

**LECTCHWORTH COMMITTEE
9 DECEMBER 2015**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

9

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: LAND AT RADBURN WAY AND BALDOCK ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE, PERFORMANCE & ASSET MANAGEMENT

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To inform Members of the outcomes of Cabinet's consideration of this matter on 29 September 2015.

2. STEPS TO DATE

- 2.1 This Information note is as requested by Letchworth Area Committee.
- 2.2 At its meeting of 28th July 2015, Cabinet agreed in principle to disposal of land between Radburn Way and Baldock Road, Letchworth Garden City. Cabinet's decision was subject to Letchworth Committee raising no substantive objections to the proposal and further discussions with Hertfordshire County Council on various property options to be reported back to Cabinet.

3. INFORMATION TO NOTE

- 3.1 This item was referred back to 29th September Cabinet by Letchworth Area Committee, with a request that Cabinet's subsequent response be referred once again to Letchworth Committee. This note is provided to meet that request and complete the consultation process.
- 3.2 The resolution of Letchworth Area Committee on 29th July 2015 was as follows:

RESOLVED:

That, as the Letchworth Committee have some concerns regarding proposed use of this land, Cabinet be requested to report back to this Committee, particularly in respect of discussions with Hertfordshire County Council regarding land swap proposals and consideration of social value, prior to a final decision being made.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Letchworth Committee to comment on the proposals for the Land at Radburn Way & Baldock Road.

3.3 A meeting was held between Officers of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) on 18th August 2015 to review various options for disposal and land swaps, and consider whether Freeman House could be temporarily be used to house homeless people and families.

3.4 Options considered:

In respect of Option one – a land swap whereby HCC transferred its former school playing field land at Lannock to NHDC in return for NHDC transferring its land between Radburn Way and Baldock Road to HCC, with a balancing payment being made if applicable:

HCC advised this could not be recommended as HCC's Cabinet had made a decision to retain the playing field land against potential education requirements, and specific Department for Education consent to dispose would be required; it was urban open land; an allocation in the Local Plan Review would be required for it to have development potential; and neither Council could evidence best value whilst planning uncertainty existed over both sites.

In relation to Option two - NHDC acquiring HCC's Freeman House and site: HCC advised this could not be recommended as, without planning permission and open market completion, HCC would not get best consideration; there were two parts to such a sale, the housing development site and the access plot for the benefit of NHDC's land to the rear of HCC's land, and the potential value of the access was only realisable once planning permission for that had been established; so HCC would sell in two parts anyway.

With regard to Option three - HCC acquiring NHDC's land between Radburn Way and Baldock Road:

HCC advised this could not be recommended as, without planning permission and open market competition, NHDC would not get best consideration; a sale to HCC could be attacked for being at less than best consideration; HCC would not want to buy in uncertain circumstances; and if HCC bought with no planning permission in place, HCC would expect to face a harder planning road than if NHDC were partners in achieving a scheme that accorded with the Local Plan Preferred Option for the site and which would add to local housing supply and NHDC's capital receipts.

In relation to Option four - HCC granting a short term lease of Freeman House to NHDC for use as Bed and Breakfast accommodation for homeless people:

HCC advised that this could not be recommended as the NHDC Housing Service had advised that prior adaptation works would be required and there was no business case for a short period of use whilst HCC look to obtain planning permission for residential redevelopment.

In respect of Option five - HCC and NHDC working together to effect a joint sale of the Freeman House site together with the land between Radburn Way and Baldock Road:

This was the option that HCC wished to pursue because they stated that it was the only sensible basis for co-operation to unlock housing supply and capital receipts for both Councils.

- 3.5 In the light of the above information, the Executive Member for Finance and IT recommended that, working in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council, the Council proceeded with the disposal of its land at Radburn Way and Baldock Road, Letchworth Garden City. Cabinet supported this recommendation.
- 3.6 Therefore, Cabinet's resolution on 29th September was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the comments from the consultation with the Letchworth Committee and Hertfordshire County Council be noted, and the Letchworth Committee be advised of the outcome of Cabinet's deliberations on this matter; and
- (2) That, working in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council, the Council proceeds with the disposal of its land at Radburn Way and Baldock Road, Letchworth Garden City.

REASON FOR DECISION: To provide a financial receipt to help fund the 2016-2021 Capital Programme.

4. APPENDICES

- 4.1 None

5. CONTACT OFFICERS

Andy Cavanagh
Head of Finance, Performance & Asset Management
Telephone 01462 474243.
E-mail address andrew.cavanagh@north-herts.gov.uk

David Charlton
Senior Estates Surveyor
Telephone 01462 474320
E-mail address david.charlton@north-herts.gov.uk

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 Cabinet Report 29th September 2015
- 6.2 Cabinet Report 28th July 2015
- 6.3 Letchworth Area Committee Report 29th July 2015