

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL COUNCIL

14th November 2023

Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Town Centre Regeneration and Growth: Cllr Daniel Lister

Report Title	Acquisition of Former Bus Depot
Report Author	Kevin Langley Head of Major Projects and Regeneration Deven Efde Regeneration Manager

List of Approvers

Monitoring Officer	Catherine Whitehead	10/11/2023
Chief Finance Officer (S.151)	Martin Henry	10/11/2023
Other Director	Stuart Timmiss	
Communications Lead/Head of Communications		

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report seeks to notify Cabinet of the decision taken by the Leader of the Council to approve the acquisition of the Former Bus Depot in Northampton for a regeneration scheme.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Local Government Act 2000 Section 9E provides that the Leader of the Council can take any executive decision alone or with his Cabinet. In West Northants the vast majority of Executive decisions, not otherwise delegated, are taken collectively by the Leader and Cabinet together but in cases of urgency the Leader of the Council can take decisions where it is necessary.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet note the decisions taken by the Deputy Leader of the Council set out at Appendix A and Appendix B.

4. Reason for Recommendations

- 4.1 Where decisions that would otherwise be taken by the Leader and Cabinet have been taken by the Leader alone, in the interests of transparency, the decision is reported to the next available meeting of the Council.
- 4.2 The decision taken provided the authority for the Council to:
- a) establish a capital budget of £3.3m for the purchase of the Former Bus Depot land and buildings at St James, Northampton
 - b) approve the acquisition of the Former Bus Depot for the delivery of a regeneration scheme.
- 4.3 Full reasons for the decision taken are set out in the decision records appended to this report.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 The tram, later bus, depot on St James' Road, Northampton was developed by the Northampton Corporation, passed to Northampton Borough Council in 1974, and with the sale of the Northampton Bus Company passed into the ownership of Stagecoach. In 2014, it was acquired with the assistance Northampton Borough Council (which briefly held the ownership) by Church's Shoes for the purpose of extending Church's manufacturing capacity. The site has been vacant for over ten years and is contributing to a negative perception and environment for the town. Church's did not develop the site as intended and decided to market it for sale
- 5.2 The primary benefit of acquiring the site is to have full control over what development and uses can take place on the site in future.
- 5.3 The site sits on the boundary of Sixfields and Dallington & Spencer wards. There are areas of high deprivation surrounding the site within the Spencer and St James neighbourhoods. The former is the second most deprived and the latter the seventh most deprived within the whole of West Northamptonshire. Both are within the top 5% most deprived neighbourhoods nationally.
- 5.4 There is the potential to deliver a benchmark, exemplar scheme that sets a new standard in the local area within affordable and mixed housing tenures. The Council would seek to use the site to raise the standard in terms of design and sustainability. This will need to be tested as the scheme for the site is developed as there may be a trade-off between the quality that can be delivered, and the costs incurred.

6. Issues and Choices

6.1 The decision taken was necessary to ensure the continued proper running of the Council and its business.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

7.2 The maximum financial exposure for the delivery of a housing led scheme is currently assumed to be £1.8m (based on a 'worst case' resale value of £1.5m with £0.3m of costs). If the council choose to sell the land for commercial uses then this loss would be mitigated. This should be treated as the cost of being able to own, control and regenerate the site as the Council wishes. Without incurring this cost the Council would have no control over the site and is informed that it would likely to be used for logistics and open storage which goes against what the council is seeking to achieve for this area of Northampton.

7.3 There is a strong expectation of significant grant funding to assist in the redevelopment of this site going forward.

7.4 Legal

7.5 Section 120 of the Local Government Act 1972 authorises the Council to purchase land by agreement:

“For the purposes of:

- a) any of their functions under this or any other enactment, or
- b) the benefits, improvement or development of their area”

7.6 The general power of competence in the Localism Act 2011 provides the Council with the power to do anything that individuals generally may do subject to the restrictions and/or limitations which are specified in the Act.

7.7 In addition, section 111 of the Local Act 1972 provides the Council with the power to do anything (whether or not involving expenditure, borrowing, or lending of money or the acquisition disposal of any property or rights) which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of any of the Council's functions.

7.8 Risk

7.9 Risks associated with the acquisition and the delivery of a regeneration scheme are set out in Appendix C.

7.10 Consultation and Communications

7.10.1 This is a commercial acquisition and is not appropriate for consultation.

7.11 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

7.11.1 There has been no consultation with Scrutiny in relation to this acquisition due to urgency except for consultation with the Scrutiny Chair in relation to urgency.

7.12 Climate Impact

7.12.1 The current site is a brownfield site, through the delivery of a regeneration scheme the site will be remediated and will no longer be a blight on the local environment. Redevelopment of the site will be guided by the council's new Construction & Maintenance Climate Strategy

7.13 Community Impact

7.13.1 The project has the opportunity to provide housing including affordable housing to support a well-known pressure locally.

8. Background Papers

8.1 [Decision - Acquisition of Former Bus Depot, St James Road, Northampton - West Northamptonshire Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

8.2 [Decision - Acquisition of Former Bus Depot, Northampton - West Northamptonshire Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)