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Report to Land and Asset Management Committee

15 September 2016

**Disposal of the Crocketts Lane Development Site
(Key Decision Ref. No. LAM02)**

1. Summary Statement

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek authority to dispose of the freehold interest in Council owned land off Crocketts Lane, Smethwick to the owner of the former Sandwell College site also on Crocketts Lane.
- 1.2 The former College land and buildings (save for the Grade II listed building) on Crocketts Lane has been acquired by ESRG Crocketts Lane Ltd.
- 1.3 ESRG Crocketts Lane Ltd intend to undertake a residential development of the site which falls within the High Street and Crocketts Lane Conservation Area. Development will consist of town houses and conversion of two locally listed former school building for apartments. Planning consent for both redevelopment of the cleared site and conversion of the Grade II listed building was granted in May 2016.
- 1.4 The Council is the owner of the cleared site of the former Crocketts Lane Junior and Infant School which immediately abuts ESRG Crockett's Lane Ltd land. The Council's site is, shown hatched black and Marked A for identification purposes only on Plan No SAM/13240/16.
- 1.5 ESRG Crocketts Lane has submitted a request to purchase the Council's land for inclusion in its development scheme.

- 1.6 Sale direct to ESRG Crocketts Lane will not only ensure a continuity of development but also assist in delivering a comprehensive regeneration of the area.
- 1.7 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**

To recommend to Cabinet that:-

- 2.1 The site of the former Crocketts Lane Junior and Infant School, Crocketts Lane, 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 Crocketts Lane Junior and Infant School, Crocketts Lane, Smethwick, shown hatched black and Marked A on Plan No SAM/13240/016 to ESRG Crocketts Lane Ltd on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director – Regeneration and Economy.
- 2.3 That, in the event that ESRG Crocketts Lane Ltd fails to complete acquisition of the land referred to in 2.2 above or if terms of disposal cannot be agreed, the Director - Governance be authorised to dispose of the land on the open market on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director - Regeneration and Economy.
- 2.4 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.

Nick Bubalo
Director – Regeneration and Economy

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3. Strategic Resource Implications

- 3.1 An Independent valuation of the Council's site has been undertaken by Aspinall Verdi an external firm of surveyors. Aspinall Verdi are of the opinion that if the Council was to offer its site to the open market for residential purposes a capital receipt in the region of £XXXXXX would be achieved.

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. The Council will meet this requirement since there is no intention to dispose of the land at less than best consideration.
- 4.2 Additionally, provided the Council can demonstrate, through the independent valuation, that it is disposing of the land at market value and provided that the Council is not otherwise making contributions to the developer or the subsequent development, there should not be any State aid implications arising from this transaction.
- 4.3 The site comprises of 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. The consent of the Secretary of State has been received for the disposal of the land.

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. Indeed there have been a number of fires in the property and the refurbishment of the listed building is welcomed by the Council. 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 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 West Bromwich in 2013. The College 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.
- 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 the former school site will be developed for residential development providing new accommodation of a high quality and energy efficient. This development is within an area where there is a strong demand and clearly in the longer term will provide the Council with Council Tax once the residential development is occupied.