

OXMOOR (HUNTINGDON) ACTION PLAN – PROPERTY UPDATE

(Report by the Head of Legal and Estates)

1 PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- provide a brief update on the current position with regard to property matters at Oxmoor;
- seek delegated authority to approve terms for two exchanges of land.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Since the report to Cabinet on the 16th December 2004 the following have been completed:-

- the demolition of the west block at Sapley Square including the concrete decking over Coneygeare Road;
- the construction of a new pedestrian/cycleway bridge over Coneygeare Road;
- agreements with the existing shop tenants at Sapley Square to relocate to the new shop units;
- the housing development at Buttsgrove Way by Huntingdonshire Housing Partnership (HHP) comprising 30 units for rent and shared ownership; and
- the sale of land at Moorhouse Drive to HHP for residential development

2.2 The Oak Tree Centre (previously known as the Acorn Centre) is due to be completed in May/June when the lease to the Primary Care Trust will commence.

2.3 The new shops with community facilities (the latter now called the Maple Centre) are due to be completed by the end of April with the shop tenants relocating by mid May. There will be four shops in the new shopping precinct comprising a post office/newsagent, supermarket, fast food takeaway and betting office. Situated above the shops, the Maple Centre will provide accommodation for the Moor Centre, Oxmoor Opportunities (including a base for the street wardens and local police) and a number of voluntary charitable organisations. In addition two meeting rooms will be available for hire to local groups or organisations. The Maple Centre will be managed by Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations.

2.4 A plan is appended to assist members in identifying the locations referred to in this report.

3. SAPLEY SQUARE

- 3.1** Once the shops have relocated, the east block at Sapley Square and the redundant garages nearby will be demolished and some temporary car parking spaces provided for the Maple Centre. This area, along with the adjoining amenity land, is identified in the Oxmoor Action Plan for residential development. As part of the agreement for the acquisition of Sapley Square shops, HHP have an option to purchase the land to the east of Coneygeare Road for affordable housing. Discussions will now commence with HHP to develop a scheme for the site.
- 3.2** The Jehovah's Witnesses who own the church at Nene Road adjoining the land at Sapley Square east, wish to provide larger premises on Oxmoor. A site adjoining the Medway Centre owned by the District Council has been identified and this will require agreement with Huntingdon Town Council, who lease the site of the Medway centre, or another landowner in order to provide a suitable access. Subject to resolving any planning and technical constraints, it is proposed to sell this land, comprising 2240 square metres, to the Jehovah's Witnesses and in return acquire the church in Nene Road (comprising a site area of about 500sq m) This would provide a larger site for the housing development referred to in 3.1 above.
- 3.3** The area north of Oak Drive was also identified in the Oxmoor Action Plan as a housing site. As the Oak Tree Centre and the new shops near completion, proposals for this site are being reassessed. There is a requirement for some additional car parking for the shops and the Maple Centre and development of the remainder may be difficult due to the steep slope up from Oak Drive. It is proposed, therefore, to leave the site as amenity land after the provision of the car park.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

- 4.1** The new Coneygeare Park is nearing completion and has been developed in partnership with the local community. The employment of a Park Ranger by the District Council will enable the park to be utilised for a wide range of activities.
- 4.2** Play equipment has been upgraded on Oxmoor and various new cycleways provided. As part of the cycleway network discussions are taking place with St John's C of E School, Sallowbush Road where approximately 157 sq m of land is required for the cycleway from Oxmire Lane to Sallowbush Road. The school would like to acquire a strip of land comprising about 85 sq m from the District Council to improve the pedestrian link between the school building and the playing fields. It is proposed, therefore, to enter into an exchange of land with the County Council and the church authorities to facilitate the cycleway link.
- 4.3** The Park Ranger will also be considering proposals for neighbourhood gardens and doorstep greens which were proposed in the Oxmoor Action Plan.
- 4.4** It is understood that Cambridgeshire County Council and Huntingdon Regional College will be marketing their land at California Road for sale later this year. The sale of this land will provide considerable funding for the environmental improvements taking place on Oxmoor.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** The total expenditure on Oxmoor, including Sapley Square, Coneygeare Park and the environmental improvements, is expected to be in the region of £6.6 million. This is being funded from government grant, land sale receipts and additional contributions from the other land owners. It is anticipated that income will meet the expected expenditure.
- 5.2** A more detailed breakdown of the financial position will be provided once the contract for Sapley Square has been completed and further land sales have taken place later in the year.
- 5.3** The Oak Tree Centre is funded separately by the District Council.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1** This year will see the completion of the Oak Tree Centre, the shopping precinct and Maple Centre which together will provide the new heart for Oxmoor. Furthermore the new community park at Coneygeare Road will be opened in the summer. Associated with these developments are the various cycleway and footway links which will improve accessibility across Oxmoor.
- 6.2** Residential development at Moorhouse Drive and California Road will take place over the next few years providing new housing for rent and for sale.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that

- (a) progress on the implementation of the Oxmoor Action Plan be noted;
- (b) the Director of Central Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillors for Resources & Policy and of Finance, be authorised to approve detailed terms for the exchange of land with the Jehovah's Witnesses; and
- (c) the Director of Central Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Resources & Policy and of Finance, be authorised to approve detailed terms for the exchange of land with St John's C of E School and the County Council for the cycleway.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Oxmoor Action Plan and Previous Minute Decisions

Contact Officer: Keith Phillips, Estates and Property Manager
☎ (01480) 388260