

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY:

Richard Long
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

DECISION NO:

20/00045

Unrestricted

Key decision: **No**

Subject:

Purchase of Land South of Seal Drive in Sevenoaks

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, I agree to:

- Fund the purchase the land south of Seal Drive in Sevenoaks for use as a playing field extension.
- Purchase the land south of Seal Drive in Sevenoaks for use as a playing field extension.
- Authorise the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Democratic Services to enter into the necessary contracts and legal agreements for the works.

Reason(s) for decision:

The Wildernesse School site was developed in 2016 for a new 4FE Trinity School and for a 3FE satellite expansion for the Weald of Kent Grammar School for girls. In 2017, Trinity school expanded to 6FE. It is proposed that a satellite of a boy's grammar school will be co-located at the site as well.

The playing field facilities presently at the site are shared use. While there is sufficient sports provision on site, it requires careful scheduling as the schools need to timetable appropriately to ensure their curriculums are not adversely impacted. This need for collaborative planning will only be exacerbated if the site were to be used by three separate parties. This would mean that sports areas would be in use nearly all the time during the school year.

A timely opportunity arose where land adjacent to the school was offered for sale by the Royal Society for Blind Children. The land measures about 9.4 acres and would support the provision of a further 2 or 3 pitches. Initial feasibility has determined that the existing gradients on the ground are not excessive and the requirement for levelling appears within acceptable parameters.

The land has a contiguous boundary with the playing fields of Trinity School and the satellite expansion of the Weald of Kent Grammar School.

KCC recently completed a consultation on the establishment of a Boys' Grammar satellite of the Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Boys. Although the provision of 3FE of boy's selective places is not dependent on the acquisition of this land and the decision as to whether the provision will be approved is yet to be taken, the purchase and use of this land as playing fields for the existing schools on site would also be of benefit to the additional 3FE selective provision if progressed, and will result in all three provisions having access to a much greater offer for outdoor sports.

Legal Implications

The land would become a Freehold KCC asset.

There is a restrictive covenant on the land. Professional advice has been sought to determine whether the use of the land that KCC is proposing, fits within the constraints of the covenants. Additional information is at Annex 1 of the Cabinet Report, which is exempt and Commercial in Confidence

Equalities implications

An EqIA has been completed and identified no negative impacts

Data Protection implications

An impact assessment identified no adverse implications and KCC did not handle any personal data relating to this decision.

Financial Implications***Capital***

A study has been carried out which provides an estimate of the cost of acquisition. That amount is commercially sensitive at this time and will be met from the CYPE Basic Need Capital Budget. The amount of the funding required is in an exempt and Commercial in Confidence appendix of the accompanying Cabinet Report. However, the availability of funding through the Basic Need Programme Budget has been confirmed by the KCC s151 Officer.

The site is currently fenced and laid to meadow grass and woodland. It will require some remediation, levelling and forming. Funding for this will be sought through Community Infrastructure Levy, or if this is unsuccessful, it will be included as part of the planned re-development of existing sports facilities on the site funded from the CYPE Capital Programme.

Revenue Funding:

The maintenance of the additional sports facilities will be through the schools' budgets, facilitated by a joint agreement between all parties.

Assets

The land would be Freehold as an asset to KCC. It is situated on a private residential road in a prime area on the rural fringe of Sevenoaks town.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The report was shared with Members of the CYPE Cabinet Committee for comment, prior to a decision being taken.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

There are no options. The potential to acquire this land was an unexpected opportunity. This needs to be considered as urgently as possible. It is an excellent opportunity to acquire a valuable and useful asset, that will enhance the school sports experience for more than two thousand local school students, as well as the wider local community. If this acquisition is not progressed at pace, the vendor is likely to seek alternative buyers.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken, and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer: None

Signed:



Date: 11th May 2020