

Appendix 2. Summary of the site search process and outcomes

- 1.1 Between autumn 2022 and spring 2023 a comprehensive site search process was undertaken for the new project. Officers examined over 20 sites across the west of the city. In order to be a credible location to host the new facility, sites had to be at least 1.5 hectares in size to accommodate a new facility of up to 9,500m² with all the necessary ancillary features such as car parking space. Sites were also favoured which were more centrally located in the west of the city with good transport connectivity for private road vehicles, public transport, and for active travel.
- 1.2 The sites examined included both public and privately owned sites. Priority was given to looking at all viable brownfield sites in the west of the city which could offer the potential to deliver the new facility without the loss of open space or biodiversity. More information about the sites that were considered is given in paragraphs 1.6 to 1.12 below (*'Outcomes of the site assessment and EOI process'*).
- 1.3 The sites were assessed by a multi-disciplinary panel of experienced officers drawn from a range of relevant disciplines including planning, sport and leisure, regeneration, finance, legal, and estates. The assessments were conducted in a structured way against 10 criteria to examine each site's relative strengths and weaknesses. These criteria related to themes including location, land ownership, planning considerations, legal constraints, and likely development and maintenance costs.

Expressions of interest

- 1.4 To ensure that all potential sites were identified, the site search process was complemented by an 'expressions of interest' (EOI) process which was undertaken between January and the end of March 2023. Through this process over 100 developers, landowners, commercial agents, and other sector contacts were invited to come forward with any sites with the potential to accommodate the new facility. Five proposals were received in response to the EOI process, two of which were proposals based on sites which officers had already examined.
- 1.5 The proposals sent in through the EOI process were also assessed by the same cross-functional site assessment panel using the same approach as used for the officer-identified sites to ensure consistency.

Outcomes of the site assessment and EOI process

- 1.6 Through their assessments of the sites, the panel determined that the majority of the sites did not offer the potential for further development. The reasons for not taking forward the other sites are summarised below:
 - landowners not prepared to sell their sites

- the sites being too small, too constrained, or not sufficiently well connected to support the development of a landmark sports and leisure facility
- the sites' locations being too remote and not sufficiently accessible for local residents
- a disproportionate loss of open space or biodiversity that could not be readily replaced or mitigated with the new development
- the topography and shape of the site making development costly, and/or compromising the design layout and thus quality of any facility to be delivered on the site
- planning policy constraints on the sites.

1.7 The publicly owned sites which the council considered included:

- **Hangleton Bottom waste management site.** The site offers the space to deliver a high quality facility that would be readily accessible from the A27 and A23. This aligns well with the West Hub's role in hosting county and regional level events. However, the West Hub's primary role is as a community facility. With that in mind the location was judged to be too far from the centre west of the city to successfully fulfill that role.

There are also other constraints on the site. Specifically, the site has been designated as a waste management site in the East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton & Hove Waste & Minerals Sites Plan (Policy SP1) and is the only safeguarded site for new waste facilities in Brighton & Hove. Under planning law every city has to have designated waste land in the city for temporary storage and the land needs to be available for development of waste infrastructure if needed.

An alternative waste management site would therefore need to be identified before any development could take place. No suitable alternative sites are currently available.

- **The council-owned parks and recreation grounds in Hove:** (i) Hove Park, (ii) Hove Recreation Ground, (iii) Nevill Recreation Ground, (iv) Victoria Recreation Ground. Each of these sites is a designated area of open space in the City Plan and therefore subject to a strong level of protection under Policy CP16. In addition, these sites currently enjoy high levels of use by the local community. The topology of some of the sites, in particular Hove Park, would make the delivery of any facility costly and difficult.
- **Hove recycling centre.** The site's constraints would limit the scope of the facility that could be delivered. It would not be suitable for accommodating a flagship leisure centre intended to serve the community and host regional and county-level events. The access roads into the site are constrained which would make managing visitor flows

difficult at peak times. This could give rise to greater congestion on Old Shoreham Road and beyond.

The cost of delivering an alternative recycling facility for the council's waste contractors (Veolia) would add significantly to the total project cost. There would also be cost, time, and risk implications associated with agreeing the surrender of Veolia's lease on the current site and with agreeing a lease on a new site.

- **Benfield Valley North.** The site's location is well connected and well located to serve the west of the city. However, the site is one the city's key areas of biodiversity, which together with its shape and topography combine to make the site much less viable than the site south of Sainsbury's.

Part of the site was allocated in the City Plan Part 2 for residential development. Hollybrook Homes are looking to bring forward a residential-led development of around 100 homes on the area of Benfield Valley north of Hangleton Lane part of which is allocated in City Plan Part 2 (H2 Housing Sites – Urban Fringe). The development is currently at the pre-application stage. With this development likely to come forward there would therefore be very limited capacity on the site for any further development.

- 1.8 The privately owned sites cannot be identified in this paper as the discussions with the current landowners were conducted on a commercial-in-confidence basis. We can however specify that they included sites across the west of the city from the Shoreham Harbour area in the west to sites in the east of Hove, in some cases on or close to Old Shoreham Road. Some of the sites were in current use for commercial purposes. Others have development currently taking place or are likely to have development taking place in the near future.
- 1.9 The reasons for the privately owned sites not being shortlisted often related to the sites being too small or too constrained to accommodate the new facility, and/or to their locations being too far from the centre-west of the city. However, for the most viable private sites, the principal reason for not taking the site forward was that the current owner was unwilling to sell.
- 1.10 Only two sites emerged from the site search and EOI process described above. These being:
- the existing site
 - the site at the council-owned land south of Sainsbury's (LSS).
- 1.11 A third site had tentatively been identified through the EOI process. A developer had suggested that an opportunity existed to deliver the new facility on the car park owned by Sainsbury's. Throughout autumn of last year officers pursued that option with Sainsbury's, including an approach by the Chief Executive.

1.12 However, Sainsbury's remained reluctant to engage and indicated that they were not willing to sell the site. With that in mind, that option was not included in the business case or site development options which feature in Continuum's final report.