

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL**DISPOSAL OF THE FORMER ABBEY SCHOOL SITE, MANSFIELD****Purpose of the Report**

1. To pursue an opportunity to work with Brunts Charity to expand their current accommodation and facilities for the elderly at the Patchills Centre through sale of the former school site at Abbey Road, Mansfield on the terms set out in the Exempt Appendix to this report.

Information

2. Some information relating to this report is not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. Having regard to the circumstances, on balance the public interest in disclosing the information does not outweigh the reason for exemption because divulging the information would significantly damage the Council's commercial position. The exempt information is set out in the exempt appendix.
3. Brunts Charity own the Patchills Centre providing accommodation and facilities for elderly people and have approached the Council with a view to the purchase of adjoining Council land at the former school site at Abbey Road. The Charity currently provides independent living within a safeguarding environment with many residents living independent lives through Adult Social care support packages. The Charity provides over 150 almshouse properties in 3 locations in Mansfield offering one bed flats and one and two bed bungalows to people over 60 who are resident in Mansfield and the district, have a local connection and are in need due to some form of hardship or distress. In pursuing this opportunity the Council will achieve more through the work of this partnership in terms of the delivery of services to older people.
4. The proposal for the development of the Abbey Road site is for a development of low cost elderly housing units of one and two bedroomed bungalows as an expansion of the current provision as well as a medical centre or dementia care facility. The new housing units would link into the existing Patchills Community Centre as a central hub which already has an excellent infrastructure including two large community halls with two separate kitchens. This is an excellent opportunity for the Council to work with an established provider using Council land to enable the provision of more accommodation and facilities for elderly residents.
5. The subject site comprises a former school (now demolished) with associated outdoor play areas of rectangular shape. The site is 5.11 acres (2.07 hectares). The site is located 1 mile to the east of Mansfield town centre and 0.5 miles to the west of A6117. The property is located off Abbey Road. To the north, east and west of the site are residential properties, to the south is a council allotment. The site is surplus to the operational needs of the Council.

6. The only vehicular access to the site is via a single carriageway from Abbey Road with a secondary dirt track access from Eakring Road which runs between the rear gardens of the houses on Normanton Drive and the council allotments. The narrow width of the main access and lack of a second suitable access point limits the potential to develop the site with a second access only being deliverable through negotiations with neighbouring owners to secure rights across their property. This access problem led to the failure of a bid to Homes England through the Local Authority Accelerated Construction scheme in 2017. It is Brunts Charity's intention to demolish two of their existing bungalows to provide an additional access into the site.
7. The local planning authority, Mansfield District Council, are currently in the process of adopting a new local plan from 2013 to 2033. The emerging plan identifies the former school site on Abbey Road as an opportunity for between 50 and 70 new homes.
8. Terms have been agreed with Brunts Charity for their purchase of the site as set out in the exempt appendix to this report with the sale to be conditional on the proposed purchaser undertaking site survey works and securing planning consent for their proposed scheme. The ability for Brunts to provide a second access to the site through their adjoining ownership gives them a special purchaser status and an independent valuation has been commissioned which confirms that the sale price agreed with them is in excess of market value.
9. As a private treaty disposal to one party, in accordance with the Constitution, the Group Manager Legal Services and Section 151 Officer have been consulted in respect of this proposed transaction and whether it is appropriate for it to proceed. They are satisfied that it is appropriate to proceed on the basis of the terms agreed.
10. As part of the disposal process confirmation was sought from the Department for Education to sell the land that was previously used as school playing fields. An application was made under The School Playing Fields General Disposal and Change of Use Consent (No5) 2014 and this has recently been granted approval.

Other Options Considered

11. The following additional options have been considered:
 - (a) Retain the Property: this property is vacant and has been declared surplus to the operational requirements of the County Council and can be sold.
 - (b) Market the property with a view to obtaining the best bid and an open market value: the restrictive single lane vehicular access significantly reduces the viability of the site for housing.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

12. To use the sale of a surplus Council land asset to work with a successful partner in the delivery of accommodation and facilities for the elderly to expand their offer thereby providing further support to vulnerable elderly people, to secure a capital receipt to the Council and to provide much needed housing for this location.

Financial Implications

13. The financial implications are set out in the Exempt Appendix.

Statutory and Policy Implications

14. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

1) That approval is given to pursue this partnership opportunity for the Council to use its' land to enable the provision of more accommodation and facilities for our elderly residents by disposing of the site at Abbey Road, Mansfield, to the proposed purchaser on the basis of the terms detailed in the exempt appendix.

Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts
Leader of the County Council

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Matthew Neal, Service Director Investment and Growth, t: 0115 977 3822; e: matthew.neal@nottscc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (CJ 08/10/2020)

15. The recommendation falls within the remit of Policy Committee under its terms of reference. The Council is under a statutory obligation when disposing of land or buildings to obtain the best price reasonably obtainable on the open market. Therefore, Members should satisfy themselves of this. If the Council has any retained land the effect on the value and use of it must be considered.

Financial Comments (CT 16/10/2020)

14. The financial implications of this report are contained within the Exempt Appendix.

Background Papers and Published Documents

- None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- Electoral Division(s): Mansfield South
Member(s): Councillor Andy Sissons, Councillor Stephen Garner

File ref.: /SK/SB/01144new
SP: 3509
Properties affected: 01144 - Former Abbey Primary School