

Divisions Affected – Isis

DELEGATED DECISION BY CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE

8 November 2024

Decision on Options for Site South of Oxford City Centre - Development and Disposal of Land North of Iffley Village, Oxford

Report by Executive Director Resources and Section 151 Officer

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is **RECOMMENDED** to:

- a) **Approve, as a key decision, the freehold sale of land to the north of Iffley Village in Oxford in consideration of Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) receiving a capital receipt once planning permission has been granted.**
- b) **Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Director of Property, to consider officer recommendations and agree the final purchaser and sale price.**

Executive Summary

1. The land at Iffley is a former playing field on the northern edge of Iffley Village, within the boundaries of Oxford City.
2. The site was historically used as playing fields for the former St Augustine's School (now re-developed into housing). The site was used as a works compound for the building works at the neighbouring Iffley Academy and has been vacant since.
3. When the former St Augustine's School site was redeveloped in 2008, the site was identified by Oxford City Council as a potential housing site. At the time, the site was being looked at for alternative playing fields for a nearby school. When this need fell away in 2015/16 the site was promoted by OCC in response to Oxford City Councils Strategic Housing Land Assessment (SHLAA) and allocated for residential development in October 2016.

4. The site was placed on the disposals list and the decision made to progress with an outline planning application for residential development. Following the Pre-Application process an application is being submitted.
5. When/if planning permission is achieved, the intention is for the land to be marketed for sale having already been declared surplus.

Background

6. OCC owns the freehold of the land north of Iffley Village, Oxford. The site is approximately 2 hectares, located north of Iffley Academy and to the west of relatively new residential development at St Augustine Way, which is the site of the former St Augustine School.
7. To the north of the site is a City Council owned playing field known as Donnington Recreation Ground and to the west is the residential road Meadow Lane, beyond which are open fields running down to the River Thames.
8. The former village (now suburb of Oxford) of Iffley lies immediately to the south with the Iffley Village Conservation Area abutting the southwest corner of the site.
9. The site shares an access with Iffley Academy at the western most end of Augustine Way.
10. The first recorded use of the site was as a playing field to the former St Augustine's School, before this the site was open space, possibly river meadow. The former school was closed in 2005 and disposed in 2008 for housing, forming the new residential development on St Augustine Way.
11. Oxford City Council identified the playing fields as a possible development site in 2009 and enquired about the possibility of it being bought forward. OCC took the decision to retain the site as playing fields as there was a potential need from the nearby St Gregory the Great School to the northeast. By 2015 the need had been met by alternative property and the site was again considered for development.
12. As part of Oxford City Council's Strategic Housing Land Assessment (SHLAA) in late 2016, the site was allocated for a minimum of 85 residential units. The property was temporarily used for a compound for the construction of Iffley Mead Academy, which put a pause to planning works.
13. The site has been declared as being surplus to the operational needs of OCC and it has been included on the disposal list. To maximise the value of the site the process of preparing a planning application was undertaken.
14. An outline planning application will be submitted in November 2024 in line with Oxford City Council's allocation.
15. Once planning permission is achieved, the property will be marketed for sale.

Risk Management

16. The Council must ensure that all capital payments received come from the client account of a firm of solicitors acting for the purchaser, which has taken responsibility for money laundering checks. The Council may wish to conduct independent checks on the source of the funds and must reserve the right to withdraw from the transaction at any stage in the event that these are not completed to its satisfaction.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

17. The sale of the site supports the agreed Property and Asset Strategy agreed in November 2022, by maximising the value of investments to support the long-term financial sustainability of the Council land and supporting the local community by the provision of land for social housing.

Staff Implications

18. There are no staff implications.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

19. There are no equality and inclusion implications.

Financial Implications

20. The Capital & Investment Strategy for 2024/25 agreed by the Council in February 2024 sets out that the principle that capital receipts should be treated as a corporate resource and used across the capital programme flexibly.

21. The sale will provide a capital receipt as set out in the disposals programme. The agreed sale price will reflect a period of open marketing of the site. The disposal will therefore be compliant with the best value requirements as set out in section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

22. The Council has power to dispose of its land assets pursuant to Section 123(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, subject to its duty to ensure it receives best value for them. The Council owns the freehold to the site.

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Sustainability Implications

23. There are no sustainability implications

Lorna Baxter, Executive Director Resources

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Appendix 1 – Exempt Information