

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Housing Portfolio Holder

16 March 2011

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director (Operational Services) / Corporate Manager (Affordable Homes)

LAND OFF WELLBROOK WAY, GIRTON

Purpose

1. That Housing Portfolio Holder recommends to Cabinet the open market sale of land off Wellbrook Way, Girton (**see area outlined on the attached plan**) for residential development.
2. This is a key decision because it requires the disposal of land with a value in excess of Level 4 (£120,000) and was first published in the Council's March 2011 Forward Plan.

Recommendations

3. That the Housing Portfolio Holder recommends to Cabinet that land off Wellbrook Way, Girton be offered for sale on the open market for the purpose of residential development.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. The Council would receive a capital sum from an open market sale and be relieved from the costs of site maintenance.
5. The land is surplus to the Council's requirements.

Background

6. Parts of the site are held on garden licence by tenants and owner-occupiers of properties in Girton Road but most of the area is now rough wasteland.
7. The site has potential for the development of new housing and has been earmarked for some years for disposal. However, a proposal to exchange the land with 4 affordable housing plots retained by the Girton Town Charity Trust at Wellbrook Way was agreed by Cabinet in 2005. Following exchange, the site was then to be used to provide a communal facility. The proposal did not progress as satisfactory terms could not be agreed.
8. Outline planning consent for 4 dwellings on the site was granted to Girton Town Charity Trust in 2006 (ref. S/0167/06/O). This provided the Council with options either to offer the site to a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) or to sell on the open market.
9. Interest was received from Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association for the development of affordable housing on the site but the Council was informed at the end of 2010 that they wished to withdraw their interest. It was felt by the Housing Association that a scheme would not be achievable on the site and they intended to arrange for transfer of funding to another scheme that was more certain of delivery.

Considerations

10. The site has clear potential for the development of at least 4 dwellings.
11. According to Housing Strategy, it is unlikely to receive any further interest from an RSL for the development of affordable housing as it is quite small scale.
12. Interest in purchase of the site for development has already been received from the neighbouring land owner.
13. Pocock & Shaw are of the opinion that planning permission could be obtained for four properties on the land rear of 82 – 88 Girton Road, probably two pairs of semi-detached dwellings. It is possible that an extra dwelling could be built on the land at the rear of 78/80 Girton Road at a later stage so it is strongly advised that any new access road is designed to retain access to this land. Taking into account the Council's affordable housing policy and the fact that a commuted sum is likely to be required, in their opinion the open market value would be in the region of £250,000.

Options

14. Offer the site for sale on the open market with planning permission for residential development.
15. Offer to transfer the site to the Parish Council for amenity use.

Implications

16. Financial	With Option 1, the Council would receive a capital sum and be relieved from the cost of site maintenance With Option 2, the Council would receive no return for the land
Legal	
Staffing	
Risk Management	
Equality and Diversity	
Equality Impact Assessment completed	No Not relevant
Climate Change	

Consultations

17. Councillors Bygott and De Lacey were consulted – no objections received to open market disposal.
18. Girton Parish Council – This area of land together with the area of land opposite (administered by Savills) were discussed at their planning committee meeting of 6 January. The following comments were submitted:

“The Committee noted that there is already inadequate open space in the Wellbrook development and expressed concern that the Savills land offered no extra public space, something which was already at a premium on this estate. The Committee noted that rapid growth in birth rates especially in estates such as this means that educational provision needs to be carefully considered. Consideration should be

given to the proximity of the main open space, where a bowling green may eventually be built, as the western plot actually borders it. The plans for the eastern plot looked inadequate when considering vehicle parking and the problems it may cause to admission by emergency, rubbish collection and other large vehicles.”

Effect on Strategic Aims

19. AIM: Commitment to providing a voice for rural life:
No objections by the Parish Council to open market sale of site but their comments to be noted.

Conclusions / Summary

20. This site has potential for residential development and has been earmarked for some years for disposal. Outline planning consent for four dwellings was granted on the site in 2006. The site was to be transferred to BPHA for affordable housing but they have withdrawn their interest. The open market value of the site is in the region of £250,000, taking into account that a commuted sum may be required under affordable housing policy. Interest has already been received in purchasing the site.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: None.

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