

LAND AT MILL HILL ROAD, EATON FORD

(Report by the Head of Law, Property and Governance)

1 PURPOSE

To approve the development of Council land in conjunction with the adjoining owner.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The land edged red on the attached plan is owned by the Council and is leased to the Scout Association Trust Corporation as Trustee for the 1st Eaton Socon Scout Group. The scout group have occupied this site since at least 1969 and the current 10 year lease is due to expire at the end of 2012. The site contains a wooden scout hut dating from the 1960s which has been improved in recent years, with parking at the front and a grassed area for activities

2.2 The land edged blue, comprising a dwelling fronting Mill Hill Road and a large area of land at the rear (about 0.2 ha), is in single ownership and the owner is interested in developing the land. Although the land already has access a better scheme could be provided if some of the scout land was incorporated. The owner's architect is currently in discussions with the planning section regarding a residential scheme and it is likely that part of the scout building would be affected

2.3 The scouts have indicated their willingness to co-operate by surrendering the land in advance of the expiration of the lease subject to securing some benefits from the proposals including replacement facilities, perhaps some funding for future maintenance and a longer lease. Ward Councillors have been consulted and, while there are no objections in principle, concerns have been raised about highway issues, ground conditions and long term use of the building.

2.4 If the scouts were agreeable and a suitable site could be found, an alternative option is to seek to relocate the scouts thus releasing the whole of the existing site for development. Investigations will, therefore, look at this possibility including the financial ramifications.

3 PROPOSED TERMS

3.1 The transaction would include the following terms:

- i) Some or all of the land leased to the Scouts would be sold to the developer in order to provide a new access to the land edged blue and for development purposes
- ii) The developer to provide replacement facilities plus some additional storage for the Scouts
- iii) The developer to pay to the Council a sum which would take into account the full financial implications of the scheme

- iv) The scouts to receive a small payment to be used for future repairs or improving facilities for surrendering the land
 - v) The existing lease to be surrendered by the scouts and a new lease granted on the existing site, or on a suitable alternative, for 25 years
- 3.2 Completion of the sale will not take place until planning consent has been granted.

4 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 From the community perspective, the scouts will benefit from improved facilities and the security of a new longer lease at a time when scouting is expanding.
- 4.2 The Council will receive a financial payment for the land.
- 4.3 The only significant risk at this stage would be a failure to obtain planning consent.

5 CONCLUSION

The proposal offers a number of mutual benefits including the provision of improved facilities for a local scout group and a capital receipt for the Council.

6 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- (i) approval to the sale of Council land be granted in principle on the terms set out in paragraph 3.1; and
- (ii) the Director of Central Services be authorised to approve the detailed terms after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Leisure and Law, Property and Governance

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Estates file M/436/1

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