

**RENEWAL, RECREATION & HOUSING PDS COMMITTEE**  
**5<sup>th</sup> November 2019 - Draft minutes**

**45C PROVISION OF HOUSING AT WEST WICKHAM LIBRARY AND STATION ROAD CAR PARK, WEST WICKHAM**  
**Report DRR19/053**

Members considered a summary of the initial feasibility work undertaken in relation to the current site of West Wickham Library and Station Road car park in West Wickham to provide approximately 34 residential units and 500sqm of commercial unit.

The report recommended that further feasibility work be undertaken in order to fully assess the viability of the scheme and a procurement exercise be run concurrently to appoint a multi-disciplinary design team. The results of this further work would be reported to a meeting of the Executive in spring 2020.

Members also considered additional confidential information set out in the accompanying Part 2 (Exempt) report (DRR19/054).

The Head of Town Centre Renewal drew Members' attention to the immense pressures on the borough in relation to housing supply and specifically in relation to affordable homes and housing for temporary accommodation. As a result, the Executive agreed that Council-owned land would be reviewed in light of its potential for residential development which included Council owned car parks.

The report identified development potential at the site of Station Road car park, West Wickham. This potential could be maximised if it was expanded to include the current site of West Wickham Library, two rear land parcels and a private road. The report summarised the initial feasibility work undertaken to date that suggested the site was financially viable with the provision of up to 34 units but only if no car parking was retained.

Additional feasibility work was needed to build a full business case for the scheme. The report sought a political mandate to continue to look at the site together with the allocation of resources to undertake the additional feasibility work set out in paragraph 3.24.

Members' attention was specifically drawn to recommendations for the following work:-

- That a more detailed assessment of the traffic and economic impact of the loss of car parking would be completed.
- That options would be considered for the re-provision of the library on an interim basis. It may be that the outcome of this work recommended a phased approach to the residential scheme for example, to avoid relocating the library twice. It was

not anticipated that the library would close except to facilitate the transition between venues. The Head of Town Centre Renewal clarified that there were no plans to relocate the library to a porta cabin in the car park of the leisure centre.

- That the massing examples provided with the report were indicative; in response to the informal feedback from planning colleagues, the massing would be reconfigured to address concerns about height and loss of privacy for residents whose properties were adjacent to the land parcels.

The outcome of this and the other items of additional work outlined in paragraph 3.24 would inform the final business case to be reported back to Members, at which point officers would recommend whether or not the site should go forward for development. It was emphasised that it was not a forgone conclusion that the scheme would be taken forward; if the outcome of the additional feasibility work showed a detrimental impact on the town that cannot be mitigated or avoided, then it may be that officers would not recommend taking the scheme forward. However, this would not be known until the additional work was completed.

The report recommended that a procurement process be run concurrently to identify a multi-disciplinary design team that would be appointed if the business case recommended the scheme go ahead. This would avoid any further delay to progressing the scheme should Members approve it be taken forward in the Spring.

Visiting Ward Member Councillor Bennett JP had discussed the proposals with officers and supported them in principle. Alternative car parks i.e. Sainsburys were very well used whereas Station Road car park was used the least. Councillor Bennett emphasised the need for housing units to be of a design appropriate to the site, in keeping with the surrounding area and not over-dominant. He did not wish the current library to be inconvenienced by moving twice and preferred the previous option of moving the library directly into West Wickham Leisure Centre.

The Council were currently in a desperate situation having to find accommodation for a total of 1600 homeless families in the borough. Once the London Plan came into effect, the target for the provision of housing would almost double.

Councillor Bennett emphasised the need for public consultation to be undertaken on the proposed scheme.

Visiting Ward Member Councillor Mark Brock highlighted the fact that these proposals were still at a very early stage.

Councillor Allatt stated that West Wickham was a popular local shopping destination. The loss of the Station Road car park could impact on parking in the High Street and may lead to the demise of retail business in the area.

Councillor Michael supported the proposals which would help to create a modern leisure centre for the local community. As reported earlier, usage of libraries had increased following similar moves to leisure centres/town centres. However, heed should be taken to ensure there was no impact on the town centre due to the lack of

car parking facilities. West Wickham was a more traditional shopping centre and it was imperative that it remain so.

Councillor Stevens had received correspondence from residents and emphasised the need for their concerns to be taken into account.

Referring to Strategic Option 1 set out on page 107 of the report, Councillor Benington asked if the scheme would still be financially viable if the proposed flats at the top of the three storey central block were removed and the block reduced to two storeys. The Head of Town Centre Renewal advised that it would depend on how massing was reconfigured; any change to the number or type of unit provided would affect the viability calculation. All options to reduce the height of the development and the impact on the privacy of surrounding residents would be considered.

It was confirmed that the proposed design of the housing units would be of traditional construction methods: bricks and mortar.

The Head of Renewal agreed to circulate information to Members on the likely income that could be generated per year by the proposed 34 housing units and how much per annum could be saved on nightly paid accommodation.

Councillor Sharma considered that bullet point two on page 98 of the report should become a priority recommendation until discussions had taken place with the owners of the privately held freehold.

Councillor Bennett advised there was ample car parking available in West Wickham. The report only referred to three car parks however, there were others including Sainsburys, Lidl and the Leisure Centre. He urged Members and officers to ensure that the following points be given priority consideration:-

- the library only be relocated once the new building is ready for occupation;
- the new library building must be in keeping with the local area;
- the housing scheme consist of traditionally built housing for residents; and
- the Council engage at an early stage with affected freeholders.

**RESOLVED that:-**

- 1 the report be noted and the Committee's comments be provided to Members of the Executive;**
- 2 Members of the Executive be recommended to:-**
  - 2.1 review the feasibility work undertaken to date and approve the West Wickham library and adjacent parcels of land and the car park at station Road, West Wickham as a potential site for housing development;**

- 2.2 approve the additional feasibility work identified at paragraph 3.24, including instructing Cushman & Wakefield to enter into formal negotiations with the land owners for the purchase of additional land to maximise the site's development potential; and**
- 2.3 approve the procurement strategy outlined in paragraphs 4.1-4.10 for the appointment of a multi-disciplinary design team for the scheme via the ADUP (Architecture Design and Urbanism Panel) framework.**

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