

ASSET DISPOSAL

Executive Summary

This report proposes that the authority dispose of a site located at Westfield Avenue known as the Westfield Avenue Compound, 65-79 Westfield Avenue, Westfield a bare site. The Compound site is in temporary occupation by Woking FC as a yard and offices. The site has an allocation for residential development under the Site Allocations DPD.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RESOLVE That

the Council dispose of the freehold interest in the Westfield Avenue Compound to the preferred bidder once planning consent has been secured for nine houses.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: The disposal of Westfield Avenue Compound will provide a capital receipt to the Council and will facilitate the redevelopment of this vacant site to deliver houses and improve the local area.

The Executive has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.

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| Background Papers: | None. |
| Reporting Person: | Kevin Foster, Strategic Director – Corporate Resources Email: kevin.foster@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3198 |
| Contact Person: | Mike Sudlow, Strategic Assets Consultant Email: mike.sudlow@woking.gov.uk |
| Portfolio Holder: | Councillor Dale Roberts Email: clldale.roberts@woking.gov.uk |
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1.0 Westfield Avenue Compound

- 1.1 The Site previously had nine houses on site, demolished in c. 2010, following which it was in temporary use as a construction yard for the residential development on the opposite side of Westfield Avenue. Following completion of that neighbouring development, the Site has been in temporary use by Woking Football Club for storage, parking and office use.
- 1.2 Following a review in 2023 It was decided that the Council should submit a planning application in its own right with a view to offering the site to the market with an outline consent, in order to maximise the capital receipt.
- 1.3 The Council made a planning application for development of nine houses on the site under planning reference PLAN/2023/0980. The Site was subsequently marketed by Seymour's both in 2023, prior to submission of the planning application, and has subsequently been re-marketed on the basis of the application scheme.
- 1.4 The Council sought unconditional bids in late 2024 for the site and the highest bid has now been accepted in principle subject to Executive approval. This bid is made on the basis that the application scheme receives consent. The application is expected to be determined by the Planning Committee in April 2024.
- 1.5 The Council has invited Woking Football Club on several occasions to bid for the site . The Club are aware that the authority intends to proceed with a disposal based on the recent marketing exercise.
- 1.6 Under Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has a duty not to dispose of land for a consideration less than the best that can be reasonably obtained ('Best Value/Best Consideration' and alternative options for the Site have been considered:

- **Apartment development**

Property Services created a draft plan for an apartment scheme on the site, and undertook a valuation of this option, which indicated that a nine-house scheme generates a higher land value than an apartment scheme. In addition, a housing scheme is considered to pose less planning risk and is more popular with local residents.

The marketing of the site has been open to offers from developers looking to deliver apartments on the site, but these have not resulted in the highest bids.

- **Alternative Uses**

Other alternative options for redevelopment of the Site have been considered and have been dismissed as unfeasible. The fact that the site has a residential allocation under the Site Allocations DPD, means that alternative uses are unlikely to secure planning consent.

2.0 Corporate Strategy

- 2.1 The proposal to sell the Compound contributes to a number of Objectives in the Corporate Strategy as set out in the *Woking for all supplementary priorities (2022-2027)* strategy. The proposed sale meets a number of this strategy's objectives, including encouraging a "A high performing council" by helping to "Get the Council's finances under control" and "Consider new approaches to increase income".

- 2.2 The Commercial Protocol has been consulted in respect of the decision-making process to apply to this disposal. The disposal meets a number of Guiding Principles within the Protocol including No 11, “*to maximise receipts from all funding streams ...over the period of the MTFs*”.
- 2.3 This project will impact directly on the Councils key priorities under the Working for all 2022-2027 (June 2022 Supplementary and amended priorities 2022-23 from the new administration):

A high performing council

- *Get the Council’s finances under control – this is our first priority.*
- *Consider new approaches to increase income.*

Greener communities

By enabling the re-use of a brownfield site, to deliver houses meeting sustainability criteria, and reducing the pressure on greenfield development.

3.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 3.1 No major risks identified.

Equalities and Human Resources

- 3.2 None arising from this report.

Legal

- 3.3 None arising from this report. This disposal is considered to be compliant with the provisions of S123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

4.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 4.1 A consultation exercise was undertaken with local residents and stakeholders supporting a residential scheme on this site.

REPORT ENDS

Site plans showing the proposed scheme under planning application PLAN/2023/0980 for nine houses.



Asset Disposal

