

**FORMER WITCHBURN ROAD OFFICES SITE
PROGRESS ON DEMOLITION AND SITE DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS**

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** On 14 December 2017 the Community Services Committee Meeting agreed that the cost of the demolition of the former Witchburn Road Offices would be met from the Strategic Housing Fund on the basis that clearance of the site would enable future housing development.
- 1.2** This report will therefore advise on progress with the demolition of the buildings and will outline options for the development of the site..

RECOMMENDATION

- 1.3** It is recommended that the Committee note:
- The current progress with the demolition and the impact the presence of bats has had on the works programme.
 - That a marketing exercise will be undertaken to establish the appropriate offering to the market i.e. either as centrally serviced or individually serviced plots for self-build.
 - That on completion of the marketing exercise, the site will be offered to the market as a development opportunity.
 - That a further update will be brought back to the December 2018 committee.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 At the Community Services Committee Meeting held on 14 December 2017 it was agreed that the cost of the demolition of the former Witchburn Road Offices would be met from the Strategic Housing Fund on the basis that clearance of the site would enable future housing development.
- 2.2 As part of the funding agreement there was a requirement to provide an update to the Committee in June 2018. This report will therefore advise on progress with the demolition of the buildings and will outline options for the development of the site.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee note:
- The current progress with the demolition and the impact the presence of bats has had on the works programme.
 - That a marketing exercise will be undertaken to establish the appropriate offering to the market i.e. either as centrally serviced or individually serviced plots for self-build.
 - That on completion of the marketing exercise, the site will be offered to the market as a development opportunity.
 - That a further update will be brought back to the December 2018 committee.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 **Demolition of Former Witchburn Road Offices:** As indicated at the December meeting of the committee, plans have been made for the demolition of the buildings and the necessary building warrant has been obtained. Since then an asbestos survey has been undertaken as has a Potential Roost Assessment Bat Survey. The results of the asbestos survey indicate that asbestos containing materials (ACMs) are present in some of the roof cladding, some of the electrical heaters and within

the electrical distribution boards. The removal of these ACMs is being included within the contract for the demolition of the buildings.

4.2 A Potential Roost Assessment Bat Survey was undertaken on 4 February 2018 which concluded that:

- The works could have an impact on roosting bats.
- Further survey work is required to determine bat numbers and species using the building.
- Survey work will also be required for the adjoining buildings which belonged to the Bird of Prey Centre as there may be bat roosts within them which if present would be affected by the demolition works.

As a result of the above findings, a bat activity survey has been commissioned and is likely to take place late April/early May, subject to weather conditions. The results of this survey will confirm when demolition can commence which is anticipated to be between late August and early October. On completion of demolition, the risk of reputational damage associated with a vacant property which is deteriorating on an ongoing basis will be removed, along with the ongoing financial burden of approximately £2000 per month for non domestic rates and maintenance charges.

4.3 **Development Options for the Site:** The options for developing the site for housing following demolition of the existing buildings need to consider how the site/plots will be serviced in conjunction with how housing could be built i.e. self-build or Developer/Contractor build. The options for the servicing the site/plots are either for individual building plots to be serviced by the Council or for the site to be serviced to one central point and for the builders to service individual plots from there. The combinations are therefore as follows:

1. Centrally serviced site for self-build;
2. Centrally serviced site for Developer/Contractor build;
3. Individually serviced plots for self-build; and
4. Individually serviced plots for Developer/Contractor build.

The advantages and disadvantages of these options are as follows

4.3.1 Option1 - Centrally serviced site for self-build

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower cost to the Council to provide services to the plots; • Smaller Contractors and individuals may be attracted to self-build 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-build may be put off by the need to service individual plots; • May take many years to build out entire site and obtain full value;

<p>route;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates new supply / offer to market (not many individual plots currently on market); • Does not add to current oversupply of larger housing sites / developer controlled land in Campbeltown. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty of timing to deliver all plots (whole site) may put off some purchasers.
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4.3.2 Option 2 - Centrally serviced site for Developer/Contractor build

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower cost to the Council to provide services to the plots; • Does not create opportunities for the self-build market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developer/Contractor may be put off by the need to service individual plots; • Margins for Developer/Contractor may be more attractive (Council lose out on profit).

4.3.3 Option 3 - Individually serviced plots for self-build

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-build market may look more favourably on opportunity; • Smaller Contractors may also be interested in self-build route; • Creates new supply / offer to market (not many individual plots currently on market); • Does not add to current oversupply of larger housing sites / developer controlled land in Campbeltown. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher cost to the Council to provide services to the plots

4.3.4 Option 4 - Individually serviced plots for Developer/Contractor build

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developer/Contractor market may look more favourably on opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Higher cost to the Council to provide services to the plots• Margins for Developer/Contractor may be reduced

4.4 **The Way Forward:** It is anticipated that the option that may give both the Council and the community the best opportunity would be Option 3 i.e. to offer individually serviced plots to the self-build market. However this would only be confirmed by testing the market. On that basis, the site can be developed in the most cost effective way by an iterative process where services are located centrally, with site services only being extended for individual plots at an additional cost on the basis that there is market appetite for those evidenced by the market test. Marketing should be undertaken once there is more certainty on the timescale for demolition of the existing buildings.

A further update on progress will be reported to the December 2018 meeting of the committee.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 The contract for the demolition of the buildings on the former Witchburn Road offices site is progressing although its programme has been delayed as a result of the potential presence of bats.

5.2 Once there is more certainty of the timescale for the demolition of the existing buildings, the site should be offered to the market as a housing development opportunity for self-build or Developers/Contractors initially as Option 1 and then Option 3 depending on interest gained from a marketing exercise.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policy – The demolition of the former Witchburn Road offices will enable future housing development.

6.2 Financial – The Council is currently having to bear costs of approximately £2000 per month for non domestic rates and maintenance charges. Offering the site to the market should result in a financial return to the Council.

6.3 Legal - None.

6.4 HR - None.

6.5 Equalities – None.

6.6 Risk – Until the demolition of the existing buildings has been completed the Council will continue to be exposed to ongoing financial and health and safety liabilities including the risk of vandalism. There will also be increased reputational risk associated with the ongoing deterioration of a significant vacant property.

6.7 Customer Service – None.

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30 April 2018

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