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East Devon District Council

Consultant's Brief Relocation of Council Offices (February 2008)

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2.1.7 The likely cost implications of pursuing a relocation to the site selected to be the best fit with the Council's aspirations.

2.1.8 A likely construction timetable in terms of delivering a new build at the preferred location.

2.1.9 The study should allow for an early meeting with key council officers to clarify the brief, presentation of the conclusions to the Senior Management Team of EDDC and a presentation to the Executive Board of the Council.

3.0 Background Information on Site Selection

3.1 To inform this study, the following is relevant:

3.1.1 The accessibility of the new offices to public transport is an important consideration. Access to good bus transport, and ideally a rail station, is desirable. Access to the geographical spread of the district and wider transport links is also relevant

3.1.2 Access for current employees and ability to successfully recruit staff in the future

3.1.3 Impact on the delivery of Council services

3.1.4 The Council's ambition: the Council would wish to have a presence that signals the Council's role in leading the East Devon community and the sub-regional growth agenda

3.1.5 The building needs to be in, or close to, a town centre where there is access to other facilities for staff and where shared provision of meeting rooms with the local town council and community groups is possible

3.1.6 The east of the district beyond Sidmouth would be least desirable due to distance from main centres of population and customers of the Council's services

3.1.7 Cranbrook, the site of the new settlement, is at the western end of the District. Cranbrook new town will be the location of the major growth in new housing and employment over the next twenty years and provides an opportunity to strengthen the identity of the new community as an East Devon town with a clear sense of place. There is also the chance of seeing a move to Cranbrook as a way of contributing to the town's success. If a large employer such as the District Council moves into the Town Centre at an early stage, it will underpin the economic future of the centre and the settlement, and be an outward show of the District Council's support for the project. It would also give the chance of shared accommodation with other organisations/town council etc.

3.1.8 Honiton has been identified in the past as worthy of consideration. Honiton is central to the District and the Council own a possible site at Hayne Lane, a 13 acre site west of Heathpark, which although it has restrictive covenants, could be a suitable location on which to develop offices either on a freehold, or leaseback. The

5.2 These include:-

5.2.1 The precise number of employees to be accommodated and a possible allowance for expansion or reduction: this needs to include an assessment of the way staff work: hot desking/open plan/individual offices/home working, all of which affect the amount of space needed.

5.2.2 Should the new community be identified as the preferred location for the new offices, a number of local area offices will be required to serve the existing communities. This will reduce the number of staff accommodated at the new offices.

5.2.3 Facilities to be included in the building, including canteen/ recreation area/Member facilities etc.

5.2.4 Allied to the above, what shared use of facilities can be achieved, or is desirable – Council chamber/committee rooms/interview rooms shared with town council/other organisations or canteen/refreshment area etc shared with private sector restaurant/cafe.

5.2.5 Amount of car parking to be provided – shared or public. A more sustainable development would ideally seek to cut down on parking and encourage public transport. If the location is within a town centre the car park could be a dual use car park.

5.2.6 Level of fitting out and the services that are required from basic shell to fully equipped and furnished ready for immediate occupation.

Note: It is acknowledged that these elements will have financial implications and will need to be resolved.

6.0 The Existing Site at The Knowle, Sidmouth

6.1 The whole site is in excess of 13 acres, with some fine mature specimen trees to the south of the site. Detailed discussions with the planning authority will be needed to establish which areas can be cleared and developed, and the type and scale of any redevelopment that will be permitted. Early discussion suggests four development areas within the grounds of approximately 20,000m². The key contact is Kate Little, Head of Planning and Countryside Services.

6.2 Work will also be needed to establish the economic impact of the removal of the offices from Sidmouth, although one would guess that the impact may not be great, and there may even be a positive effect of replacing the offices with housing, the occupiers of which will spend in the town and contribute to its wider economic and social life.

6.3 More difficult to assess, is the impact of the loss of image on the town of losing the District Council offices, the Council Chamber facilities (used as a function room available to the public) and also the loss of the amenity of the Knowle gardens, much of which will either have to be developed or at least given over to private space for residents, although parts of the lower gardens can be retained for public use.

7.8 Copyright

Arrangements will be required to allow East Devon District Council to use the material in the Study at its own discretion.

7.9 Project Management

Overall management of the project will be by East Devon District Council, but day-to-day management of it will be by Fliss Morey, Projects Director, East of Exeter Projects Team.

At each stage, documents shall be delivered to Fliss Morey, Projects Director, East of Exeter Projects Team. The documents and any plans shall also be made available in electronic format.