



SURPLUS LAND DISPOSALS
SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL'S
LOCAL COMMITTEE (ELMBRIDGE AREA)
22 SEPTEMBER 2003

KEY ISSUE:

To consider the disposal of surplus land within the Elmbridge Area.

SUMMARY:

When the County's Countryside Estate was recently externalised to Surrey Wildlife Trust a number of ancillary areas were omitted from the transfer. The Local Committee is being asked by the Member Asset Panel to provide information and guidance to assist in any disposal. It is also asked to note the disposal of some grazing land.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

- i) The Committee is asked to agree to recommend to the Member Asset Panel:
 - a) That the surplus land at Point Meadow, Weybridge be transferred to Elmbridge Borough Council to remain in recreational use on terms to be agreed.
 - b) That the surplus land at Hurst Park, Molesey be transferred to Elmbridge Borough Council to remain in recreational use.
- ii) The Committee is also asked to note the proposal to dispose of grazing land adjacent to Burhill Community Infant School, Hersham.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:	None

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The County Council recently externalised the Countryside Estate to Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT). As part of that process, a number of ancillary areas were omitted from the transfer, the intention being that SWT would concentrate on the management of the core estate and the County Council would retain and subsequently dispose of those parts of the Estate which were not to form part of the main transfer.
- 1.2 At a meeting on 9 December 2002, the Executive received a report from the Countryside Service and resolved to declare a number of areas of land surplus to requirements.
- 1.3 The Member Asset Panel has invited local members and the Local Committee to provide information from a local perspective to assist decisions on the disposal of the land. The purpose of the consultation is to ensure that local needs and issues are known, not to comment on any financial aspects to the sale.
- 1.4 The Member Asset Panel will consider the outcome of the consultations later in the autumn, final decisions are likely to be taken by the Executive in December with disposals early in 2004. The local member will be invited to attend the panel when land within their division is being discussed.
- 1.5 Although not part of the Countryside Estate, the County Council is also proposing to dispose of grazing land adjacent to Burhill Community Infant School. It is intended to dispose of this land at the earliest opportunity. The Local Committee is asked to note this disposal.

2. ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

- 2.1 Three areas of land are identified within Elmbridge as surplus to the County Council's requirements, although only the first two are part of the Countryside Estate. These are:
 - Point Meadow, Weybridge
 - Hurst Park, Molesey
 - Grazing land at Burhill Community Infant School

Maps are attached at Appendix 1 and further information on each is set out below.

3. CONSULTATION

- 3.1 The three members for Weybridge, Molesey West and Hersham within whose divisions the sites are situated have been involved from the outset of this process. In consultation with them a list of suitable consultees were identified. This list is attached at Appendix 2.
- 3.2 Responses have been received from most of the consultees and are summarised below.

4. POINT MEADOW

- 4.1 This is a piece of land at the North West tip of Desborough Island in Weybridge. It is bordered on three sides by the River Thames which here marks the borough boundary between Elmbridge and Spelthorne.
- 4.2 The land is open and a Right of Way runs through the land. Elmbridge Borough Council own the adjacent land which is likely to be used for managed grazing of cattle to help maintain the habitat.

Results of consultation

- 4.3 The Director of Community Services at Elmbridge Borough Council has confirmed that this site is part of the flood plain of the Thames, that it is completely land-locked by the Borough Council's holdings on Desborough Island, and that the Council's preference would be to see the use of this land remain unchanged.
- 4.4 The Local Transportation Service pointed out that Right of Way 27a runs through the land and that this fact would need to be considered in any sale.

5. HURST PARK, MOLESEY

- 5.1 This land on the northern edge of the borough also borders the River Thames which here marks the boundary between Elmbridge and the London borough of Richmond upon Thames.
- 5.2 The site is fully open to the public for recreational use and is designated as strategic open urban land.
- 5.3 The Thames towpath and the National Cycle path run along the bank side and it is the proposed site of the Sunnyside Pedestrian Bridge across the Thames.
- 5.4 A number of environmental improvements have been planned for the area including the Heritage Marker seats that were part funded through David Morris' members' allocation.
- 5.5 The land is leased to Elmbridge Borough Council who have managed it for many years.

Results of consultation

- 5.6 The Chairman of the Hurst Park Residents' Association (HPRA) has replied pointing out that these riverside lands are green belt, flood plain and of important historical heritage. He has confirmed they are intensively used for recreational purposes by residents from a very wide surrounding area and that the slightest hint of any change of use would be met by extremely fierce resistance by local residents and others. The HPRA suggests that the land should be transferred to Elmbridge Borough Council at no cost so that the Borough's residents and the many visitors from further afield can continue to benefit from this important recreational asset.

- 5.7 The matter was discussed at a committee meeting of the HPRA and the Vice-Chair has also contacted us to confirm that the committee fully endorsed the views expressed by the Chairman. She also informed us that part of the area is a haven for wildlife and that the view from the north of the river is protected.
- 5.8 Chairman of the Molesey Residents Association has written querying the concept of declaring green belt public open space surplus to requirements. However if this is the County's intention he suggests the obvious solution is to transfer the freehold at a peppercorn price to Elmbridge Borough Council with the proviso that any sum presently paid to them for upkeep should continue.
- 5.9 The Director of Community Services at Elmbridge Borough Council has written to confirm that the land is currently leased to the Borough Council and that the County Council meets 50% of the cost of maintaining the land. In 2003-04 this will amount to £6,978.66.
- 5.10 The Molesey News & Mail featured a long article about this consultation on the front page of the edition of 27th August 2003.
- 5.11 The Local Transportation Service pointed out that the Thames towpath and National Cycle path run along the bank side and that the area is the proposed site of the Sunnyside Pedestrian Bridge across the Thames. Any sale would need to consider these.

6. GRAZING LAND AT BURHILL COMMUNITY INFANT SCHOOL

- 6.1 This land is currently let on an annual grazing licence and sits within the Green Belt of the Elmbridge Borough Local Plan, where there is a presumption against development. The sale would be subject to restrictive covenants in respect of its use.

Results of consultation

- 6.2 Responses have been received from five residents of Pleasant Place expressing concern that disposal of the land could lead to it being developed in the future and pointing out, in particular, the impact that this would have on traffic congestion in the area.
- 6.3 The Headteacher of Burhill Community Infants School has also expressed concern that the land might be developed in the future. She feels strongly that the land is a precious local resource which should be retained for grazing purposes in order to preserve the rural character of the locality.
- 6.4 Surrey County Council's Senior Estates Surveyor has now also written to some residents to clarify the status of the land (see Appendix 3).
- 6.5 The Director of Community Services at Elmbridge Borough Council has written to confirm that the adjoining field belongs to the Borough Council and it is their intention to incorporate this field in the potential country

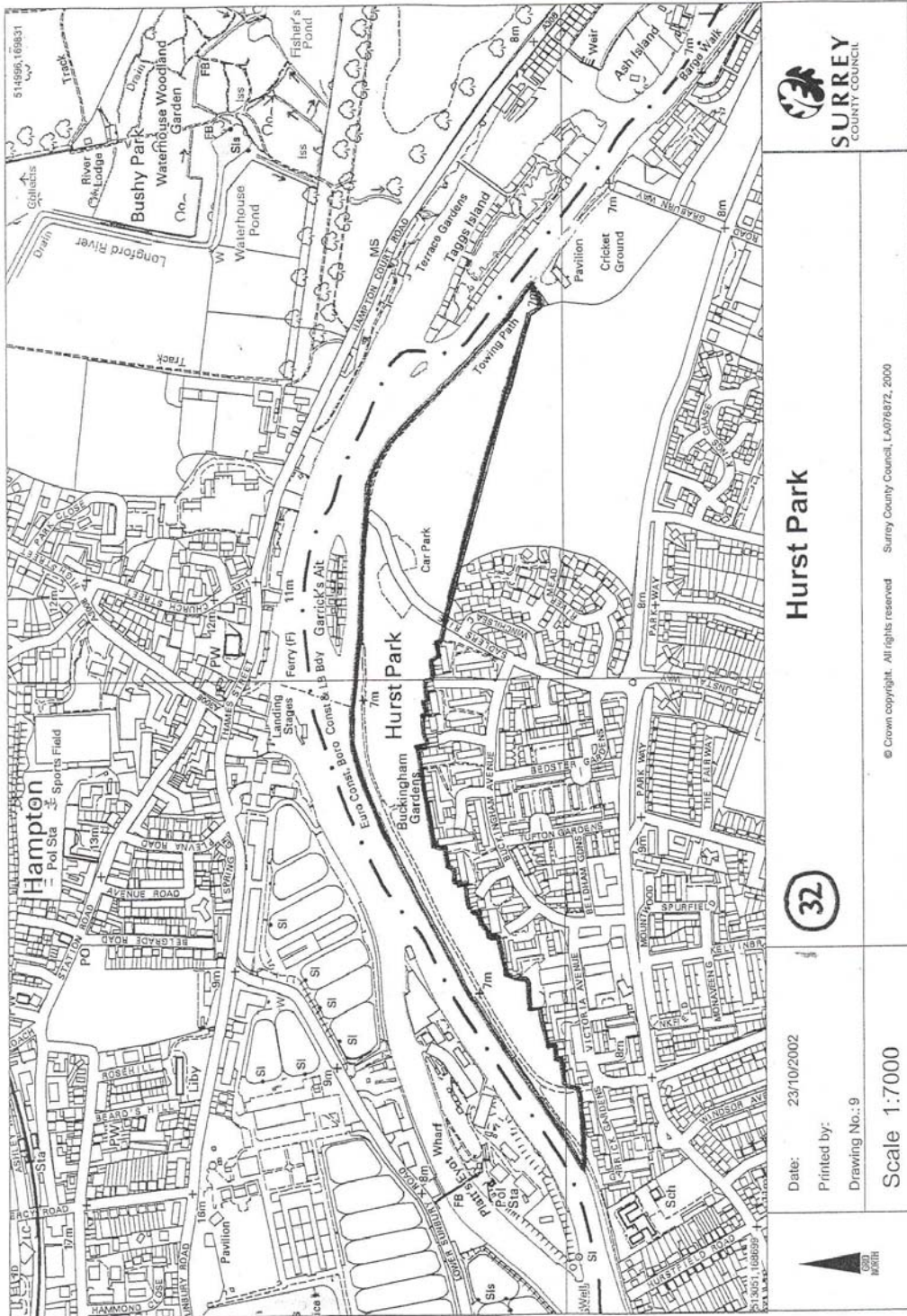
park for Hersham. The preference of ward councillors is for the land owned currently by the County to remain in grazing use and for the status quo to be maintained.

- 6.6 Councillor John Sheldon (Hersham South) has contacted us subsequently to clarify that he shares the concerns expressed by the Headteacher of Burhill Community Infant School that sale of the land on the open market could lead to undesirable development. He has also pointed out that this would block any future expansion of the school and that his preference would be for the land to be sold to Elmbridge Borough Council. He has confirmed that his two fellow ward councillors share his views and that they are both governors of the school.
- 6.7 The Local Transportation Service have confirmed that this piece of land does not have any implications from a transportation point of view. It is not strategically important from a highways perspective as it does not link with other areas or provide access to major development. The only concern would be if the land were to be sold for development purposes as access to it could be difficult.

7. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 A range of views have been sought on the disposal of the three pieces of land within Elmbridge and a fairly comprehensive picture of local opinion has been given.
- 7.2 This opportunity for local views to be heard in advance of disposal of County land is very much welcomed.

Report by: Janet Cooke, Local Director for Elmbridge



Hurst Park

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Grazing Land at Burhill School

LEGEND	
	Proposed Area
	Existing Area

COMMENTS

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Surrey County Council's Property Services

SURREY
COUNTY COUNCIL

511415
141056
511413
143796

Appendix 2

LIST OF CONSULTEES

POINT MEADOW

Elmbridge Borough Council
Local Transportation Service

HURST PARK

Hurst Park Residents' Association
Molesey Residents' Association
Elmbridge Borough Council
Local Transportation Service

GRAZING LAND AT BURHILL INFANTS SCHOOL

Current Tenant
Headteacher, Burhill Community Infants School
Occupiers of Nos 43, 45, 47, 55, 57, 59, 61, 63, 65, 46, 48, 50, 52 and
54 Pleasant Place, Hersham
Elmbridge Borough Council
Local Transportation Service

Appendix 3

Dear Resident,

GRAZING LAND AT PLEASANT PLACE, HERSHAM

Thank you for your e-mail in response to my colleague Alison Bennett's letter regarding the disposal of the above land.

I am able to confirm that the land in question is surplus to the Council's requirements and is due to be sold by our agents Nelson Bakewell on the open market. Following the land being declared surplus by the Council it was originally retained due to the likelihood of its longer term residential development potential, however, following re-allocation within the Elmbridge Local Plan as being within the Green Belt it is felt that such potential is now quite remote and the Council has no requirement to retain the land.

Any future proposals in respect of the planning use of the land would be given full and proper consideration by Elmbridge Borough Council Planning department through the due planning process in line with both central government guidance and the Surrey Structure Plan. This is not something which the County Council as landowner would seek to duplicate.

Any sale would include restrictive covenants to protect the Council in terms of the price paid, and any application to modify those covenants by a future owner based upon an alternative planning permission being obtained would, be considered, subject to a further payment to the County Council in line with its obligations to achieve best price under Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Since being declared surplus the land has been licenced out for grazing purposes in order to keep the management costs of the land to a minimum. The licence is terminable by either party at short notice and provides no security of tenure to the licensee. It is likely that the land will be sold subject to the current licence.

Should you be interested in bidding for the land, please contact James Cannon at Nelson Bakewell (0207 544 2241), although he will be in contact in due course with details. I trust that this clarifies the points raised and apologies if my colleagues letter caused any confusion.

Yours sincerely

Paul Flatt MRICS
Senior Estates Surveyor