



CABINET – 2ND APRIL 2014

SUBJECT: 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS: FORMER ALDI SITE, RHYMNEY

REPORT BY: ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval to demolish the disused Aldi Store on the former Aldi site, Rhymney.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report is recommending demolition of the former Aldi store on the former Aldi site, Rhymney. The site was originally purchased to provide options for the redevelopment of Upper Rhymney Primary School. However, the key drivers for demolition of the building are both for health and safety reasons and financial ones.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The report links to the 21st Century Schools Programme. Originally the former Aldi site, Rhymney was purchased as part of a potential option for re-development of a replacement school for Upper Rhymney Primary School.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The former Aldi site, Rhymney, was purchased in the Summer of 2013 for £300,000 following approval by Cabinet on 30 April 2013. Since 5 August 2013, the Council have been liable to pay rates on the disused Aldi store building. There are now growing health and safety concerns with the Council potentially liable for any injury to young people and other members of the public accessing the site or disused building.
- 4.2 As part of the 21st Century Schools Programme, the former Aldi site was purchased in order to provide potential options for the redevelopment of Upper Rhymney Primary School. However, consideration to the development of a new Upper Rhymney Primary School can only be given when it is known how much is available from the £12 million funding once the rest of the 3-18 Upper Rhymney Strategy is agreed and delivered.
- 4.3 Originally conversion of the former Aldi store into a new replacement school was considered a possible option for Upper Rhymney Primary School. Such a conversion is technically possible, and does have the potential for savings by using the existing framework of the existing building rather than constructing a new one. However, initial research shows that similar attempts in England at converting stores into schools were not progressed as they were fraught with difficulties. A further major issue is satisfying Welsh Government grant requirements. Although Welsh Government need to consider the detailed business case before making a decision, they have given an early indication that they may not be supportive of such a conversion as part of the 21st Century Schools Programme.

- 4.4 As the Upper Rhymney Primary School project cannot proceed until cost certainty has been established for the rest of the 3-18 Upper Rhymney Strategy, it would seem sensible to demolish the Aldi building to secure the savings in business rates. The site itself could still be included in a future options appraisal for the Upper Rhymney Primary development. However, early indications are that there may be size constraints in terms of using the site to develop a school.
- 4.5 Demolishing the former store building would remove the business rates liability. The amount payable for the period 5 August 2013 to 31 March 2014 is £41,016 and the amount payable for 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 will be £63,855. The cost of demolishing the building is estimated to be £50,000. This would render the site safe and remove the business rates liability.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no equalities implications at this stage.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The business rates liability for the former Aldi store in 2014-15 is £63,855. The cost of demolition is estimated as £50,000. Assuming the demolition is completed within the first quarter of the financial year then the saving in 2014-15 will be £10,400. It is not envisaged that demolition of the building will adversely effect the value of the land in the event it was sold in the future for alternative use such as housing. Although detailed planning consideration would be required in terms of any future development, there is nothing in planning policy terms to prevent the demolition at this point in time. Furthermore, at this stage the future market value of the land has not been determined.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no personnel implications associated with the report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The report reflects the views of consultees.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Aldi building is demolished.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To remove the liability for business rates and render the site safe.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 This is contained within the Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000.

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Consultees: Directorate Senior Management Team
Councillor Rhianon Passmore, Cabinet Member for Education & Lifelong Learning
Gail Williams, Monitoring Officer/Principal Solicitor
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