

**CABINET  
6 JANUARY 2026**

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**LAND AT MORTON PALMS BUSINESS PARK – PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF PLOT**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member -  
Councillor Mandy Porter, Resources Portfolio**

**Responsible Director -  
Trevor Watson, Executive Director Economy and Public Protection**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval to dispose of the plot of land at Morton Palms Business Park as shown on the attached plan (**Appendix 1**), subject to planning permission being obtained by the proposed purchaser.

**Summary**

2. The plot of land extends to 0.56Ha (1.376 Acres) or thereabouts and it is intended that the land be used to provide surface car parking in connection with the proposed extension of Stephenson House which is the office building located directly opposite.
3. The proposed purchaser of the Council's plot is intending to acquire Stephenson House with a view to enlarging the office building to accommodate an office relocation of a major employer within Darlington.
4. Enlarging Stephenson House will mean building on what is currently the office car park and as such the Council is being asked if they can relocate the car parking onto the vacant plot of land opposite off Alderman Best Way.
5. In principle discussions about terms have taken place with the proposed purchaser and these are set out in the Part III report attached (**Appendix 2**).

**Recommendations**

6. It is recommended that:-
  - (a) Approval be granted to dispose of the plot of land at Morton Palms Business Park as indicated on plan Appendix 1 and the Director of Economy & Public Protection be authorised in consultation with the Cabinet Member for the Resources Portfolio to agree terms in line with those set out in Part III, Appendix 2.

- (b) The AD Law & Governance Monitoring Officer be authorised to document the disposal accordingly.

### Reasons

7. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:-

- (a) To assist business relocation and retention of jobs in Darlington, and  
(b) To achieve a Capital Receipt for the Council.

**Trevor Watson, Executive Director – Economy and Public Protection**

### Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

Guy Metcalfe : 6725

Council Plan	This proposed sale is in accord with the objectives and deliverables in the Council Plan
Addressing inequalities	There are no diversity or inequality issues affected
Tackling Climate Change	There are no sustainability issues
Efficient and effective use of resources	A capital receipt will help the Council's budget
Health and Wellbeing	There are no Health and Well Being issues
S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for crime and disorder
Wards Affected	Sadberge & Middleton St George
Groups Affected	There are no Groups adversely affected.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not present a change to the budget or policy framework
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

## **MAIN REPORT**

### **Information and Analysis**

8. The plot of land at the Morton Palms Business Park extends to 0.56Ha (1.376 Acres) or thereabouts and it is intended that the land be used to provide surface car parking in connection with the proposed extension of Stephenson House, which is the office building located directly opposite, see Appendix 1.
9. The proposed purchaser of the Council's plot is intending to acquire Stephenson House with a view to enlarging and almost double the size of the office building to accommodate an office relocation of a major employer within Darlington.
10. Enlarging Stephenson House will require building on what is currently the existing car park and as such the Council is being asked if they can relocate the car parking onto the vacant plot of land opposite, off Alderman Best Way.
11. In principle discussions about the proposed terms have taken place with the purchaser and these are set out in the Part III report attached Appendix 2.
12. Although the plot is to be used for car parking this will facilitate the expansion of Stephenson House which will enable a large employer to relocate and retain jobs within the town.
13. The increase in Business Rates generated from the expansion of Stephenson House will also be a financial benefit to the Council as indicated in the Part III report Appendix 2.
14. Even with the disposal of the plot there is sufficient land retained by the Council to be of interest to other potential developers.

### **Financial Implications**

15. The proposed disposal of the plot will achieve a capital receipt for the Council as shown in the Part III report Appendix 2.

### **Legal Implications**

16. The Council has the authority to dispose of land pursuant to S123 Local Government Act 1972 and the proposed disposal complies with the requirements of that act.
17. The Assistant Director Law and Governance Monitoring Officer will be required to document the disposal and deal with any issues arising from the legal process.

### **Estates and Property Advice**

18. The plot of land at the Morton Palms Business Park which extends to 0.56Ha (1.376 Acres) or thereabouts is available for development and although it is to be used for car parking this will facilitate the expansion of Stephenson House which will enable a large employer to relocate and retain jobs within the town.

19. The land disposal will also generate a capital receipt for the Council.

#### **Procurement Advice**

20. This is a straightforward disposal of Council land and Procurement Advice will be sought as considered necessary.

#### **Carbon Impact and Climate Change**

21. It is expected that the proposed expansion of Stephenson House will be built to BREEAM Excellent standard.

#### **Consultation**

22. External consultation will take place as part of the normal planning process.
23. Internal consultation has raised no objections to the proposed disposal.