
ASSET RATIONALISATION FOR EASEMORE ROAD - DECLARATION OF LAND SURPLUS TO REQUIREMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS AT COMMUNITY HOUSE, EASEMORE ROAD, TOWN CENTRE

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Matthew Dormer
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton - Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
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Wards Affected	Abbey
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	No
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green
Non-Key Decision	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee RESOLVE that:-

the existing Community House building and associated land in Easemore Road (rear of No. 103), be declared surplus to Council requirements and disposed of at market value.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The existing Community House building is unfortunately no longer suitable to retain within its current condition. Following a recent detailed condition survey and report, it is now envisaged that over the next five years a minimum of some £340k will need to be spent on just planned preventative maintenance.

2.2 Examples of the issues to be addressed to the structure are:

- Asbestos Containing Materials (ACMs) were found throughout the building;
- Rising damp;

- Contravention of Fire regulations;
- Structural deficiencies;
- Lath and plaster requires testing for anthrax prior to extraction works due to age of the building;
- Timber rot in various locations;
- Upgrade works to fire detection system and emergency lighting throughout;
- Investigation required of existing drainage, potential failure contributing to dampness throughout the building;
- Issues with electrical distribution boards that are life expired.

2.3 As a result of 2.1 - 2.2, it is considered that the most appropriate way forward is to demolish the existing structures and replace it with the housing development, as shown in Appendix 1 (Drawing No. P2049/175A refers). Based on preliminary comments received both from Worcestershire County Council (Highways) and Planning Services as a result of submitted pre-apps, this Indicative Layout is considered acceptable for the submission of an Outline Planning application, subject to receipt of formal confirmation.

2.4 'Where Next' have a lease on the site adjacent to, and south-west of the Community House proposed redevelopment site, but regrettably over the years they have encroached substantially onto this site. Consequently, preliminary discussions have taken place with their representatives and 'Where Next' understand that they will need to vacate this encroached area. In doing so, Officers will work with them to develop better accessibility to their entire site from the main entrance off Wellesbourne Close.

2.5 'Where Next' were originally relocated on this site in 1980s, when they were transferred from their previous leased site now occupied by Sainsbury's on the Alvechurch Highway roundabout, adjacent Middlehouse Lane. The Council at that time, wanted to dispose of this site as part of the major store development, and therefore relocated 'Where Next,' encompassing the construction of the existing office and glass houses at Wellesbourne Close.

2.6 Consideration has been given to include the 'Where Next' formal site off Wellesbourne Close as part of the complete redevelopment of the site, but there are a number of factors that do not support such a

proposal. 'Where Next' site becomes narrow very quickly, therefore development would be limited to providing a very small number of additional dwellings. Use of the site would of course obviously require 'Where Next' to be relocated, and there would undoubtedly be pressure for the Council to not only supply this alternative site, but also provide new infrastructure, presumably at no cost to 'Where Next.'

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The sale of this land will generate capital receipts to the General Fund, and all capital receipts from disposals are deemed to be a Corporate capital resource available for allocation in line with Corporate priorities.
- 3.2 The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government issued guidance in giving Local Authorities greater freedoms with how capital receipts can be used to finance expenditure. This Direction allows for the following expenditure to be treated as Capital, 'expenditure on any project that is designed to generate ongoing revenue savings in the delivery of public services, and/or transform service delivery to reduce costs, and/or transform service delivery in a way that reduces costs or demand for services in future years, for any of the public sector delivery partners.'

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The primary tenant and the sub-tenants of Community House have been aware for some considerable time that the condition of the building will warrant their eventual displacement, so our proposals are not new to them. Although the Council has no legal obligations to provide replacement accommodation, Officers have met with both the primary tenant and the sub-tenants to realise an understanding of their accommodation needs. Officers have also met with other community group tenants of our other properties in the area, to assess space availability to help best relocate all the current occupants of Community House.
- 4.2 Although the Council may dispose of its land or property in any manner it wishes, the Council is required to dispose of any interest in land at Best Value in accordance with Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972. To achieve this requirement, it is normal for the Council to market the sites for sale to achieve the highest capital receipts possible.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 5.1 **Communities which are safe, well maintained and green** – the existing arrangements provide a mixture of small business ventures situated within an ageing building, with an extensive car park at the rear. Easemore Road in this locality is predominantly a residential area, being in close proximity to the town centre, with excellent bus routes being readily accessible. Consequently, with the new proposal of providing the housing development, this appears to be a more appropriate fit than business use, complimenting the existing residential properties.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 As part of the land sale, Officers recommend that it will be stipulated, that the proposed housing development will not include any on-site fossil fuelled installations, and will also obtain the highest Energy Performance Certificate rating possible (to be agreed with Council).

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment is required and undertaken.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 In consultation with Worcestershire County Council, they have requested the existing bus stop situated on Easemore Road, close to the existing access to the rear car park, to be repositioned slightly. In addition, they have also requested the provision of dropped kerbs and tactile paving provision at various locations in close proximity to the site, to facilitate better pedestrian movement. Also, the existing Traffic Regulation Order will need to be amended on Easemore Road, to facilitate that 'No Waiting at any Time' restrictions are provided, this to ensure that sight visibility lines for the new access are unobstructed by parked vehicles. The cost of these works will be met by the successful purchaser/developer presumably through a Section 278 Agreement.
- 6.3 Referring to 2.4, 'Where Next' have requested assistance in providing an improved vehicular access arrangement within their approved site, in view of our 'request' for them to vacate the land that they have encroached upon. These are minor engineering works, and it is

suggested that as a condition of the sale of the site, the successful purchaser/developer undertakes such works.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The existing condition of Community House is a financial and safety risk to the Council, this would be mitigated by relocating the current tenants and then removal of the building.
- 7.2 Failure to achieve best value for the land is mitigated through the process for selling at market value.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 - Indicative Layout

Appendix 2 - Site Location Plan

Pre-application advice received from Worcestershire County Council (Highways).

Executive Committee

12 July 2022

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Matthew Dormer	
Lead Director/Head of Service	Claire Felton - Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services	
Financial Services	Peter Carpenter Interim Deputy S151 Finance	
Legal Services	Clare Flanagan Principal Solicitor	
Policy Team	Emily Payne Engagement and Equalities Advisor	
Climate Change Officers	Kath Manning - Climate Change and Energy Support Officer Anna Wardell-Hill Environmental Policy and Awareness Officer	