

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Housing Portfolio Holder

20 July 2011

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

LAND OFF WELLBROOK WAY, GIRTON

Purpose

1. To seek a decision by the Housing Portfolio Holder regarding the disposal of the above site (see area outlined in red on attached plan).
2. This is a key decision because:

It requires the acquisition or disposal of any land or interest in land with a value in excess of Level 4 (£120,000).

Recommendations

3. That the Housing Portfolio Holder agrees to offer the land for sale to the Parish Council at the price of £125,000 plus the Council's legal costs, for amenity use only (Option 1).

Reasons for Recommendations

4. The land is surplus to the Council's requirements.
5. The Council would be relieved from the costs of site maintenance and receive a capital sum from a sale.
6. Transferring the site to the Parish Council for amenity use only would help to meet the open space needs of the community.

Background

7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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 an RSL or to sell on the open market.
10. 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.

11. Direct interest in purchasing the site has now been received from the following parties:
 - i) Dareway Properties Ltd (the neighbouring land owner), who wish to develop the whole site for housing
 - ii) Girton Parish Council who have requested to purchase the site for amenity use
 - iii) Girton Town Charity Trust who have not specified their proposed use of the site but are prepared to bid for it on the open market

Considerations

12. The site has clear potential for the development of at least 4 dwellings.
13. 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.
14. 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.
15. In the opinion of Pocock & Shaw, the value of the land solely for amenity use would be £20,000 but only if there were no prospect of gaining planning consent for development. If development were limited to two dwellings, and the remainder retained as open space, the value of the whole site would be reduced to £125,000 for the development area plus £10,000 for the open space.
16. Girton Parish Council accepts the valuation by Pocock & Shaw of the site for development use but as the Wellbrook Way Estate currently fails the SCDC criteria for available open space, wishes that the site is retained for recreational use only. They feel that the maximum value for that use should be half of that figure and are confident that they can raise that sum. They are therefore prepared to enter negotiations with SCDC to purchase the land for £125,000 and if the Council rejects their offer, request that they are given the opportunity to try to increase the figure.
17. Legal have confirmed that disposal of this site would be classed as permitted disposal under the General Consent Order, so Secretary of State approval to dispose at less than best value would not be required.

Options

18. Option 1: Offer to transfer all of the site to the Parish Council for amenity use only, at £125,000 plus the Council's legal costs
19. Option 2: Offer the whole of the site for sale on the open market at full development value, £250,000.

20. Option 3: Offer part of the site (of sufficient size for two dwellings) for sale on the open market at full development value (£125,000) and transfer the remainder on the eastern side, adjacent to the existing open space, to the Parish Council at amenity use value (£10,000).

Implications

21. Financial	Option 1 would give a capital return to the Council of £125,000 Option 2 would give a return of £250,000 Option 3 would give a return of £125,000 plus £10,000 (Options 2 and 3 are suggested figures only) By disposing of the land, the Council would be relieved from the costs of site maintenance.
Legal	The transfer of land will require some legal work.
Staffing	None
Risk Management	None
Equality and Diversity	None
Equality Impact Assessment completed	No Not relevant
Climate Change	None

Consultations

22. Councillors Bygott and De Lacey were consulted and they have asked that the need in this area for increased open space should be strongly considered.
23. Girton Parish Council – This area of land together with the area of land opposite (administered by Savills) were originally 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.”

See point 15 for further comments of the Parish Council.

Consultation with Children and Young People

24. None

Effect on Strategic Aims

25. AIM: Commitment to providing a voice for rural life:
The Parish Council is of the strong opinion that there is a need for increased public open space in the area.

Conclusions / Summary

26. 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 withdrew their interest. The open market value of the whole site is in the region of £250,000, taking into account that a commuted sum may be required under affordable housing policy. Interest in the site has been received from three separate parties. A decision is required on whether to place the whole or part of the site on the open market at full development value or offer the whole site to the Parish Council at half of the development value but with the aim of meeting the open space needs of the community.

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

None.

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