

DISPOSAL OF KNUTTON RECREATION CENTRE

Submitted by: Portfolio Holder for Regeneration & Planning

Portfolio: Regeneration and Planning

Ward(s) affected: All (property located in Knutton and Silverdale ward)

Purpose of the Report

To report back to Cabinet the outcome of the scrutiny review process and to seek a decision on how to proceed in this matter.

Recommendations

- (a) To receive the comments from the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to thank them for their views.
- (b) That members reaffirm the Cabinet decision made on 15 June 2011 with the additional recommendations as follows:
- That the Council commits to undertaking a public consultation process supported by any preferred purchaser prior to the submission of any planning application for development of the subject land.
 - That any marketing particulars clarify:
 - (i) the Council's expectation of compliance with the current policy regarding the provision of affordable housing and;
 - (ii) the potential for inclusion of a convenience store.
 - That the outcome of any public consultation process be reported back to Cabinet as part of any final report to dispose of the subject land.

Reasons

To enable Cabinet to respond to the views arising from the Scrutiny call-in process and to make a final decision in this matter so that progress can be made to secure a comprehensive redevelopment programme for this surplus site.

1. Background

- 1.1 Cabinet resolved, at its meeting on 15 June 2011 to dispose of the Knutton Recreation Centre site. In particular the following resolutions were made:-
- (a) That officers be authorised to take the necessary steps, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, to dispose of the Knutton Recreation Centre site for redevelopment as soon as practically possible after the new Jubilee 2 centre is completed.
- (b) That the redevelopment of this site should be primarily housing-led with provision also made for a replacement bowling green and pavilion and the potential for a small convenience store.

- (c) That, in principle, the existing '3G' football pitch should be retained and options for its future local/community-led management arrangements be explored (including the bowling green), the outcome of which would be reported to Members.
 - (d) That consideration be given to the inclusion of adjoining land in the Council's ownership in order to optimise the prospects of securing a comprehensive redevelopment scheme.
 - (e) That officers be authorised to engage suitably qualified specialist advisors to prepare both marketing particulars for sale of the subject land and a planning brief (reflecting the Council's ambitions for comprehensive redevelopment of the site).
- 1.2 The above decision was called in for review by the Council's scrutiny process on the following two grounds:-
- (a) The local residents are unhappy with a decision to remove the recreation centre without consultation following Renews demise, the regeneration programme for Knutton is in doubt.
 - (b) The revenue budgets, contrary to the report, are not needed for running Jubilee 2.
- 1.3 The Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee scoped the call-in at its meeting on 26 July 2011 and identified the following by lines of enquiry:-
- (a) What is the current position regarding the regeneration programme for Knutton following the demise of RENEW?
 - (b) How have local residents been consulted over the decision to remove the recreation centre?
 - (c) What impact does the disposal of the site have on the council's revenue budget, specifically in relation to the running of Jubilee 2?
 - (d) What will be the impact on Knutton and its residents e.g. What facilities are and will be available for residents at the college and the fire station
 - (e) Is executive housing what is really needed in this area?
- 1.4 The Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed the call-in at its meeting on 19 September 2011 and resolved:
- (a) **That Cabinet reconsider the decision made at its meeting on 15 June 2011 in light of the following specific points that were raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee:**
 - (i) **The block booking of the Gordon Banks Sports Centre**
 - (ii) **The mix of affordable and social housing**
 - (iii) **Full Consultation with residents, users and other interested parties**
 - (iv) **The impact of a convenience store**
 - (v) **Parking provision and concerns at Jubilee 2**
 - (b) **That Cabinet report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating its response to this recommendation.**

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee will be in attendance at the meeting to provide feedback to the Cabinet.

2. **Issues**

2.1 Procedurally it is necessary for Cabinet to review its previous decision in this matter in light of the Scrutiny Committee's views so it is appropriate to consider each of the five points listed above before making a final decision.

2.2 **Housing**

2.2.1 The Scrutiny Committee did not object to the principle of housing-led redevelopment of the site, their lines of enquiry sought greater clarity about the tenure mix (the discussion focussed upon the ongoing need for social housing in the area as well as identifying concern if 'executive housing' were to be promoted).

2.2.2 As I confirmed at the Scrutiny Committee:-

- There is no intention to promote the site for executive housing (indeed I indicated that it would be very unlikely that a market-led scheme would bring forward such housing).
- The affordable housing element envisaged would be consistent with the Council's policy in this regard – i.e. 25% provision overall, split along the lines of 15% social housing and 10% otherwise affordable (e.g. shared ownership).

2.2.3 Subject to the comments above, I consider it most appropriate to allow the prospective purchaser/developer of the site to prepare detailed proposals based upon their own market analysis and community/stakeholder consultation (see below). For the sake of clarity I feel it would be appropriate to state the Council's expectations with regard to affordable housing provision in any marketing particulars.

2.3 **Convenience Store**

2.3.1 Within the existing centre of Knutton there is a small number of existing retail premises which the Scrutiny Committee felt may be adversely affected if a convenience store were to be built as part of the redevelopment.

2.3.2 The previously commissioned DTZ reports attempted to formulate an appropriate form of development on the Knutton Recreation Centre site – in scale, form and nature (land uses) – that would create an urban village square feel.

2.3.3 Whilst this piece of work envisaged housing as the primary land use it did propose a convenience store and potential community facilities as a focal point at ground floor level, to frame the new square, notwithstanding the potential impact upon local businesses.

2.3.4 Clearly it is within the Council's gift to constrain any potential disposal to exclude such a facility, if that were considered to be preferable. In view of the recommended arrangements for consultation (see below) I consider there may be merit in eliciting the views of any prospective developer and local people about this matter as part of the said consultation arrangements. Any final decision in this regard could be aided by an appreciation of the views of local residents and businesses.

2.4 **Community Consultation**

- 2.4.1 In view of the demise of the Renew programme and the extent of previous public consultation undertaken as part of the master planning, the Scrutiny Committee felt that consideration ought to be given to further consultation prior to making any disposal decision.
- 2.4.2 Whilst I concur with the general principle I do feel that there would be limited value in consulting local people without the benefit of any indicative plans, particularly given that a housing-led scheme is known to be the most appropriate form of redevelopment (as elicited through the previous Renew master-planning work).
- 2.4.3 I am keen to ensure that residents have their say about the nature of any such plans but my preference would be to market the site to prospective developers with a view to the engaging the community/stakeholders before submitting formal proposals to the Council. Any final disposal decision would be based upon a combination of both the purchase price and a qualitative assessment of the scheme.
- 2.4.4 Of course the above process would be complemented by a formal consultation process undertaken by the Council as local planning authority.
- 2.4.5 Most importantly, as far as I am concerned, is the potential opportunity presented by the redevelopment of this site to complete the work begun during the Renew programme's existence – i.e. to establish the sense of place envisaged for this central part of the High Street – and ensuring that local residents can engage in a meaningful dialogue would be best facilitated by the prospective developer in my view.

2.5 **Block Bookings of alternative Recreation Centres**

- 2.5.1 The Gordon Banks Sports Centre was officially opened on 22nd April 2010. The centre comprises a 4- badminton court sports hall with “futsal”, 5-a-side football, netball, and basketball and cricket lane facilities. Also the centre includes a 12.8m x 16m air-conditioned dance studio and a 25 station gym. Outdoors, along with grass playing pitches, there is a full size, floodlit “3G” pitch.
- 2.5.2 The centre operates both pay and play and fitness membership for the gym and studio classes. Monthly members also have access to the health spa, sauna and steam room across at the main college.
- 2.5.3 For sports clubs and community groups, the Sports Hall, 3G pitch, grass pitches, seminar room and dance studio are all available for hire. Enquiries can be made via the website or telephone.
- 2.5.4 The Sports Centre is open 7 days a week, throughout the year as follows:

Monday to Friday: 7am to 10pm
Saturday/Sunday: 9am to 6pm
Bank Holidays 10am to 4pm

Although it should be noted that during College / School term times public access to the centre is not available between the hours of 8.45am to 6pm.

- 2.5.5 It is acknowledged that, in common with most popular sports/leisure centres, block bookings of facilities by Sports Clubs and local teams does occur. However given the availability of a wide range of such facilities serving the local communities, along with less formal community facilities (such as community centres, church halls, etc) it is considered that accessibility to facilities by local people is satisfactory.

2.5.6 For the sake of clarity the range of indoor and outdoor community facilities within the immediate Knutton Village area which offer a range of opportunities for residents include:

- St Mary's Primary School,
- St Mary's Church,
- Knutton Children's Centre (Sure Start),
- Knutton Community Centre,
- Knutton Working Men's Club,
- Knutton Youth Club,
- Knutton Methodist Church,
- Knutton Training and Activity Centre,
- Black Bank Football Pitches,
- Cotswold Avenue Football Pitches,
- The Wammy Football Pitches.

2.6 **Car Parking Provision at Jubilee 2**

2.6.1 Members of the Scrutiny Committee expressed concern about the current users of Knutton Recreation Centre being deterred from using the new Jubilee 2 Centre because of having to pay car parking charges.

2.6.2 Cabinet Members will recall that this matter was the subject of a report at your last meeting which demonstrated the availability of free weekend parking nearby as well as free weekday provision before 8.00am and after 6.00pm.

2.6.3 Specifically the following arrangements were agreed:

- Free parking on the King Street Car Park, School Street Car Park and Windsor Street car park before 8.00 am
- Free parking on the King Street Car Park, School Street Car Park and Windsor Street Car park after 6 pm.
- Free parking on the King Street Car Park all day Saturdays.
- Free parking on the King Street Car Park, School Street Car Park and Windsor Street Car park all day Sundays.
- Free on-street car parking on School Street after 6.00 pm.

At all other times outside of the above times, standard car parking charges apply.

2.6.4 Additionally, it should be noted that free parking is presently available at the following locations where alternative sports centre provision can be accessed by local residents.

- Newcastle College's Gordon Banks Centre;
- Proposed new Centre at Chesterton;
- New Community Fire Station at Knutton Lane;
- Lilleshall Road Sports Centre.

3. **Options Considered**

3.1 Having reviewed the Cabinet decision the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee could have chosen to reject the call-in and note the original decision or to accept the call in form and refer the decision back to Cabinet with its additional comments to be considered by Cabinet at its next scheduled meeting.

3.2 Cabinet may now amend the decision or not before adopting its final decision.

3.3 In order for Cabinet members to review its decision it is important to note that the following asset management options have been considered in relation to the Knutton Recreation site:

- The development of new facilities
- The redevelopment of existing facilities
- The divestment of facilities
- The provision of alternative facilities

4. **Proposal**

4.1 That Members receive the comments from the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to thank them for their views.

4.2 That Members reaffirm the Cabinet decision made on 15 June 2011 with the additional recommendations below as follows:

- That the Council commits to undertaking a public consultation process supported by any preferred purchaser prior to the submission of any planning application for development of the subject land.
- That any marketing particulars clarify:

4.3 The Council's expectation of compliance with the current policy regarding the provision of affordable housing and;

4.4 The potential for inclusion of a convenience store.

4.5 That the outcome of any public consultation process be reported back to Cabinet as part of any final report to dispose of the subject land.

5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

5.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating resolved that the decision be referred back to Cabinet as it considered that there were specific issues in need of further consideration.

5.2 As Portfolio Holder I am satisfied that the Cabinet's previous resolutions, supplemented by the additional recommendations above, will facilitate the optimum development for the Knutton Recreation site, consistent with the Council's corporate objectives set out below.

5. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

- creating a Borough of opportunity
- creating a healthy and active community
- transforming our Council to achieve excellence

More specifically the provision of well served affordable housing and accessible community facilities contributes to the delivery of the Council's strategic priorities as set out in the corporate plan, in particular the positive impact of affordable housing and sport and active lifestyles opportunities on improving health and regeneration.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

6.1 The Call-in has been carried out in line with the Council's Constitution.

6.2 The Council has the necessary powers to determine the future/ change of use for the site and has a duty to achieve 'best consideration' in any property disposal.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 No adverse impact has been identified. On the contrary, in planning the relocation of sport and active lifestyles opportunities to new facilities at Newcastle College and Jubilee 2 and the development of the facilities themselves. full consideration has been given to improving equalities issues.

7.2 Further analysis will be undertaken in relation to social housing and other development on the site as plans for its' development come forward.

8. **Financial/Resource implications**

8.1 The proposed actions are necessary to achieve the objectives of the Council's financial strategy and Asset Management Strategy.

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 Vacation of the site has been subject to the Council's normal risk management approach and this will also be deployed as development plans for the site are formulated

10. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

Cabinet Report – Proposals for the Redevelopment and Disposal of Knutton Recreation Centre: 15 June 2011

Report to the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee: 19 September 2011

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee: 19 September 2011

11. **List of Appendices**

Appendix A: Cabinet Report – Proposals for the Redevelopment and Disposal of Knutton Recreation Centre: 15 June 2011

Appendix B: Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee held on 19 September 2011