



Report of Head of Land & Property

Report to Director of City Development

Date:

Subject: Site of the former Wortley High School, Swallow Crescent, Leeds.

Are specific electoral wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If yes, name(s) of ward(s): Farnley and Wortley.		
Has consultation been carried out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number: 1.		

Summary

1. Main issues

- This property is the cleared site of the former Wortley High School (excluding the former playing fields), it was a latterly the site of a secondary school which closed in 2011. Following fire damage the buildings were demolished in Autumn 2011.
- Marketing was undertaken and offers invited by a closing date. A number of offers were received.
- This report seeks approval to sell the land on the terms set out in the attached confidential appendix.

2. Best Council Plan Implications ([click here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)

This proposal contributes to the Best Council Plan's housing aspirations as follows:

- Providing homes of the right quality, type and affordability in the right places.
- Building good quality, affordable homes in clean and well cared for places.
- Improving energy performance in homes.

3. Resource Implications

- Discussions have been undertaken with the prospective purchaser based on market value, as best consideration, for the site.
- The property is surplus to Council requirements and no operational reason has been identified to justify its retention. In these circumstances, its disposal represents prudent and economic asset management, obviating holding costs associated with managing the site and therefore supports the best value objectives of the Council.

Recommendations

- It is recommended that the Director of City Development grants approval to dispose of the subject property to the successful bidder on the terms outlined in the confidential appendix.

1. Purpose of this report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to dispose of the freehold interest in the subject property to the recommended bidder detailed in the appendix.

2. Background information

2.1 The site of the former Wortley High School is shown on the attached plan. The premises were closed in 2011. Following vacation the school was declared surplus to the requirements of Children's Services.

2.2 The building was then considered by the Property Review Group for alternative Council uses, but none were identified. The building was subsequently demolished following a fire.

2.3 The site measures approximately 1.52 Ha (3.76 acres). It is bordered to the north and west by residential properties, to the south by retained playing fields, to the east is the West AIP. Vehicular access to the site is from Swallow Crescent with the potential for further accesses from Silver Royd Road and Swallow Avenue.

2.4 The site is a vacant brownfield site, which is unallocated within the Leeds UDP. However, the site is allocated as a housing site within the Site Housing Allocations Plan (HG2-82, Wortley High School).

3. Main issues

3.1 The property was handed over to CPM Leeds to manage on behalf of the Council pending its disposal. The main buildings were demolished in 2012, the caretaker's house in 2017.

3.2 The site has been considered for alternative Council use and no future or alternative use was identified for the property within the Council.

3.3 The property was marketed and attracted a number of offers the highest of which was selected as the preferred bid - further detailed in the confidential appendix.

3.4 Following agreement of the ground abnormal costs, it is proposed and recommended that the site be sold to the highest bidder on the terms noted in the confidential appendix.

3.5 The proposed sale of the site will help to bring forward new housing which will contribute towards the requirements of housing delivery, offer an element of affordable housing and green space provision.

3.6 The disposal and development of the site will support the Council's aims of bringing brownfield sites back into use.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 Ward Members for Farnley and Wortley were briefed on the proposal to dispose of the site on 31 May 2019. Follow-up e-mails were sent on the 25 July 2019. Cllr. Forsaith e-mailed to express thanks for being kept updated.
- 4.1.2 The Executive Board Member for Resources was informed of the proposal on 14 August 2019. Cllr. J. Lewis is content with the proposal.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 The proposal has no specific implications for equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

- 4.3.1 The proposed disposal of the site would generate a capital receipt to support the Council's Capital Programme that covers a wide range of Council Policies and City Priorities.
- 4.3.2 The proposals outlined in this report would result in the development of a brownfield site with modern housing which would be in line with the Best Council Plan priorities of "providing homes of the right quality, type and affordability in the right places", "building good quality, affordable homes in clean and well cared for places", "improving energy performance in homes".

Climate Emergency

- 4.3.3 The site is currently vacant. The proposed sale would create a housing development which would generate traffic. However the site was previously that of a secondary school which generated many more traffic movements.
- 4.3.4 The proposal would bring a brownfield site back into use whilst providing modern, energy efficient homes.
- 4.3.5 As part of the planning process any developer would have to meet public transport requirements.

4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money

- 4.4.1 The sale of the Council land will be at market value.
- 4.4.2 The property is surplus to Council requirements and no operational reason has been identified to justify its retention. In these circumstances, its disposal represents prudent and economic asset management, obviating holding costs associated with managing the site and therefore supports the best value objectives of the Council.

4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

- 4.5.1 Under Part 3, Section 3E(g) of the Council's Constitution (Officer Delegation Scheme (Executive Functions)) the Director of City Development has authority to discharge any function of the Executive in relation to Asset Management.
- 4.5.2 The Chief Officer - Asset Management and Regeneration, Head of Asset Management and Head of Land and Property have authority to take decisions in relation to Asset Management as delegated in the Director of City Development's sub-delegation scheme.
- 4.5.3 The proposal constitutes a significant operational decision; it is not subject to call in.
- 4.5.4 The Head of Land and Property confirms that in his opinion the terms offered to the Council represent the best consideration that can reasonably be obtained under Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 (or under the Housing Act 1985).
- 4.5.5 The information contained in the Appendix attached to this report relates to the financial or business affairs of a particular person, and of the Council. This information is not publicly available from the statutory registers of information kept in respect of certain companies and charities. It is considered that since at this stage the information relates to the potential negotiations for the disposal of the property/land then it is not in the public interest to disclose this information at this point in time. Also it is considered that the release of such information would or would be likely to prejudice the Council's commercial interests in relation to other similar transactions in that prospective purchasers of other similar properties would have access to information about the nature and level of consideration which may prove acceptable to the Council. It is considered that whilst there may be a public interest in disclosure, much of this information will be publicly available from the Land Registry following completion of this transaction and consequently the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing this information at this point in time. It is therefore considered that this element of the report should be treated as exempt under Rule 10.4.3 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules.
- 4.5.6 The Key Decisions relating to this site were issued on the 28 February 2012 for demolition of the school (Director of City Development D38858) and on the 7 July 2013 for disposal on the open market (report to Executive Board Housing Investment Land Strategy App 1 List C Wortley High School D40573).

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 If the disposal is not completed the Council will need to re-market the site with associated costs and delay in receiving the capital receipt.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 It is concluded that the site be sold to the selected purchaser to facilitate the development of the site of the former Wortley High School.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recommended that the Director of City Development grants approval to dispose of the subject property to the selected bidder on the terms detailed in the confidential appendix.

7. Background documents¹

- 7.1 None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.