

WIRRAL COUNCIL

DELEGATED DECISION

SUBJECT:	<i>VACANT LAND AND BUILDING REVIEW - LAND IN OLD CHESTER ROAD (HOLT ROAD) ROCK FERRY</i>
WARD/S AFFECTED:	<i>ROCK FERRY</i>
REPORT OF:	<i>HEAD OF UNIVERSAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES</i>
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	<i>MEMBER FOR SUPPORT SERVICES - COUNCILLOR ADRIAN JONES</i>
KEY DECISION?	<i>NO</i>

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to authorise a review of the reserve and guide prices for the land in Old Chester Road (Holt Road), Rock Ferry previously declared surplus and approved for disposal by the Member for Central & Support Services on 22 October 2013.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 A review has been undertaken in respect of the Council's vacant land and buildings to determine whether they are required by the Council or whether they are surplus to requirements. As part of the review it has been established that the land in Old Chester Road (Holt Road) is not required for Council purposes and is considered appropriate for sale.
- 2.2 The land in Old Chester Road (Holt Road), shown cross hatched on the attached plan, was previously declared surplus and approved for disposal by the Member for Central & Support Services on 22 October 2013.
- 2.3 The land, purchased under the Holborn Square & Queen Street CPO 1965, is shown, cross hatched on the attached plan and extends to a total area of approximately 1,350m². It is grassed with mature trees and is enclosed by a low metal railing fence, with gated access on Old Chester Road and Holt Road. It should be noted that part of centre of the land is not owned by the Council and is not registered to anyone at the Land Registry. Officers have asked the Land Registry to consider granting title to the Council, but this has been refused.
- 2.4 The land was put to auction in February 2014 and again in April 2014. Whilst there was some interest shown at the first auction, the bids did not meet the reserve. At the April auction there was one bid, but this fell well below expectations. Consequently the Auctioneer has recommended that the reserve and guide prices be reviewed.
- 2.5 Council officers will review and set a new reserve for the sale, based on the professional advice of the Auctioneer.

3.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 3.1 There is a risk that the land will not sell at auction, however, the Council will only be charged a fee if the sale is successful.
- 3.2 The sale will remove the risk of liability for any future maintenance of the land.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 As the land is not required by the Council, a sale by auction is considered to be the most appropriate method of disposal. Consequently no other options have been considered.

5.0 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Head of Universal and Infrastructure Services has consulted with other relevant Council departments. In addition, the auctioneer will undertake a promotional exercise to advertise the availability of the land at its auction, which will include promotion through its website and auction catalogue.
- 5.2 The land is open to public access. Accordingly the proposed disposal was advertised in the local press, in accordance with the Local Government Act, and no objections were received.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

- 6.1 The land is not considered to be suitable for transfer or disposal to voluntary, community or faith groups, although such groups would be able to bid at the auction.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

- 7.1 Should the land sell at auction, it will generate a receipt and will also remove any potential liability such as clearing the land of fly tipping. In addition the purchaser will pay the Council 2% of the gavel price, with a minimum of £1,000, towards the Council's fees. If the land does not sell, no costs will be charged to the Council.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The disposal will require the preparation of appropriate legal documentation.
- 8.2 A sale by auction is considered to be the best way of demonstrating that the best price reasonably obtainable has been achieved, which satisfies s123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

No because there is no relevance to equality.

10.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no carbon reduction implications arising directly from this report.

11.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The site is designated as part of the Primarily Residential Area in the Unitary Development Plan. As such, any future planning application for a housing scheme would be assessed for compliance with UDP Policy HS4 'New Housing Development' and Policy GR7 'Trees & New Development' which will require proposals to demonstrate there would be no detrimental change to the character of the area and sets criteria for considering the protection to be given to trees on development sites.

11.2 The National Planning Framework NPPF paragraph 74 also indicates that existing open space should not be built on unless assessed to be surplus to requirements; or it can be replaced by better or equivalent provision. While the site is not formally designated as Greenspace and is within 400 metres of Mersey Park, it comprises a well-maintained area of open space with a number of established trees, which currently contributes to visual amenity along the frontage on Old Chester Road.

12.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

12.1 That authority be given to Officers to review and set a new reserve price for the disposal of the land in Old Chester Road (Holt Road) for a future sale through the Council's appointed Auctioneer.

13.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

13.1 To make the best use of the council's property assets by seeking authority to review the current reserve price for a future disposal through the Council's appointed Auctioneer.

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APPENDICES

Location plan

REFERENCE MATERIAL

No reference material has been used in the preparation of this report.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date