

Report of:	Corporate Director
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Portfolio Leaders:	Economic Development & Planning and Corporate Improvement
Key Decision:	No
Report Track:	Cabinet: 18/09/14

<p style="text-align: center;">CABINET 18 SEPTEMBER 2014 REDEVELOPMENT OF THE FORMER AELFGAR SCHOOL SITE, TAYLORS LANE, RUGELEY</p>
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<p>1 Purpose of Report</p>

- 1.1 To give consideration to the disposal of Council owned land to facilitate the comprehensive redevelopment of the former Aelfgar School site in Taylors Lane, Rugeley.

<p>2 Recommendations</p>

- 2.1 That Cabinet agrees to the principle of including the former squash courts and part of the adjacent Taylors Lane car park in emerging plans for the redevelopment of the former Aelfgar School site in order to facilitate a comprehensive approach to redevelopment.
- 2.2 That, the Corporate Director is authorised to negotiate appropriate terms and conditions for the disposal of the Council’s land in consultation with the Portfolio Leaders for Economic Development & Planning and Corporate Improvement; and to enter into agreements as necessary to enable the disposal and development of the Council’s land in conjunction with the land owned by the County Council.

<p>3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendation</p>

- 3.1 Staffordshire County Council owns the former Aelfgar School on Taylors Lane, Rugeley which has been vacant since its closure in August 2011. The site area is 1.73 hectares or thereabouts (see appendix 1).

- 3.2 In response to local need, the County Council is proposing to use about half of the site for large (60 bed) ExtraCare (or FlexiCare) facility. This development would also include other complementary services such as a GP surgery, other therapies, a pharmacy, community café, hairdressers etc. The remainder of the site would be surplus to needs of the FlexiCare facility and would be available for appropriate alternative use such as residential development.
- 3.3 The District Council owns property adjacent to the former Aelfgar School Site; namely Taylors Lane pay and display car park and former squash courts. The squash courts were declared surplus in excess of 10 years ago and have remained vacant since pending the redevelopment of the Aelfgar Centre site.
- 3.4 Policy RTC4 of Part 1 of the Cannock Chase Local Plan identifies the former Aelfgar School site as a potential residential development opportunity noting that it should be developed as a single comprehensive package. The Policy also notes that any scheme should facilitate improved access to the Rose Theatre and adjoining YMCA. The inclusion of the former squash courts and part of the car park will be required for the access arrangements necessary for the whole site and the achievement of a comprehensive scheme for its redevelopment, and therefore it is recommended that the Council's property interests should be included within the emerging proposals, subject to satisfactory terms and conditions being agreed by the County Council.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 In accordance with the Council's Asset Management and Energy Management Strategy 2013-18 the Council will use its non-operational land assets to generate capital receipts and where possible support the growth and regeneration plans for the District. This strategy supports the Council's Corporate Priority of Prosperity and will contribute to the realisation of Policy RTC4 of the Cannock Chase Local Plan as outlined above.
- 4.2 In addition, this report supports the Council's Corporate Priorities in that it assists in the provision of a FlexiCare facility designed to improve the living environment for a number of elderly residents in the District.

5 Report Detail

- 5.1 Policy RTC4 of the Cannock Chase Local Plan identifies the combined site of the former Aelfgar School site and the former squash courts on Taylors Lane, Rugeley as a site available for residential development. It is considered that it could accommodate a mixed housing scheme comprising town houses, semi-detached houses, flats for the elderly, apartments and affordable units, at a site density of around 30-40 dwellings per hectare.
- 5.2 The availability of the former Aelfgar School and squash courts site for housing development is ultimately dependent on Staffordshire County Council releasing

the site for development. The County Council has however identified the site as suitable for a FlexiCare scheme.

- 5.3 The key components of a FlexiCare scheme are housing for older people in the form of self contained apartments with additional facilities which can vary but usually include a café, lounge, activity space, IT equipment and gardens and staff on site 24 hours a day 7 days a week to provide care and support to the residents.
- 5.4 The County Council's proposals are still at the "concept" stage of design. It is therefore not possible at the present time to ascertain the total extent of land that will be occupied by the FlexiCare scheme. It is likely the remainder of the site could be disposed of for residential development purposes. It is considered vital that this land is included within an overall scheme to secure the comprehensive redevelopment of the whole site thus avoiding piecemeal development. The formulation of improved access arrangements will require the inclusion of the Council's land holdings, and is considered to be the most effective means of securing a comprehensive scheme for the entire site as envisaged by the Local Plan (Policy RTC4). It should be noted that the Council's property holdings in this location are considered difficult albeit not impossible to redevelop in isolation, therefore securing their inclusion within a larger scheme would be beneficial. A small saving will also be achieved via reduced rating liabilities. Also, the squash courts were due to be demolished during the course of 2014/15. The cost of such work can now be avoided.
- 5.5 The concept design plans for the FlexiCare scheme indicate that access to it would be off Taylors Lane. The existing access to the former school site (and Rose Theatre) is narrow and would be inadequate to serve a FlexiCare scheme of the scale proposed. Inclusion of the District Council's land would open up the frontage of the scheme and provide improved access.
- 5.6 Taylors Lane car park currently has 47 pay and display parking spaces but it is not used to capacity. Disposal of part of the car park to accommodate the County Council's proposals would result in the loss of approximately 15 spaces. Currently the District Council receives approximately £19,000 per annum in income from the car park. It is considered that the remaining 32 spaces would be sufficient to satisfy the existing demand for parking for off-street car parking with minimal impact upon income.
- 5.7 As this report seeks to establish the principle of including some of the Council's property holdings within the emerging plans for the whole site, no information is currently available on the capital receipt that could be generated via such a disposal. Accordingly, if Cabinet agreed to include the property indicated, the Corporate Director would be authorised to negotiate appropriate terms for the disposal to the County Council. Such terms and conditions would need to be agreed by the Cabinet Leaders for Economic Development & Planning and Corporate Improvement before the sale proceeds.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

If Members agree to dispose of the Council owned land at Taylors Lane the proceeds received will be a Capital Receipt for the General Fund; this will be available to fund future Approved Schemes within the General Fund Capital Programme.

Sale of the land will also generate savings in expenditure as the Council will avoid having to pay demolition costs for the derelict squash court buildings.

Para 5.7 refers to a potential loss of income due to the proposed reduction in the number of pay & display spaces that remain following disposal. However, the Head of Housing & Waste Management has advised that the income currently derived is from a underutilised car park and that a reduction from 47 to 32 spaces should not impact on the income received.

Additionally, the Council is currently paying NNDR of £6,025 for the premises at Taylors lane; these would be avoided if the site was disposed of. There will also be a small saving in the NNDR costs charged to Car Parks if the number of spaces is reduced from 47 to 32; the 2014-15 cost is currently £3,064.

It is anticipated that any professional fees payable in relation to the disposal will need to be met by the relevant Authority and will form part of the negotiations between the Corporate Director & Portfolio Leader and SCC.

6.2 Legal

Section 123 Local Government Act 1972 allows local authorities to dispose of land at best consideration that can reasonably be obtained. However, the Secretary of State allows sales at an undervalue where it would further the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the area and where such undervalue does not exceed £2 million.

6.3 Human Resources

None

6.4 Section 17 (Crime Prevention)

None within the scope of this report, although the subsequent redevelopment of the site will take crime prevention issues into account.

6.5 Human Rights Act

None

6.6 Data Protection

None

6.7 Risk Management

None

6.8 Equality & Diversity

None within the scope of this report, but the subsequent redevelopment of the site should enable elderly people to retain their independence whilst living within a secure environment.

6.9 Best Value

If Cabinet agrees to the principle of disposal, the Corporate Director would be required to agree appropriate terms with the County Council based upon the principle of achieving best value for the Council.

7 Appendices to the Report

Appendix 1

Indicative Land Ownership Plan

Previous Consideration

Background Papers



 FORMER AELFGAR SITE
 FORMER SQUASH COURTS AND PART OF CAR PARK

SCALE 1:1250

DATE: AUGUST 2014

