

REPORT TO: Executive Board Sub Committee

DATE: 11 September 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director - Environment

SUBJECT: Appointment of GVA Grimley Limited to prepare a supplementary planning document for Runcorn Old Town

WARDS: Mersey

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report requests the Sub Committee's agreement to waive standing orders to allow the appointment of consultants GVA Grimley Ltd to prepare a 'supplementary planning document' for Runcorn Old Town. This will take forward the proposals it has prepared for the area as part of the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy (prepared by GVA Grimley and approved by the Executive Board on 19 June 2008) into planning policy that could be used as evidence in any public inquiry into the Mersey Gateway Scheme.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

(1) That for the reasons set out in the report, Procurement Standing Order 4.1 be waived to allow the appointment of consultants GVA Grimley Ltd to prepare a 'supplementary planning document' for Runcorn Old Town, without the need for competitive tender.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Consultants GVA Grimley were appointed by the Council in 2007 to prepare a regeneration strategy for Halton based on the opportunities for regeneration presented by the Mersey Gateway Scheme, particularly those opportunities arising from the de-linking of the Silver Jubilee Bridge from the strategic highway network and the consequent demolition of approach roads at West Bank and Runcorn Old Town.

3.2 Runcorn Old Town is one of five 'impact areas' identified by the Regeneration Strategy, including West Bank, Astmoor Industrial Estate, Halton Lea Shopping Centre and Rocksavage/Ashville Industrial Estate. The areas of greatest regeneration opportunity created by the proposed demolition of the approach roads to the Silver Jubilee Bridge are at West Bank and at Runcorn Old Town.

3.3 As part of their original commission, GVA Grimley have now prepared a draft supplementary planning document (SPD) for West Bank. This was because this area is designated as an Action Area in the Halton Unitary

Development Plan and requires an SPD to provide detailed planning policy for the area. However the results of the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy have revealed that the current planning policies in the UDP for Runcorn Old Town are insufficient to deal with the emerging opportunities.

- 3.4 The Planning Division had already begun work on SPDs for Runcorn Old Town and Halton Lea before the Regeneration Strategy was begun. These were listed in the Council's Local Development Scheme that lists all SPDs and development plans that the Council intends to prepare over a 3 year rolling period. However it was decided to pause this work to await the findings, of the Regeneration Strategy, in particular the implications of de-linking.
- 3.5 Meanwhile staff resources within the Planning Division are now being concentrated on the production of the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework that will set the 'spatial planning' framework for the Borough over a 15 year period. This work, together with delays in filling vacant staff posts has left little capacity for the Runcorn Old Town SPD to be completed in house.
- 3.6 There is clearly a cost advantage in appointing GVA Grimley to work up their Regeneration Strategy proposals for Runcorn Old Town into an SPD as they have already completed all the evidence gathering, public consultation, consideration of alternatives and sustainability appraisal that is necessary for the production of an SPD.
- 3.7 Both the West Bank SPD and the Runcorn Old Town SPD could be used, together with the emerging Core Strategy for the Borough to provide an up to date planning policy context to support the Mersey Gateway Scheme at a public inquiry expected in early 2009.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 A Runcorn Old Town SPD will be used for development control purposes and as evidence to support the Mersey Gateway Scheme at a future public inquiry (as described above). The SPD will also be instrumental in helping to implement the Sustainable Transport Strategy being prepared by consultants for the Mersey Gateway Scheme. This describes sustainable transport policies and potential schemes that will demonstrate how the Mersey Gateway and Silver Jubilee Bridge, in particular will enable increased public transport, walking and cycling across the Mersey, and be integrated into development at Runcorn Old Town.

5.0 BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 A quote from GVA Grimley for £16,128 dated 23 May 2008 is considered good value. The cost can be met from the Housing and Planning

Delivery Grant recently awarded to the Council for help in preparing its Local Development Framework.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 6.1 There will be many implications for the Council's priorities arising from the content of this SPD when it is prepared. Many of these overlap with the implications arising from the overall Regeneration Strategy that was reported to the Executive Board on 19 June. However there are no direct implications arising from the recommendation of this report.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

These proposals are not so significant as to require a full risk assessment.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 None arising directly from the recommendation of this report.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Halton Unitary Development Plan	Rutland House	Andrew Pannell
Mersey Gateway Regeneration strategy	Rutland House	Andrew Pannell