

**FORMER FIRE STATION SITE
AND WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE
HUNTINGDON STREET, ST NEOTS**

(Report by the Head of Law Property and Governance)

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to the marketing of land at Huntingdon Street, St Neots. Part of the site is vacant and the domestic Waste Recycling Centre is due to be relocated by the County Council at the end of this year.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The land hatched black on the attached plan is owned by the Council and comprises an area of about 0.82 acres (0.33 hectares). The adjoining car park edged black is also owned by the Council giving a total area of 1.5 acres (0.61 ha).

2.2 Within the hatched area there are 25 car parking spaces allocated to Cressner House, 12 Huntingdon Street, and these would have to be provided elsewhere should the land be required for development. After allowing for this parking and deducting the existing access way at the side of Cressner House, the net development area is about 0.58 acre (0.24ha).

2.3 The former Fire Station in Huntingdon Street had been redundant for many years and has recently been demolished.

3 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

3.1 In anticipation of the Waste Recycling Centre being relocated by the County Council, Interim Planning Guidance was adopted in May 2006. This envisaged development of small scale mixed use space together with enlarged car parking provision and clear pedestrian links through the fenced off Waste Recycling Centre.

3.2 The Guidance identified various site constraints including proximity to residential properties on two sides and a number of large trees which screen some of the dwellings. Vehicle access will need to be carefully considered as existing access to the car park is through land owned by Lidl. The Council has a limited right of way through the Lidl car park which will allow access for the servicing of only part of the hatched area.

3.3 Before any development takes place investigations would be required to establish ground conditions.

4 MARKETING

- 4.1 Two parties have already expressed an interest in the site. One is seeking a site for leisure development (cinema/theatre and associated activities) while the other proposal is for a health scheme (health centre). Both have requested a form of exclusivity agreement so that their schemes can be developed in more detail. While encouraging both parties to continue with developing their proposals, the granting of an exclusivity agreement is not considered to be the best way to secure alternative redevelopment of this site.
- 4.2 In order that the site is fully marketed and all potential developers have appropriate opportunity, it is proposed that a detailed Development Brief should be prepared and a comprehensive marketing exercise undertaken. Applicants would be invited to submit details of their proposals including drawings showing the layout, size and external appearance, together with financial proposals and a draft timetable. The applications would then be assessed according to compliance with the Development Brief and the financial benefits to the Council.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 While welcoming and encouraging proposals from the interested parties, a wider marketing campaign would ensure that all applicants have an opportunity to submit proposals and the requirement to obtain best consideration would also be satisfied.
- 5.2 In the interim, however, the two interested parties will have the opportunity to develop their detailed proposals in accordance with the Development Brief.

6 RECOMMENDATION

Cabinet is recommended to approve the preparation of a Development Brief and the commencement of a marketing exercise for the disposal of this site.

Background Information:

Interim Planning Guidance Brief 2006

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