

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 29 October 2024

BY: Executive Director for Place

SUBJECT: Former Cockenzie Power Station Site Technical Appraisal

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To introduce the outputs of the Technical Appraisal process undertaken for the former Cockenzie Power Station Site and seek authority to undertake community engagement to get feedback on the outputs.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Council is asked to:
- Note the Stantec Technical Appraisal Report (available in the Members' Library, Ref: 129/24, October 2024 Bulletin: [Agendas, reports and minutes | East Lothian Council](#));
 - Agree that officers engage with the local communities on that Technical Appraisal Report and then report on feedback; and
 - Agree that officers engage in further commercial engagement and marketing of the site.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 An update report on the Cockenzie Power Station site was presented at Council on 28 June 2022. Paragraph 3.15 sets out the need appoint consultants to “consider the development potential of the site as a whole and identify constraints and necessary core infrastructure to divide the site into development parcels. It is anticipated that the infrastructure and development parcels will be as flexible as possible, at this early stage, before the likely land uses are known and understood”. Council agreed the recommendation to undertake this.

- 3.2 Procurement of the consultants was undertaken in spring 2023 and a report to Council on 27 June 2023 provided an update on this. Paragraph 3.11 stated that what was being procured was “different from the 2017 masterplan in that it will set out how the site could be technically and physically redeveloped for economic uses rather than high level vision and options for site uses. Its purpose will be to identify the potential constraints to development and devise a suitable internal road network and potential servicing routes, so that the site can be divided into a series of development land parcels and appropriate landscaped areas. It is intended that this will provide a flexible development structure for the site, allowing land parcels to be consolidated for a larger user or divided for smaller use types. This reflects the fact that the aspiration for employment investment could encompass industrial, office, distribution, or other use types as well as public realm improvements.”
- 3.3 It had been anticipated that this Technical Appraisal would have reached a stage to made available to Councillors earlier. However, progress had to be delayed to factor in whether the 90% UK Government funded enabling works, involving removing the earthwork bunds surrounding the coal store (Planning Ref: 24/00324/PM) were going to be funded and permission granted. Those works were consented by Planning Committee at the end of June 2024 and commenced at the beginning of September, together with the East Lothian Council-funded link road (Planning Ref: 22/00440/P).
- 3.4 Stantec, the appointed consultant, commenced work on the appraisal in autumn 2023, with workshops held with external key agencies and Council departments to gather information on the site as well as initial feedback on some of the outputs under construction.
- 3.5 The Technical Appraisal produced by Stantec has been published in the Members’ Library ([Agendas, reports and minutes | East Lothian Council](#)). As per above, it is important to clarify what this is and what it isn’t given the potential for misinformation with visual documents. The appraisal is not a draft Council strategy or plan. It is independent advice to the Council that could then inform future plans, programmes and strategies. It has no formal status and cannot be referred to in the determination of future planning applications. The purpose of it is as advice as a possible development strategy as to how the site could be come forward as a high-quality setting for economic development. The mission section of the appraisal sets out that the main building blocks of that strategy are:
- Building on East Lothian Council’s (ELC’s) strategy for economic development within Cockenzie and the wider region;
 - Harnessing the unique advantages of the site to drive forward ELC’s strategy for employment growth and job creation;
 - Deliver an exemplary appraisal and layout which is in keeping with local and national policy, including National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4);

- Provision of a high-quality industrial/business park with the flexibility to respond to market demand and future needs;
- Marketable development areas that can be viable and which are suitably accessed, serviced and take cognisance of local constraints;
- Development areas set within an attractive landscape setting that respects cultural and natural heritage assets and provides a significant open space network offering significant biodiversity net gain;
- A utilities and servicing strategy focused on the integration of a comprehensive green and blue infrastructure network as part of a strategy for significant ecological enhancement;
- Encourage, promote and facilitate development that minimises emissions and adapts to the current and future impacts of climate change and the proposals resilience to them;
- Provision of local community benefits within significant open spaces, alongside new and enhanced public amenity areas, the form of which can be informed by the community itself; and
- An accessible and sustainable employment location and community assets with the opportunity to strengthen local walking and cycle path connections and encourage active travel.

3.6 It is not the purpose of this report to summarise the detail in the content of the appraisal. However, a short summary and highlight of key points is as follows: the appraisal is structured into 7 chapters. Following an introduction, chapter 2 sets out the context of the site, including its constraints and current planned developments, which then frames the development potential of the site for both community and economic developments as well as access, biodiversity and greenspace enhancement. A key factor in that initial context is the topography of the former coal store part of the site, where there is a 16m difference in levels falling from south to north that will result in the requirement for development platforms.

3.7 Chapter 3 sets out what are referred to foundation components of the technical appraisal. The former power station site is identified as a single developable plot of circa 8ha, this to be access and serviced from the Edinburgh Road.

3.8 Development of a southern plot would include a platformed coal store site bounded in the north by the link road and the south by the coal rail link and would be circa 21ha. Given the level differences and to avoid significant costly level raising, it is recommended that this area be formed into development platforms dropping in height with the surrounding landform. A greater number of development platforms would reduce the building sizes that could be developed and therefore the flexible potential for the site. This area has no services and therefore it is recommended that a services strip be created down the western side of the site along with a

separate access road that could allow each individual platform to be accessed.

- 3.9 A secondary ranked area of development potential could be to the south of the Edinburgh Road of circa 1.85ha. Note that that area was not included for development in the 2017 Masterplan and may be controversial. The chapter also contains sections on utilities, drainage options and active travel.
- 3.10 Chapter 4 sets out advice on design guidance for the build form for future development of the site and where over half of the site would be open space. The built form factors in topography to inform potential building heights. Sections are also included indicating access, layouts, and building appearance. The section on layout states that the uses listed are based on building sizes and don't represent any preferred use of the site but what sizes of buildings they typically have.
- 3.11 Chapter 5 sets out design guidance for the significant areas of open space that could be enhanced to support the development of the wider site. This includes biodiversity enhancement through a series of connected networks and a significant public realm enhancement along the John Muir Way. A community market/event space is considered along the eastern edge of the power station site. Sections are included on sustainability, public space, drainage, play and public art.
- 3.12 Chapter 6, an Options Summary, looks to synthesise the aspects of the previous chapters to set out two broad layouts for the site. Note that there are many more potential layout combinations from the content of the previous chapters. However, they do highlight that potential up to circa 300,000 sq ft of floorspace could be accommodated on the northern site and circa 700,000 sq ft of the southern site. Again, this could be less or more, depending on uses, which could include community aspirations. What is presented is a flexible approach which can respond to future needs, market conditions and circumstances. The chapter concludes with high level costing estimates for some of the access and sustainable drainage infrastructure required for the site. We are working with Stantec to gather further information on servicing costings.
- 3.13 Chapter 7 is a short section on how development of the site could be phased, with chapter 8 as a conclusion. It concludes that key next steps include:
 - Marketing of the site;
 - Determining an investment programme for servicing the site; and
 - Developing the open space and biodiversity guidance for the site.
- 3.14 Whilst this is technical advice to the Council as landowner from experienced consultants, it was set out at the start of the process that we would look to engage the surrounding communities of Prestonpans, Cockenzie and Port Seton on the outputs of the process. Whilst not a

formal planning consultation, officers would propose meeting with community representatives, as well as making the documents available online for the submission of feedback on its content. Details are being worked up with consultants Stantec, who will be part of that process. It is then proposed that feedback would be reported back to Council in early 2025.

- 3.15 It is proposed to use the appraisal to continue engagement with UK and Scottish Governments and associated agencies such as Scottish Enterprise on the redevelopment of the site. The appraisal and feedback would also be used to market the site to potential investors and developers. It should be noted that the site's potential will be featured on the Invest East Lothian website. The appraisal and feedback will also be used to inform emerging policy for the site in the preparation of LDP2 over 2025 and business case options for future redevelopment of the site. This will need to factor in the scale and availability of investment that will be required and any feedback and interest from the marketing process.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None. This is advice to Council and not deciding policy.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The appraisal is advice to the Council rather than a Council, plan, strategy or development. Therefore, an integrated impact assessment to engage communities on that external advice is not required.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – the appraisal has already been budgeted for in 23/24 and 24/25 capital budgets.
- 6.2 Personnel - none.
- 6.3 Other – none.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Report to June 2022 Council – Cockenzie Former Power Station Site: Progress Update and Actions – https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/23098/05_cockenzie_former_power_station_site_progress_update_and_actions

- 7.2 Report to June 2022 Council – Cockenzie Levelling Up Funding Bid
https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/23099/06_cockenzie_levelling_up_funding_bid
- 7.3 Report to June 2023 Council – Cockenzie Former Power Station Site Update
https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/23908/08_cockenzie_former_power_station_site_-_update
- 7.4 Stantec Technical Appraisal Report: Members’ Library, Ref: 129/24, October 2024 Bulletin: [Agendas, reports and minutes | East Lothian Council](#)

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DATE	14 October 2024