

**CABINET
8 SEPTEMBER 2026**

LAND AT MORTON PALMS BUSINESS PARK - PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF PLOT

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

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

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.

Summary

2. The plot of land extends to 1.61ha (4.00 acres) or thereabouts, and it is intended that the land be developed to provide a food retail store, drive thru coffee facility and EV charging hub, with ancillary parking to serve the development, all subject to planning permission.
3. The proposed purchaser is a well-established developer with a good track record for delivery.
4. The parcel of land identified occupies the corner plot of the business park with frontage overlooking the A66, and despite having been available over the years, little interest in the site has materialised.
5. An opportunity now exists to see this plot of land come forward for development which it is felt will serve and complement the nearby existing businesses and the wider Borough.
6. In principle discussions with the purchaser have taken place and the proposed terms are set out

in the Part III report attached (**Appendix 2**).

Recommendations

7. 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.
- (b) The Director of Economy & Public Protection be authorised in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources Portfolio, to agree the terms in line with those set out in the Part III report, see Appendix 2.
- (c) The Assistant Director Law & Governance Monitoring Officer, be authorised to document the disposal accordingly.

Reasons

8. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:

- (a) To bring development forward and provide more job opportunities in Darlington, and
- (b) To achieve a Capital Receipt and Business Rates for the Council.

Trevor Watson
Executive Director Economy and Public Protection

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Council Plan	This proposed disposal is in accordance 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 from the purchase and the resulting Business Rates from the development will help the Council's budget.
Health and Wellbeing	There are no Health & Wellbeing 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

9. The plot of land at the Morton Palms Business Park extends to 1.61ha (4.00 acres) or thereabouts.
10. The proposed purchaser intends to develop the site to provide a food retail store, drive thru coffee facility and EV charging hub, with ancillary parking to serve the development, all subject to planning permission.
11. A Pre-App application has been submitted by the proposed purchaser at their risk and we understand this has not identified any issues which would prevent a detailed planning application being submitted at the appropriate time.
12. The proposed purchaser is a well-established developer with a good track record for delivery.
13. The parcel of land identified, occupies the corner plot of the business park with frontage overlooking the A66, and despite having been available over the years, little interest in the site has materialised.
14. An opportunity now exists to see this plot of land come forward for development which it is felt will serve and complement the nearby existing businesses and the wider borough.
15. In principle discussions with the purchaser have taken place and the proposed terms are set out in the Part III report, Appendix 2.
16. 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

17. The proposed disposal of the plot, will achieve both a capital receipt and Business Rates for the Council.

Legal Implications

18. 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.
19. The Assistant Director of 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

20. This proposed development provides an opportunity to raise the presence and profile of Morton Palms Business Park for those travelling along the A66 and into Darlington.

Procurement Advice

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

Carbon Impact and Climate Change

22. It is expected that the proposed development will respect the Council's commitment to Carbon and Climate change and this will be addressed through the planning application process.

Consultation

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