growth, it is unlikely that the scheme could be achieved without a significant increase in congestion. It is suggested that the scheme now acts as a constraint against growth and development and one which would not lead to regeneration of the town centre. As such abandonment of the scheme means that transport options can be developed as an outcome of the evolution of masterplanning for Strood rather than as a driver of it.
- 2.3 The properties listed in section 3 are those acquired by Kent County Council when highway authority or by Medway Council and held for highway purposes. If the scheme is abandoned then either other uses can be found for them or they can be declared surplus and disposed of.

### **3. Property Assets no longer required for the Scheme.**

#### **3.1 Land at Station Road Strood.**

- 3.1.1 The Council owns the freehold of the above areas of land as edged black on the attached plan and marked "1". The site has an area of approximately 333 sqm. The site is let as a car lot.

#### **3.2 Site of 16/20 North Street Strood.**

- 3.2.1 The Council owns the freehold of the above land as edged black on the attached plan and marked "2". The site has an area of approximately 387 sqm. The site is let for an advertising hoarding.

#### **3.2 Site of 31-35 North Street and site of 4-18 Edward Street Strood.**

- 3.3.1 The Council owns the freehold of the above parcels of land as edged black on the attached plan and marked "3". The land has an area of approximately 10,108 sqm. The land is let to the adjacent supermarket for parking.

#### **3.3 37-39 North Street Strood and land rear of 39 North Street Strood.**

- 3.3.1. The Council owns the freehold of the above land and property as edged black on the attached plan and marked "4". The site has an area of approximately 829 sqm. The property is let as a shop/flat.

#### **3.4 Land in Commercial Road Strood.**

- 3.4.1 The Council owns the freehold of the above land as edged black on the attached plan and marked "5". The site has an area of approximately 312 sqm. The land is let as a commercial vehicle lot.

### **3.5 Commercial Road (Temple Street) Car park Strood.**

3.5.1 The Council owns the freehold of the above car park as shown edged black on the attached plan and marked "6". Most of this car park is needed for the scheme. The car park has an area of approximately 2,575 sqm and has 76 spaces. The car park is not well used (The gross income last year was £20,500, which equates to only 75 pence/space/day) and any lost spaces will be more than compensated for by the creation of 140 new car parking spaces at the old Civic Centre site, these spaces will be available on the same tariff as the Temple Street car park hopefully from November this year. Any development on this land is likely to be in the form of an expansion of the existing retail area and this could include an element of parking.

### **3.6. 173, 175,1a, 3a, 5a, 7 and 7a Cuxton Road Strood.**

3.6.1 The Council owns the freehold of the above properties as edged black and marked "7" on the attached plan. The site has an area of approximately 930 sqm. The properties on the site include six shops and one flat. If the scheme is abandoned it is recommended that these properties are retained for possible future use as a library site and first point of contact centre. Further work needs to be undertaken on this possibility and will be reported to members in due course. It should be noted that part of the land occupied by 173 and 175 is needed to improve visibility at the junction of Cuxton Road with the A2. A design is being developed for this and will be the subject of a future consultation locally. If the visibility and safety improvements do go ahead, then a small area at the corner will be needed to be retained as highway and this is likely to involve the demolition of 173 and 175 High Street.

## **4. Options**

4.1 These property assets can either be retained or sold. If they are sold, capital receipts will be obtained, which the Council can use towards funding service priorities/reducing debt.

## **5. Risk Management**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Action to avoid or mitigate risk</b>
Land needed for future scheme	Land that the highway authority disposes of after declaring surplus cannot be immediately re-acquired through the CPO process	None possible but situation considered unlikely.

## **6. Advice and analysis**

- 6.1 The disposal of the properties referred to in paragraphs 3.1- 3.5 above will bring in capital receipts, which can be used to help fund service priorities and will also hopefully result in further regeneration of the Medway area.

## **7. Consultation**

- 7.1. Consultation has taken place with the service directorates and the relevant Portfolio Holders and was supported at the Strood Regeneration Cabinet Advisory Group and no objections to the abandonment of the scheme or these disposals have been received.

## **8. Financial and legal implications**

- 8.1 The Council has a duty under s123 of the Local Government Act 1972 to obtain best consideration, when it disposes of property, unless consent is obtained from the Secretary of State or one of the general consents applies.
- 8.2 The Council has a duty under s109 of the Transport Act 2000 to keep its Local Transport Plan under review.
- 8.2 Some of these properties are income generating and this income will be lost once the properties are sold. However, it is felt that the financial return, which can be made from the receipts, will outweigh this loss of income.

## **9. Recommendations**

- 9.1 That the Committee recommend to Cabinet and then Council that the Strood Environmental Enhancement Scheme currently included in the Local Transport Plan is abandoned.
- 9.2 Subject to 9.1 above the Committee recommend that Cabinet agree that:-
- 9.2.1 the land at Station Road Strood as edged black and numbered 1 on the plan attached to this report, be declared surplus to enable the Assistant Director of Housing and Corporate Services in consultation with the Finance Portfolio Holder to dispose of it at best consideration using delegated powers.
- 9.2.2 the site of 16/20 North Street Strood Street as edged black and numbered 2 on the plan attached to this report be declared surplus to enable the Assistant Director of Housing & Corporate Services in consultation with the Finance Portfolio Holder to dispose of it at best consideration using delegated powers.

- 9.2.3 the site of 31-35 North Street and the site of 4-18 at Edward Street Strood as edged black and numbered 3 on the plan attached to this report be declared surplus to enable the Assistant Director of Housing and Corporate Services in consultation with the Finance Portfolio Holder to dispose of them at best consideration using delegated powers.
- 9.2.4 37-39 North Street and land rear of 39 North Street as edged black and numbered 4 on the plan attached to this report be declared surplus to enable the Assistant Director of Housing & Corporate Services in consultation with the Finance Portfolio Holder to dispose of it at best consideration using delegated powers.
- 9.2.5 Land in Commercial Road Strood as edged black and numbered 5 on the plan attached to this report be declared surplus to enable the Assistant Director of Housing and Corporate Services in consultation with the Finance Portfolio Holder to dispose of it at best consideration using delegated powers.
- 9.2.6 the Commercial Road car park as edged black and numbered 6 on the plan attached to this report be declared surplus to enable the Assistant Director of Housing and Corporate Services in consultation with the Finance Portfolio Holder to dispose of it at best consideration using delegated powers.

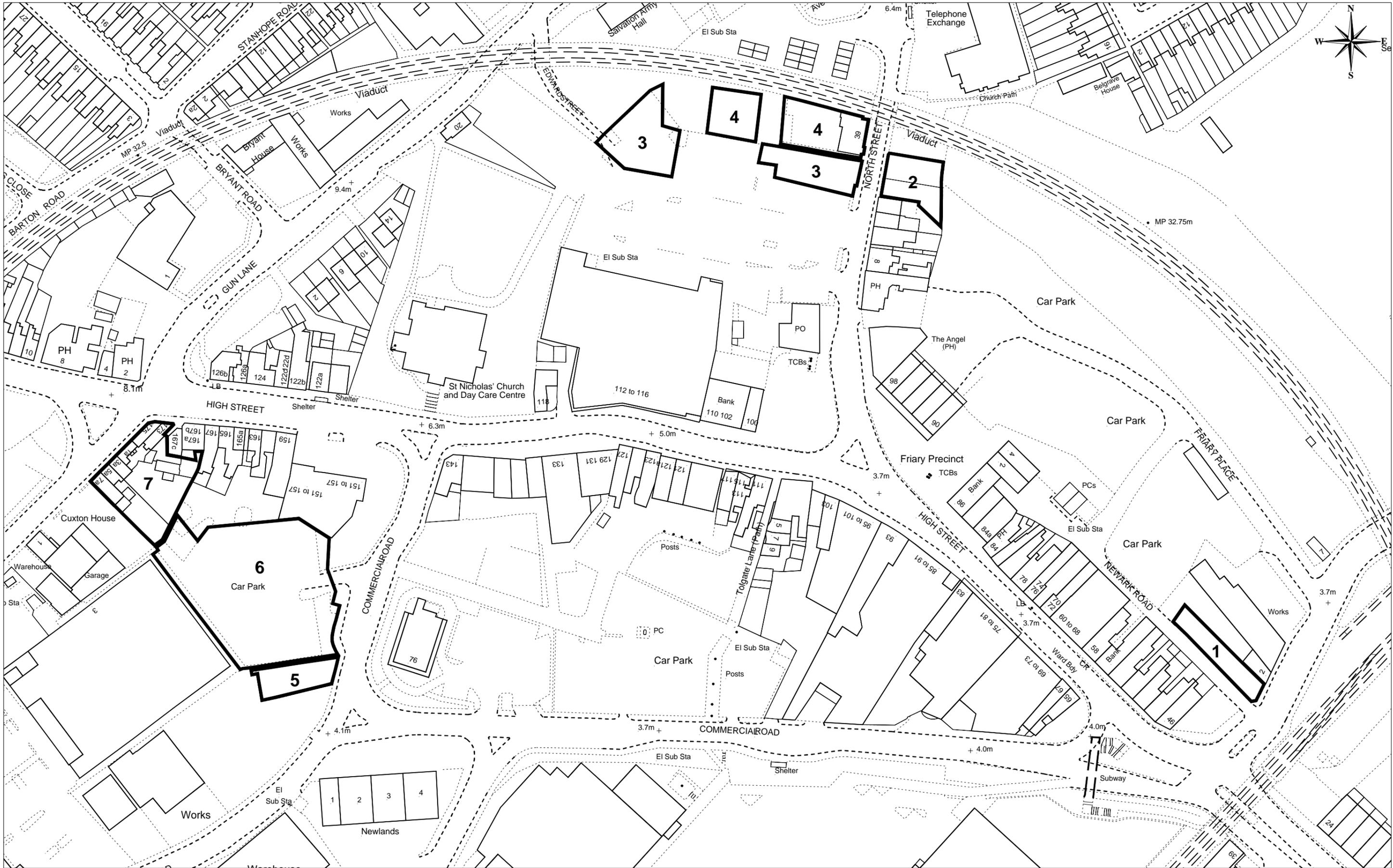
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**Background Papers:**

None.



**Strood Town Centre - Land held for Strood Environmental Enhancement Scheme**

