

## Employment land proposal for Strategic Towns Fund

### Background - existing policy

#### CORNWALL LOCAL PLAN OBJECTIVES FOR LISKEARD

##### Objective 1 – Economy and Jobs

Deliver economic growth / employment, providing much needed jobs to counterbalance current and future housing development in and on the edge of Liskeard.

LISKEARD'S NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN was overwhelmingly agreed in a referendum in 2018. The foreword to the plan states:

'The priorities we have agreed focus around the concept of Liskeard as a thriving, modern market town acting as the sustainable social and economic heart of the wider community of South East Cornwall.'

One of the main sections of the Neighbourhood Plan relates to 'a Place to Work and Learn'. This was the theme people felt most strongly about according to the major community consultation, with ideas on the subject coming through under Housing, Town Centre Regeneration as well as Employment and Training. People said they would like there to be more work, for themselves and for their friends and relatives, but they were less sure how to create and maintain jobs.

The aims under 'a Place to Work and Learn' are to:

- Attract high quality employment, and training facilities, to meet the needs of business and the working age population
- Ensure the long-term sustainability of Liskeard as a thriving, prosperous place and modern market town
- Provide high quality services to local residents and the surrounding rural communities

POLICY EM2 deals with Employment Land Allocation

Employment development will be supported at the following locations:

1. East of Charter Way (11.05 ha)
2. North of Pengover Road (0.93 ha) – (NB – this site was the subject of a recent marketing exercise. Several expressions of interest were received for industrial, storage and office type uses. This would suggest that demand will still exist after an end purchaser has secured the site.)
3. Rapsons Lorry Park/Mortuary Site (0.25 ha) – (NB – this site is now occupied by ZLC Energy Ltd)
4. Undeveloped part of Heathlands Trading Estate (0.44ha) – (NB – the developable elements of this site have since been built on by Ugalde & Sons and Rebecca's.)

EM2B specifically relates to the extension to the Liskeard Business Park:

The development of the land east of Charter Way must include:

- a) B1, B2 and B8 uses
- b) A 15 metre wide heavy planting strip on the site's perimeter and the retention of important hedgerows which will link with it.

The site may include:

- a) Self-build residential development

b) Live-work units

and

c) Recreational facilities

Retail, other than as an integral part of a principal use, is specifically excluded.

Where a developer of employment land can demonstrate that cross-subsidy from a housing project is necessary to ensure the viability of the development, an element of housing will be supported subject to policies elsewhere in this document and the Cornwall Local Plan on design standards.

The reasoned justification relating to policy EM2B states – Recognising that the site has been delayed since public sector funding previously allocated by the former Caradon District Council was removed by Cornwall Council and the CLP does not allocate specific economic regeneration funding to Liskeard, provision for value-enhancing uses on the land east of Charter Way is included to provide cross- subsidy to encourage employment development, notwithstanding the assessment of the site in the Town Framework and the Cornwall Infrastructure Needs Assessment 2013 as ‘having good short term prospects for employment development’ (and there is now positive stakeholder interest).

### **Recent developments**

Since the Neighbourhood Plan was agreed, efforts have been made to move forward the new business park type of employment land identified but these have not so far been successful.

However, all 3 of the smaller infill or opportunity sites indicated in the Neighbourhood Plan Policy EM2 have been developed or are under offer.

Liskeard Town Council, Cornwall Council, the LEP and Creative Kernow have undertaken demand studies in 2017, 2018 and 2019 showing strong demand from local businesses for light and general industrial, storage and office units.

The Chair of the Liskeard Chamber of Commerce is an architect by profession and has a number of businesses looking for space on a business park.

At one stage a private sector developer was interested but this has not resulted in any action. This investor who has recently purchased Drakes Island and recently provided (B1, B2 and B8) units on two Cornwall Council owned plots on an industrial estate at Callington. Unfortunately, there are no vacant plots on the Cornwall Council owned Liskeard Business Park.

Liskeard Town Council and the Liskeard Cornwall Councillors see the Strategic Towns Fund and the towns Vitality Fund as an important way to move this agenda forward.

A meeting was held in November 2020 involving key town councillors and the three Cornwall Councillors which agreed that unlocking employment land, especially the extension of the Liskeard business park site, was a key priority and this was endorsed by the Town Council Meeting on 24 November as the basis for an application for funds. We also do not want to lose sight of the potential of other local employment sites and the importance of providing spaces for agriculture related businesses.

On 1 December Cornwall council DLT met with Liskeard town councillors and Cornwall Councillors and the outcome of the meeting was summarised in an email from Phil Mason:

My reflections of the meeting are that you have some clear priorities that you have developed as a community and Town Council, and we are keen to support you in a targeted and focussed way. My DLT remain impressed with the momentum you have created around the Cattle Market and your instigation of the Makers Project.

I think the actions are that you will continue to refine and articulate your project list for discussion around funding from the Town Centre Vitality fund and Strategic Towns fund, but that for our part we will continue to prioritise the work on Liskeard Cattle Market in all its forms, and assemble a team to look at bringing forward the employment land to the south of Liskeard Business Park. That team's task will be to make contact with the land owner formally, agree parameters, commission masterplan and feasibility study (drawing on existing demand studies and other evidence), and look at commercial terms, and identify funding gaps etc. Matthew Brown in Adam's team will be allocated to take that forward. I propose we will fund any this activity, including commissioned work, from the Strategic Town fund. I will start the process of getting approvals for this work subject to your submission of a proposal. Obviously this sits in the context of Tenecreek but we await your clear steer as a community about the emphasis you want to place on maintaining the mixed use elements of that scheme versus a more residential focus in the context of other employment and retail sites. I am absolutely not dismissing the Agri-hub but feel that at this stage the land to south of Liskeard Business Park is the place to start. Clearly if the private sector comes forward with some specific proposals round the Agri-hub we can engage with them at the time.

### **Developing a feasibility study around an extension to the Liskeard Business Park**

The key question to answer in this feasibility study is what does the public sector need to do to ensure that this site is developed as high quality employment land.

As described above, demand studies have already been undertaken but this now needs to be taken further to the stage which would enable investment decisions to be taken.

Questions include:

- \* The readiness of the existing landowner to sell and the costs of the land. To revisit the willingness of the landowners to sell that had been shown in 2017 when the Neighbourhood Plan was being drafted.
- \* The masterplan design of the site, including the number and type of units to be provided and how this relates to what is known about demand.
- \* What infrastructure needs to be put in.
- \* What the anticipated income would be from the site. This would include the cross subsidy with suitably provided and planned residential development.
- \* The potential roles of the private sector in the project. Including a) investors in the provision of some infrastructure for sub-letting and leasing to other businesses and b) as owners and/or occupiers of property in their own right.

