

# Moredon Recreation Ground – Multi Sports Hub Proposals

**Cabinet**

**Date: 14<sup>th</sup> March 2018**

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Author: Cabinet Member for Communities and Place  
Corporate Director Resources and Growth / Head of Property Assets

Wards: Rodbourne Cheney

Parishes Affected: Central Swindon North

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## **1. Purpose and Reasons**

- 1.1 This report seeks Cabinet approval to create a multi sports hub, ancillary retail, community related facilities, associated car parking and enabling residential development at the Moredon Recreation Ground, Swindon.
- 1.2 If Cabinet chooses to proceed, there is an opportunity for the Council to work with third parties to manage and maintain the multi sports hub, community related facilities and associated car parking as well as ring-fence any capital receipt from the disposal of the enabling residential land.
- 1.3 This proposal links to the Vision for Swindon Priority Three: to “ensure clean and safe streets and improve our public spaces and local culture.” Working with community groups and promoting high quality facilities for sports, leisure, and cultural activities across the town aids the health and welfare agenda. The sale of the enabling residential development land would offer opportunities to benefit the Swindon economy creating employment during construction and new homes for residents.

## **2. Recommendations**

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Authorise the Head of Planning, Regulatory Services and Heritage and the Head of Property Assets to provide resources, to assist in the design and development of the multi sports hub, ancillary retail, community related facilities, associated car parking and enabling residential development (‘the Development’) at the Moredon Recreation Ground Swindon.
- 2.2 Authorise the Head of Property Assets to apply for planning consents for the proposed multi sports hub, ancillary retail, community related facilities, associated car parking and enabling residential development (‘the Development’) at the Moredon Recreation Ground Swindon.
- 2.3 Authorise the Head of Property Assets in consultation with the Director of Law and Democratic Services and the Cabinet Member of Communities and Place to identify potential occupiers and operators and to agree the terms for leasehold land transfers of the whole or part of the proposed sporting hub to third parties in exchange for taking responsibility for future management and maintenance and

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Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Kathy Sherratt, Direct Dial Telephone Number 07789651922, [ksherratt@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:ksherratt@swindon.gov.uk).

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on such other terms and conditions that are considered appropriate in order to protect the Council's interests.

- 2.4 Authorise the Head of Property Assets to arrange for the enabling residential development land to be sold on the open market, conditional on the grant of full planning permission for development, on such detailed terms and conditions as are agreed with the Director of Law and Democratic Services in order to protect the Council's interests.
- 2.5 Authorise the Head of Property Assets in consultation with the Director of Finance to agree all necessary documentation to support grant-funding bids for the proposed sporting hub at the Moredon Recreation Ground Swindon on such terms and conditions as are necessary to protect the Council's interests.
- 2.6 Authorise the Director of Finance to ring-fence any capital receipt from the disposal of any enabling residential development land to fund the proposed sports hub with community related facilities and associated car parking at the Moredon Recreation Ground Swindon.
- 2.7 Approve a budget of up to £290K funded from section 106 Planning Agreement income to meet the costs of working up and submitting a planning application for delivery of the multi sports hub, ancillary retail, community related facilities, associated car parking and enabling residential development ('the Development') at the Moredon Recreation Ground Swindon.

## **3. Detail**

- 3.1 Moredon Recreation Ground Swindon outlined in red on the plan attached as Appendix 1 ('the Grounds') is a Council owned asset providing 4 adult football pitches, 2 cricket wickets, croquet, a model car club as well as informal open space and recreation. A sports pavilion and changing rooms serves the facilities but is in need of major refurbishment or replacement. There is also a par 3 golf course on part of the site, the use of which was suspended in 2014, as it was no longer economically viable. The 3 par golf course was excluded from the leisure and golf facilities portfolio transferred to third parties as part of the Leisure and Culture Commissioning change programme in 2014 (Cabinet Minute 5(6), 2014/15 refers).
- 3.2 In accordance with the Cabinet Minute 5(5) 2014/15, the Council has sought options for other recreational uses for the Grounds with a focus on its long-term use and sustainability.
- 3.3 Officers have been working with a range of users to consider suitable activities and the utility and social potential of the Grounds. Initial discussions with key sports governing bodies, which include but is not limited to, Wiltshire and Swindon Sports Partnership, Swindon Sport Forum, Bicycle User Groups and the Croquet Club indicate strong support for the development of a multi sports hub at

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the Grounds. Sport England, British Cycling and the Football Foundation have also indicated a willingness to offer grant funding to offset the cost of new changing rooms and a pavilion, a proposed cycling closed road circuit and a third generation ('3G') artificial grass pitch ('AGP'), subject to a formal application process.

- 3.4 The proposed sporting uses of the Grounds shown on the plan attached as Appendix 1 and the potential users include:
- 3.4.1 Cricket – retention of two artificial cricket wickets to facilitate existing and expanded use via the mid-week league and other grass roots forms of the game such as the 'Last Man Standing' league.
  - 3.4.2 Croquet - enabled expansion of the existing club from three lawns to six to cater for an expanding membership and allowing regional level competition.
  - 3.4.3 Cycling – construction of a cycling closed road circuit of between 1 - 1.5km with street lighting. This would be a sub-regional facility enable both competition and community use throughout the year. The proposed circuit would incorporate the existing on site haul road as a warm up area and could also be utilised for cycle proficiency training.
  - 3.4.4 Cyclo cross – centred on the former golf course area north of the river. While there would be a couple of permanent features this is largely event based demountable circuit so does not preclude the use of the land north of the river as informal public open space. Regional and European level events have already been successfully held here.
  - 3.4.5 BMX Pump Track, Cycle Speedway and Skatepark – community facility particularly aimed at younger riders
  - 3.4.6 Football – retain and enhance the quality of 4 natural turf pitches for competition use via the Swindon Saturday and Sunday leagues
  - 3.4.7 Football – construction of a Football Association approved full size 3G AGP primarily for training and community use
- 3.5 The proposed cricket and football uses are supported by the Swindon Borough Playing Pitch Strategy 2016-21 adopted at the 7 February 2018 Cabinet Meeting (agenda item 12).
- 3.6 The mixed use enabling development identified on the plan attached as Appendix 1 will comprise a proposed replacement changing room and pavilion and sports related ancillary retail along with additional car parking. In order to comply with Local Plan any ancillary sports related retail development of over 600m<sup>2</sup> would require a retail impact assessment.
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- 3.7 The proposal multi sports hub would offer an increase in the open space available for informal recreational use as the former golf course would no longer be fenced from public access. It would also become more accessible via an enhanced link with the off road footpath/cycle route to Shaw Forest Park and the Western Flyer being enabled via a separate Great Western Community Forest-led project. Linkages along the green corridor to the east would also be maintained.
- 3.8 Initial feasibility work has been undertaken to assess the likely cost of the Development and to test the willingness of stakeholders to provide grants and operate the facilities once completed. The identified costs and funding streams to undertake the Development are identified in 5.2 below. Soft market testing has already identified a willingness of third parties to take on the future management / ownership of various parts of the Grounds via leasehold interests for their individual sports and Officers would secure a commitment from third parties prior to the Development commencing.
- 3.9 Recent investigations and surveys on topography, utility supplies, archaeology and ecology/protected species indicate that the Development outlined on the plan attached as Appendix 1 is possible subject to planning permission for the same being secured.
- 3.10 Approximately 6.5 acres of enabling residential development land is proposed within the Grounds. The Local Plan allows for the loss of open space where the proposed development provides community benefit, which outweighs any loss when assessed against the Open Space Appraisal and Assessment. Any capital receipt from the sale of this residential development land on the open market would need to be ring-fenced for the funding of the improvements proposed to the Grounds.
- 3.11 To maximise the disposal value of the enabling residential development land and to ensure that a high quality development is achieved the Head of Planning, Regulatory Services and Heritage would prepare and consult upon a Planning Development Brief ('the Brief'). This enabling residential development land would then only be offered to the open market for sale if the Brief has been approved by the Council's Planning Committee. The Brief would be used to ensure that potential bidders have full information on the form, type and design expectations of development that is acceptable in planning terms and to secure the maximum capital receipt from an appropriate scheme.
- 3.12 It is anticipated that a planning application for the proposed multi sports hub, ancillary retail, community related facilities and associated car parking and the adoption of the Brief could be submitted during 2018. Agreements with third party operators and grant funding applications would be considered in tandem. It is unlikely that any final award of grant funding would be secured until planning consents have been obtained due to their legal constraints. If necessary, it is

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proposed that the Development would be phased to link with match funding timetables.

3.13 The next steps would be to:

3.13.1 Undertake further informal consultations with residents and other stakeholders on the detailed master plan attached as Appendix 1 and make any required amendments.

3.13.2 Prepare and submit the planning application for the multi sports hub and the Brief for the enabling residential development, having commissioned the necessary supporting studies to include: transport, drainage, flood risk, ecology, archaeology, and noise assessments; ground investigations and any other identified requirements.

3.13.3 Negotiate and complete all necessary legal documentation with future operators of the whole or parts of the multi-sports hub and submit any grant applications.

3.13.4 Market and agree the terms for the sale of the enabling residential land on the open market.

3.13.5 Market and agree the terms for the disposal of any ancillary sports related retail facilities on the open market.

3.13.6 Procure and construct the new sports hub in accordance with the Councils adopted procedures and the planning consent (if granted).

3.14 This proposal would involve the displacement of the existing model car club who are currently located on the Grounds, as the land upon which they operate from would be needed for the Development. Officers have met with the model car club and have offered them assistance in identifying a suitable alternative location, as far as they are able, although no guarantees can be offered that this can be secured.

## Local Consultation

3.15 A draft master plan for the Development was shared at a public meeting held in Western Community Centre, Swindon on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2017 hosted by the Ward Members and the Opposition Spokesperson for Resources. At this meeting there were approximately 60 members of the public in attendance and there was an overwhelming agreement in the room of support for the Development. Concerns only being raised about the need to retain full permeability of the Grounds for residents; to provide adequate car parking; the need to prevent site damage to the Grounds from any cyclo-cross events and to protect the Grounds from access by motorcross bikes.

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- 3.16 The Parish Council has indicated its support for the Development at a meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017.
- 3.17 The Grounds are adjacent to the Nova Hreod Academy and the school has indicated that they may be interested in expanding their extracurricular activities to include the uses (particularly cycling) that would be offered within the Development.

## **4. Alternative Options**

- 4.1 The Grounds could continue to support recreational use in its current form being maintained by the Central Swindon North Parish Council under the agreed maintenance deed. However under this option the opportunity for the Council to directly enable the improved facilities may be lost.

## **5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management**

### Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 Section 106 Planning Agreement income amounting to c£290K is available for leisure and recreation projects in this location and is proposed to be utilised to fund delivery of the Multi Sports Hub proposals including the planning application for the Development and the Brief.
- 5.2 It is anticipated that the Development may cost in the region of £3.65M of which c £750K would be sought from grant funding and c £3.25M of capital receipts from the sale of the enabling residential development land. Indicative Development costs have been secured from national governing body framework agreements; Sport England facility cost guidance and officers' experience of commissioning similar elements of the proposed build.
- 5.3 As the enabling residential development land can only be progressed if it is associated with the improvements to the proposed Grounds in accordance with the Local Plan then this capital receipt would not be available to spend on alternative projects if this proposal does not proceed.
- 5.4 Currently the costs of maintaining the StreetSmart activities at the Grounds is funded from revenue income received from Central Swindon North Parish Council and booking of the football pitches. The revenue cost of running and maintaining these new facilities once completed has been considered as part of the initial feasibility and is considered to be viable and sustainable. However the Development would not be progressed unless and until suitable third parties have committed to take over the management and maintenance of the Grounds in whole or parts in order to ensure there is no revenue implications to the Council.
- 5.5 Procurement of the Development would be undertaken in accordance with approved protocols.



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## Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.6 All legal documentation will be issued will by the Director of Law and Democratic Services in consultation with the Head of Property Assets and the Head of Planning, Regulatory Services and Heritage in order to protect the Councils interests.
- 5.7 It is possible that the Council may be required to permit legal charges to be placed on the land ownership title in order to secure the necessary grant funding.
- 5.8 There are no known human rights implications and it is believed the recommendations are compatible with Convention rights

## All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.9 Council staff currently manage the StreetSmart activities at the Grounds under a service level agreement with the Central Swindon North Parish Council. Any implications to this will be considered as part of the project delivery and there is no immediate change proposed to the staffing arrangements. There is the potential for this project to increase sport and leisure patronage in the Borough by improving facilities to aid the Councils health and wellbeing agenda. Increased use and presence of organised activities at the Grounds could result in a reduction in crime and disorder in the immediate area.

## Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.10 A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) has been completed. No adverse or other significant issues were found. A copy of the DIA can be obtained from the report author.

## Risk Management

- 5.11 There is a risk that the necessary planning consents and other match funding grants are not secured for the Development and/or that no suitable operators/occupiers are prepared to accept the responsibility for the completed Development. Soft market testing and engagement with grant funding bodies has been undertaken indicating full support for these proposals and in any event to mitigate against this risk the Development will not proceed until there is formal legal and binding commitment from suitable operators.
- 5.12 The identified s106 monies is available to spend on this proposal, however there is a risk that this may be lost if the Development does not proceed for any reason.
- 5.13 The market value of the enabling development has only been assessed in principle at this time and its delivery is still subject to the successful adoption of

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the Brief; ground condition and other relevant surveys and assessments and the market conditions prevailing at the time of sale.

## **6. Consultees**

- 6.1 The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.
- 6.2 Rodbourne Cheney Ward Members
- 6.3 Central Swindon North Parish Council
- 6.4 Nova Hreod Academy School

## **7. Background Papers**

- 7.1 None

## **8. Appendices**

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Plan

## **9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme**

- 9.1 This is not a Key Decision