

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Housing Portfolio Holder 9th November 2006
AUTHOR/S: Executive Director/Lands Officer

Disposal of 57/59 High Street, Sawston

Purpose

1. To consider the disposal of the premises at 57 and 59 High Street, Sawston as shown on the attached plan and photographs and make a recommendation to Cabinet on the method of disposal.

Background

2. 57 High Street, Sawston is a first floor premise that was leased to Sawston Parish Council as office accommodation until 20th May 2006. Annual rent to the Council was £4,725.
3. 59 High Street is a ground floor premise that was leased to Unwins Wine Group Ltd (now in liquidation) for retail purposes until 20th May 2006. Annual rent to the Council was £9,000.
4. The land in Council ownership adjacent the premises includes parking spaces for 6 cars and a grassed rear 'garden'.
5. Earlier this year interest was sought from a number of RSLs in the possibility of redeveloping the premises for affordable housing.
6. Kelsey Housing Association expressed interest in redeveloping the upper floor for affordable housing and on 23rd January 2006, the following decision was made by the Housing Portfolio Holder:

Subject to planning permission for change of use, on expiry of both leases, offer the first floor to an RSL for redevelopment as affordable housing. Offer the ground floor for sale on the open market, subject to valuation for commercial use.

7. A valuation was obtained from the District Valuer in June 2006 based on the existing uses of the building, as follows:

57 High Street

Market rental value as offices £6,000 pa

59 High Street

Market rental value as retail £10,500 pa

Capital value of both together £190,000

8. Since then Kelsey have confirmed that they no longer wish to take on the premises. Similar interest has been received from Hundred Houses Society and confirmation of their proposal and decision to proceed is awaited.
9. Considerable interest has been received from other sources in purchasing or leasing the premises, including that from developers who would look to convert the upper floor to residential accommodation.

Considerations

10. 57 and 59 High Street are the only commercial premises owned by the Council.
11. Advice from Planning regarding a possible change of use of these premises is as follows: “ Policies in the development plan seek to resist the loss of retail premises where the loss would result in a significant reduction in the level of retail provision locally available (Local Plan Policy SH6 and Structure Plan Policy P3/4) and state that the loss of commercial premises will be resisted unless the existing use is generating environmental problems such as noise, pollution or unacceptable levels of traffic or where it is demonstrated that the site is inappropriate for any employment use to continue having regard to market demand. One exception to this may be for the redevelopment of the site for affordable housing under the exceptions policy (Local Plan Policy HG8).”
12. 57/59 High Street is not a Listed Building but the adjoining building at no. 61 is Listed. Advice from Conservation regarding a proposed change of use of 57/59 is as follows: “This building was originally a public house before its conversion to a shop, and makes a positive contribution to the streetscene in the Conservation Area. The conservation section would have no objection to the idea of using the first floor of this building for residential accommodation. However, we do have some concerns over the ground floor. The ground floor windows are still essentially unchanged and we are keen that they remain in this form. We can foresee a potential conflict between the need for privacy in a ground floor flat and our desire to keep the windows at their current size and form. Also, we are keen that Sawston High St remains a vibrant commercial street.

Therefore our preference would be to retain the existing building, but with appropriate alterations (eg the flat roofed extension to the rear could be removed and possibly a new extension added to provide independent access to the first floor) to enable some form of commercial use to be retained on the ground floor, with residential use (one or two flats) above.”

13. The potential open market value of the premises with planning consent for no 57 for change of use to residential to be advised.

Options

In the event that there is no further RSL interest in the premises, consider the following options:

14. Place both premises for sale on the open market, subject to valuation for office/commercial use only.
15. Subject to planning consent for change of use for no 57, place both premises for sale on the open market, no 57 with potential for residential use and no 59 for commercial use only.
16. Retain the property in Council ownership and offer both floors for commercial lease.

Consultations

17. All Councillors for Sawston were previously consulted and agreed that interest should be sought from RSLs regarding redevelopment of the upper floor (no 57) for affordable housing and to dispose of the ground floor (no 59) on the open market.
18. It is intended to consult further once a response has been received from Hundred Houses Society.

19. Implications

Financial	By disposing of this site on the open market for commercial and/or residential use, a capital receipt could accrue to the Council.
Legal	The sale of this site is not subject to the Right to Buy legislation.
Staffing	None
Risk Management	None
Equal Opportunities	None

20. Effect on Annual Priorities and Corporate Objectives

Affordable Homes	The first floor of the building may offer potential for redevelopment for affordable housing under the exceptions policy.
Customer Service	None
Northstowe and other growth areas	None
Quality, Accessible Services	None
Village Life	Redevelopment of these premises could increase the supply of affordable housing in Sawston
Sustainability	The first floor of the building may offer potential for redevelopment for affordable housing under the exceptions policy.
Partnership	None

21. Conclusions

The leases on this property have expired and both premises are vacant. Potential exists to redevelop no 57 for affordable housing and confirmation of interest from an RSL is awaited. Should the Council approve the sale of this site on the open market, this would enable revenue to be realised by the Council. It is possible

that obtaining planning permission for change of use to residential could increase the value of no 57.

Recommendations

22. In the event that there is no further RSL interest in the premises and subject to planning consent for change of use for no 57, place both premises for sale on the open market, no 57 with potential for residential use and no 59 for commercial use only.

FOR DECISION

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

None.

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