



## CABINET - 16TH NOVEMBER 2016

**SUBJECT: LAND AT MILL STREET CAR PARK, RISCA**

**REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND S151 OFFICER**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek approval to the disposal of land at Mill Street, Risca (shown hatched black on the attached plan) to the POBL Group.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The land at Mill Street Car Park, Risca forms part of a potential redevelopment site identified in the Risca and Pontymister Town Centre Action Plan (Approved 2014). The site is in a prominent location at the junction with Mill Street and Commercial Street, at the southerly entrance to the town. POBL (a Registered Social Landlord, or RSL) has approached the two landowners (the Council and a third party), with a view to redeveloping the whole site with both affordable and supported housing.
- 2.2 The disposal of the site will produce a capital receipt, as well as revenue savings for the Council and its statutory partners. Over a 20 year period, projected costs savings from the delivery of the supported housing scheme are anticipated to be significant, details of which are set out in paragraph 7.1 of the report.

### **3. LINKS TO STRATEGY**

The contents of this report link to the following key strategic objectives:

#### **3.1 Housing Focus**

“Encourage the development and maintenance of high quality, well designed and efficient, sustainable homes and environments which can meet all needs.” (*Community Strategy: Living Environment – Objective 1*)

“Ensure an adequate and appropriate range of housing sites are available across the County Borough in the most suitable locations to meet the housing requirements of all sections of the population” (*Local Development Plan –Objective 9*)

“Meet housing requirements through the provision of a range of good quality, affordable housing options.” (*Aim 5: Affordable Housing – Local Housing Strategy*)

“Provide good quality, well-managed homes in communities where people want to live, and offer people housing choices which meet their needs and aspirations.” (*Aim 6: Housing Management - Local Housing Strategy*)

“Promote sustainable and mixed communities that are located in safe and attractive environments.” (*Aim 11: Community Regeneration - Local Housing Strategy*)

There is a need to increase the number of affordable homes for purchase or rent (*Improving Lives and Communities – Homes in Wales – April 2010*).

### 3.2 Well Being of Future Generations

The proposal contributes to the following Well-being Goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015:

- ✓ A sustainable Wales
- ✓ A prosperous Wales
- ✓ A healthier Wales
- ✓ A more equal Wales
- ✓ A Wales of cohesive communities

## 4. THE REPORT

### 4.1 Background

4.1.1 The land at Mill Street Car Park, Risca forms part of a potential redevelopment site identified in the Risca and Pontymister Town Centre Action Plan (approved in 2014). The site is in a prominent location at the junction of Mill Street and Commercial Street at the southerly entrance to the town. It comprises a public car park and vacant land (in separate land ownerships) and has the potential to be redeveloped for housing purposes. The site is shown edged black on the attached plan. The land that is the subject of this report is that part of the site that is in Council ownership (i.e. the public car park, shown hatched black on the plan). Pobl has approached the two landowners (the Council and a third party), with a view to redeveloping the whole site providing both affordable housing and a supported housing scheme.

### 4.2 Policy Context

4.2.1 There is a significant need for affordable housing across the County Borough. Policy CW11 of the Local Development Plan (LDP) sets Affordable Housing Targets throughout Caerphilly County Borough, ranging from 40% in the higher viability area around Caerphilly Basin, to 0% in the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area (HOVRA). Economic indicators and housing need have influenced these targets.

4.2.2 An operational housing requirement for the provision of affordable housing has been identified; the housing waiting list data for the Risca area demonstrates that there is housing demand in this area. The 2015 Local Housing Market Assessment identifies a shortfall throughout the County Borough of 526 affordable homes per annum. It also identifies a high number of households who are living in unsuitable housing because their accommodation no longer meets their requirements arising from disabilities, medical conditions or old age.

4.2.3 On 10th June 2014, the Council adopted a key document, entitled the Risca and Pontymister Town Centre Action Plan which acts as a framework for the future regeneration of Risca/Pontymister as a Principal Town within the Council's Local Development Plan.

4.3 The Mill Street, Risca site [“the site”] (shown edged black on the plan) has lain dormant for a number of years whilst its landowner has attempted to secure a purchaser. The site is identified in the Risca and Pontymister Town Centre Action Plan as a gateway into the town centre; currently, it offers an unattractive entrance feature into the town from the south.

- 4.4 Pobl has been in negotiation for the purchase of the site, for the development of an affordable housing scheme along with a supported housing project. In order to realise the development, it is necessary for the Council's land ["the car park"] to be incorporated into the overall scheme.
- 4.5 Pobl has prepared a scheme for the site, in consultation with relevant officers, identifying a mix of properties that seeks to address the housing needs within the area as identified in the Council's Housing waiting list. In addition, subject to planning approval, the scheme will deliver a regional supported living accommodation project. The supported living project would be funded regionally, within Gwent, by the 5 Gwent Supporting People Teams (including CCBC) and would see the provision of an eight-bed property for women who have suffered domestic violence, providing 24-hour support for clients and their families.
- 4.6 Highways officers have confirmed that there is no operational requirement for the car park, Risca Town Council has however objected to the proposed transfer of the car park to Pobl for new housing on the grounds that the local area cannot cope with any additional on-street car parking to add to the current demands of local businesses and surgeries.
- 4.7 A survey of the use of the car park been carried out, on different days and at different times, with the following results:

Day	Date	Time	N° of cars	Notes
Sunday	24/07/2016	11 <sup>20</sup>	10	
Wednesday	03/08/2016	14 <sup>00</sup>	7	
Tuesday	09/08/2016	10 <sup>00</sup>	8	
Wednesday	10/08/2016	10 <sup>00</sup>	6	
Wednesday	17/08/2016	08 <sup>00</sup>	2	
Wednesday	24/08/2016	08 <sup>30</sup>	4	
Wednesday	31/08/2016	09 <sup>40</sup>	10	
Tuesday	13/09/2016	13 <sup>30</sup>	9	
Wednesday	14/09/2016	09 <sup>50</sup>	9	
Monday	19/09/2016	09 <sup>10</sup>	9	"School run" time
Wednesday	21/09/2016	08 <sup>05</sup>	1	
Wednesday	28/09/2016	09 <sup>25</sup>	11	
Friday	30/09/2016	15 <sup>00</sup>	17	"School run" time
Tuesday	04/10/2016	15 <sup>00</sup>	17	"School run" time

- 4.8 Pobl has advised that in order to deliver the development they would need to include both sites. There is scope neither to provide time-limited public parking space nor residents parking within the proposed development to reconcile the needs of all parties.
- 4.9 However, its loss has been taken into account when considering the potential of the site for development; as noted in the Risca and Pontymister Town Centre Action Plan (2014): "Opportunities will need to be explored for the continued provision of car parking either on or off site as an integral part of any redevelopment scheme. One option would be to relocate the car park to the A2 site (Eastern part of land adjacent to River Ebbw, Pontymister) where it would be better located for shoppers." Thus, the principle of development on this site, and the loss of the existing car parking facility has been determined as being acceptable.

Members are asked to note that, whilst there are no immediate development proposals to bring forward the A2 site (primarily because of ongoing issues with flooding), the opportunity will be taken to explore the continued provision of car parking as part of any scheme.

- 4.10 In summary, the sale of the car park will have a lasting, positive, impact on the town of Risca, facilitating the development of an unsightly, prominent site.

Perhaps more importantly it will help reduce existing pressure on Social Services budgets by providing a facility within the county borough, which the Council currently has to outsource.

## **5. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS**

- 5.1 This proposal contributes to the Well-being Goals as set out in Links to Strategy above. The scheme is also consistent with the five ways of working set out in the sustainable development principle, as defined in the Act. The scheme is integrated in that it contributes to a number of the Well-being goals and supports the objectives of other stakeholders within the community. Implementation of the scheme exemplifies collaboration across organisational boundaries; working together for the good of our communities in pursuit of shared objectives.
- 5.2 RSLs, as developers, generally take a longer view, protecting (as far as possible) and improving the local environment and infrastructure for the future. Other benefits that RSLs can bring are an emphasis on sustainable construction including Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3+, and Targeted Recruitment and Training that will enhance employment prospects and skills of local people, particularly the young and those at a disadvantage, and promote equality of opportunity.

## **6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (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.
- 6.2 Schemes such as this are widely accepted as producing substantial benefits such as preventing children going into care, reducing homelessness, improving health and savings for the criminal justice system.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Based on research by national charity Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse [CAADA], existing services for victims save at least £2.90 for every £1 spent. A supported living scheme such as that proposed has the potential to produce a saving of over £500,000 over three years for statutory services such as Health and Criminal Justice services and will contribute to the safeguarding and protection of families and vulnerable children. Of that £500,000 it is estimated that the Council would realise over £100,000 in potential cost avoidance for Children's Services (in respect of the safeguarding of families and vulnerable children).
- 7.2 In addition to this cost avoidance, the disposal of the car park will produce a capital receipt of £50,000.

## **8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no personnel implications arising out of the report.

## 9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 Risca Town Council has objected to the proposal on the grounds that the local area cannot cope with any additional on-street car parking to add to the current demands of local businesses and surgeries.
- 9.2 One resident has objected that existing community needs are not being considered because the car park is used by parents when dropping off and collecting children from Ty Isaf Infant School at the upper end of Mill Street, and that alternative car parking, provided in a different location, may not be a safe route to school.

There is an alternative car park at the end of Isaf Road, Risca, which is closer to the infant school and has capacity, although it is recognised that for access and egress to the school children would need to be supervised when crossing Mill Street.

Officers acknowledge that the proposal will result in the loss of the car park as a safe dropping off and collection point for the school, however this loss of benefit has to be balanced against the benefits that officers consider the development will bring to better address the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in the county borough as required under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

- 9.3 Cllr Rees requested consultation be undertaken with the community prior to a decision being made in respect of the disposal of the car park. Consequently, a consultation event was held involving Local Ward Members on Monday 18th July 2016.
- 9.4 There was general support for the proposed development, although a number of queries were raised which included:

### **Car Parking:**

Residents asked if an area for off road car parking could be allocated within the proposed development site. The adjacent Church is attended by elderly residents and a replacement car parking proposal on Commercial Street (possibly at the site of the former gas works) is thought to be too far away, as is the railway station car park. Officers have determined that there is scope neither to provide time-limited public parking space nor residents parking within the proposed development to reconcile the needs of all parties; it is considered also that there is sufficient on-street parking to cater for the needs of the elderly residents attending the adjacent church.

### **Schools:**

Residents queried whether there is capacity in the Primary/Secondary school for this development. The Assistant Director for Education has, however, confirmed that there would be sufficient school places in the vicinity to accommodate a development of this size.

### **Health:**

There were concerns that GPs surgeries are already full and this development will compound the problem. The Practice Manager for Wellspring has confirmed that the practice has recently taken on new Partners and increased GP sessions.

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

## 10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 That land shown edged black on the plan is transferred for £50,000 (and otherwise on terms to be agreed) to the Pobl Group.

10.2 That approval of the detailed terms of the disposal is delegated to the Head of Property Services in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Performance and Asset Management.

## **11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

11.1 The asset is surplus to the Council's operational requirements.

11.2 An affordable housing scheme that meets with the needs identified within the Council's Local Housing Market Assessment and Housing register will be delivered. In addition, the development will furnish a regional supported living accommodation project.

11.3 The development will support the regeneration of Risca Town Centre.

11.4 Paragraph 8.1(iv) of the Disposal Procedure in Part 4 of the Council's Constitution states that Cabinet approval will be obtained before direct negotiations are opened with a single party where it is possible to market a property but where the Head of Performance and Property Services is of the opinion that this course of action may not be in the best financial or service interests of the Authority.

## **12. STATUTORY POWER**

12.1 Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000, and The Local Government Act 1972: General Disposal Consent (Wales) 2003. This is a Cabinet Function.

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Appendices:  
Appendix 1 Plan showing the land

