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Report to Land and Asset Management Committee

12 May 2016

**Disposal of the Crockett's Lane Development Site
(Key Decision Ref. No. LAM017)**

1. Summary Statement

- 1.1 The former Sandwell College site ("College") on Crockett's Lane Smethwick ("Site") is under offer to a prospective developer who wishes refurbish the listed parts of the College for residential development and develop the cleared Site with town houses that will meet local demand. The Site falls within 'High Street and Crockett's Lane Conservation Area' and the main block is Statutory Listed Grade II, which affords protection from demolition, and makes any proposed refurbishment works more stringent in order to protect the original building.
- 1.2 The Council is currently owner of the freehold of an adjoining cleared site that used to accommodate the local primary school ("Adjoining Site"). The prospective developer wishes to acquire the Council's Adjoining Site to provide additional housing in this location. Clearly the delivery of new houses in this location is welcomed and in the longer term, once occupied, will deliver council tax to the Council.
- 1.3 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required as there are no equality issues to consider, the report is seeking authority to dispose of a Council owned site.

Further details are attached for your information

2. Recommendation

That Cabinet be recommended to approve:-

- 2.1 That the site of the former Crockett's Lane Primary School, Smethwick be declared surplus to the Council's requirements.
- 2.2 That, subject to 2.1 above, the Director – Governance be authorised to dispose of the freehold interest of the site of the former Crockett's Lane Primary School, Smethwick, as shown on plan SAM/13240/003, on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director – Regeneration and Economy.
- 2.3 That subject to 2.1 and 2.2 above the Director – Governance be authorised to enter into or execute under seal if necessary any other related documentation in connection with the disposal of land on terms to be agreed by the Director - Regeneration and Economy.

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Director – Governance

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Director – Regeneration and Economy

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3. Strategic Resource Implications

- 3.1 An independent valuation of the site has been commissioned taking account of the proposed sale to an adjoining land owner.
- 3.2 The valuation of the site will take account of the Council's specific requirements in relation to refurbishment of the listed college building and the burden being placed on the developer to undertake work over and above that would normally be required and expected in relation to both the College and the adjacent residential development. These development constraint and requirements will impact upon the value of the Site XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.

4. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 4.1 It is Government policy that local authorities should dispose of surplus land wherever possible. Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 imposes a statutory duty on local authorities that land should be sold for the best consideration reasonably obtainable. This will need to be borne in mind when disposing of the land.
- 4.2 The Secretary of State has power to give a general consent for the purpose of land disposals by local authorities under their powers in the LGA 1972 (*section 128(1)*). Specific consent is not required for the disposal of any interest in land that the authority considers will help it to secure the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of its area (*circular 06/03, Local Government Act 1972: General Disposal Consent (England) 2003*). Paragraph 3.2 details the reason behind the disposal and paragraph 1.2 indicates that there is a long term benefit to the proposed disposal in that it will generate housing and revenue in the form of Council tax. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx, in the long term it should result an improvement of not only the dilapidated building but also the area and a long term economic benefit, which would fall within the provisions of the General Consent.
- 4.3 The Site comprises school land and in accordance with the Academies Act 2010, there is a requirement to ask for Secretary of State consent to dispose of community school land to include all land in which a freehold or leasehold interest is held by the local authority and which has been used for any school (including any academy) in the last 8 years. It is unclear from the report how long the land has been vacant/not used as a school. In the circumstances that Secretary of State's consent is required, an application should be made as soon as possible to ensure that consent for the disposal is forthcoming.

5. Implications for Scorecard Priorities

5.1 Great Place

Currently the College buildings and the Council's cleared site do not contribute to the economy whatsoever being blight on the landscape of Smethwick. The redevelopment of these vacant sites and refurbishment of the Grade II listed building will lead to new residential accommodation for the people of Smethwick.

5.2 Great People

The proposed disposal of the site of the former Crockett's Lane School will, in the longer term deliver new energy efficient residential accommodation for the people of Sandwell. Moreover there is potential to provide construction training on the new development and specialist restoration techniques on the listed buildings whilst the new homes are being constructed.

5.3 Great Performance

This proposed disposal, working closely with the proposed developers of the former Sandwell College property and sites on Crockett's Lane will enhance the Council's capital receipt and the innovative joint working has the potential to provide a well-designed development proposal within the designated Conservation Area.

6. Background Details

6.1 Sandwell College moved to the new site on Spon Lane in 2013 and has demolished all the non-listed buildings dating from the 1960's and 1970's. Accordingly most of the site is free of existing development. However, the Victorian Grade II listed block remains as do two locally listed buildings to the north of the College building and are key components of the High Street and Crockett's Lane Conservation Area.

6.2 The two locally listed properties have been deemed worthy of preservation by the local planning authority and the prospective developer has agreed to make these properties bespoke residential living spaces with character features. Clearly the refurbishment of listed properties is more expensive than starting with a cleared site but the developer is very keen to retain the existing street frontage and acknowledges the benefit of retaining the Victorian properties.

- 6.3 By working with the prospective developer the Council's cleared site is able to become unified with the College lands this will lead to a better more unified development across the two ownerships and retain the integrity of the listed buildings within the designated Conservation Area.
- 6.4 In the longer term both sites will be developed as one providing new residential accommodation of a high quality and energy efficient. This development is within an area where there is a strong demand for residential development and clearly in the longer term will provide the Council with Council Tax once the residential development is occupied.