



CABINET - 27TH NOVEMBER 2013

SUBJECT: LAND ADJOINING CEFN FFOREST SPORTS CENTRE

REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND S151 OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet's views on a proposal to sell a plot of land adjoining Cefn Fforest Sports Centre for residential development.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The parcel of land edged red on the attached plan is surplus to operational requirements and officers recommend its sale on the open market for residential development. Local members object to the sale, on the grounds that it may be needed for future leisure development. In line with the agreed procedure, this matter is being referred to Cabinet for a decision.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The delivery of this site would contribute to the following strategic objective **Priority P2** of the Single Integrated Plan: "*Improve standards of housing and communities giving appropriate access to services across the county borough*".
- 3.2 Under its approved Asset Management Objectives, the Authority aims to manage its land and buildings effectively, efficiently, economically, and provide a safe, sustainable and accessible living and working environment for all users.
- 3.3 The Authority has a medium term financial plan (MTFP), which includes cost saving targets resulting from the disposal of assets.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 In 2003, the Leisure division declared the parcel of land edged red on the attached plan surplus to its operational requirements. The owner of the adjoining property (the former caretaker's house) expressed an interest in buying the area for garden use but his application was refused, on the grounds that the land was considered suitable for residential development, subject to detailed design. Local members had no objections and an open market sale was approved under delegated powers.
- 4.2 Prior to the site being marketed, Leisure officers asked for matters to be placed on hold, as a potential operational requirement was being considered. It was later confirmed that the land should remain under Leisure's control for possible future redevelopment.

- 4.3 The area continues to be maintained but is not accessible to the public, as it is fenced along its frontage; it is understood that the fence was erected to prevent nuisance to the adjoining owner, caused by youths congregating on the area.
- 4.4 The Leisure division has advised that it no longer has any plans for the site and has declared it surplus. In view of the time lapse since the original decision, Planning has been consulted on the proposed sale of the land for infill residential development and has commented as follows:

- The site is located within the settlement boundary for Cefn Forest as defined by the LDP. Residential uses to the south, the leisure centre to the north and the road to the west bound it. It is located within a predominantly residential area and, as such, the proposed residential use is compatible with the surrounding uses.
- The principal policy consideration for this proposal is the loss of the open area to development. Policy CW7 of the LDP seeks to protect open space, unless the area is not a valuable recreational or visual amenity space and that there is sufficient open space remaining within the area. An Open Space Assessment has been undertaken on the land in accordance with the provisions of LDP 8 - Protection of Open Space; that Assessment has proven there is sufficient remaining open space to meet the needs of the community and therefore the proposal accords with the provisions of CW7, Criterion A.
- CW7, Criterion B, seeks to protect areas that are valuable for their recreational or visual amenity. The site was once part of the large open area within which the Leisure Centre was originally located. Over time this area of land has been cut-off from the remaining areas located to the north and east of the Leisure Centre and has become an isolated pocket within the street scene of Bryngoleu Street. It is currently enclosed and precludes access via metal railings around its perimeter with the road; it is not maintained to a high degree and the landscape within the site has been degraded. However, Criterion B needs to take account of the potential value of the site if maintained and improved, not merely based on its current state.
- The site has potential to be a valuable open space for the residents if it were to be opened up and improved. The site is located within a residential area and could provide an area for residents to relax and interact within a pleasant setting. Therefore the site has potential value as a recreational and visual amenity.
- However, in considering whether the proposal satisfies Criterion B, the history of the site and the surfeit of available open space in the area should also be considered. The land has previously been approved for sale for residential purposes, which indicates that it has not been such an amenity for a considerable period of time.

On balance the provisions of policy CW7 are satisfied and, therefore, no objection to the proposed sale of the land for residential use is raised.

- 4.5 The Head of Performance and Property Services, under his delegated powers, approved the sale of the site on the open market for residential development, subject to there being no objections from ward members. When consulted, both ward members offered objections to the sale and, in line with the agreed procedure, the matter is being referred to Cabinet for a decision.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An EQIA screening has been completed in accordance with the Council's Equalities Consultation and Monitoring Guidance and no potential for unlawful discrimination and/or low level or minor negative impact have been identified, therefore a full EQIA has not been carried out.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The sale of the land will produce a capital receipt.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are none.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 Local members have been consulted on the proposed sale.

8.2 Councillor Williams is of the opinion that the land should not be sold, as it may be needed for future improvements to the leisure centre

8.3 Councillor Hawker objects to the sale, as he feels the land could be an asset in the future.

8.4 There are no other views expressed as a result of consultation that differ from the recommendation.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The land be sold on the open market for residential development.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 The land is surplus to Leisure's requirements.

10.2 There are no proposals to develop a community facility on the land.

10.3 If the land is sold, there will be sufficient remaining open space to meet the needs of the community.

10.4 The sale of the land will produce a capital receipt.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Act 1972, Section 123. This is a Cabinet function.

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Background Papers:

File available for inspection at Tredomen House