

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 28th March 2013

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Children and Enterprise

SUBJECT: Peelhouse Lane Site

WARDS: Boroughwide

PORTFOLIO: Physical Environment

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Executive Board approval was obtained in June 2012, to develop a 'whole site' approach and report back to members with a recommended way forward for the Peelhouse Lane Site (formerly Fairfield High School) site and land. This means that respective potential uses would not be presented, nor indeed, developed in isolation, but that the interrelationship between respective opportunities is promoted.
- 1.2 A number of meetings have been held between officers to discuss the options for the future use of the Peelhouse Lane Site. This report outlines the current recommended way forward along with the funding proposals and the timeline and actions required.

Recommended Future Use of the Peelhouse Lane site

It is proposed that the Peelhouse Lane site be used to provide a 50 year cemetery with the remainder of the land being set aside for housing.

The intention would be to allow sufficient space on the site for housing such that all the works for the cemetery, removal of existing buildings and the provision of additional transport links can be funded from the capital receipts derived from the sale of land for residential development.

In addition, it is suggested that the surplus ensuing out of capital receipts as a result of the release of the frontage of the site as residential building land can be used to enhance the educational delivery within the Fairfield Infant and Fairfield Junior schools by the improvement of the building structures and vehicle access to the schools. This will form the basis of a separate Executive Board paper in due course.

It is essential that the site is brought forward for development as quickly as possible to ensure that the Council is able to meet the tight timeframes in respect of bringing forward a 50 year capacity cemetery for the borough and delivery the necessary capital receipts.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To note the progress on the disposal of the former Fairfield High land (see attached Plan Appendix A) as a school asset.**
- 2.2 To note the timescales and key dates for the recommended approach to ensure that land is available for cemetery use within the required time.**
- 2.3 To undertake such consultation as is necessary to deliver the new cemetery and undertake applications to Sports England and the Planning Authority.**
- 2.4 To promptly demolish the vacant school buildings upon the immediate vacation of the site by Wade Deacon, funded from eventual capital receipts.**
- 2.5 To place 11.35 acres of land fronting Peelhouse Lane in the open market for sale as residential building land.**
- 2.6 The land delineated in red in Appendix A be appropriated from education purposes to be held for planning purposes in terms of sections 232 and 237 Town and Country Planning Act 1990.**
- 2.7 That the Operational Director – Economy, Enterprise and Property in consultation with the Portfolio holder listed be authorised to finalise the indicative boundary between residential and cemetery, shown in blue on Appendix A with the other recommendations in the report being adjusted accordingly. The final line will remain consistent with the cemetery having a 50 year capacity.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Background and Guiding Principles

3.1.1 Widnes Cemetery

The current Cemetery at Birchfield Road has approximately four years of capacity left. If a new cemetery is not created and ready to provide for burial by the end of 2016 the residents of Widnes would not be afforded the right to be buried in their own town. They would have to be buried at Runcorn Cemetery which would reduce the capacity there, or there would be a requirement to look for a burial ground outside of the Borough.

The former Fairfield High School site would be the most appropriate site for a new Widnes Cemetery as it is central and easily accessible. It is also in the ownership of the Council. The programme shown in Appendix B highlights that there is not much flexibility in meeting the 4 year end date

for current Cemetery capacity. Internal decision making and reporting may extend the process.

3.1.3 Wade Deacon High School

Wade Deacon currently occupies the former Fairfield High School site whilst the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) remodelling work is being undertaken.

It is agreed in writing that Wade Deacon is to vacate the site by the 26th April 2013. This could be extended in the unlikely event of programme slippage for the new building.

3.1.4 Finance

There is no identified Council budget for a new cemetery. It is proposed that capital is to be generated for the Cemetery development, and associated works, including the removal of existing buildings, via a residential development on the fronting Peelhouse Lane land.

A cemetery development to provide capacity for 50 years would release 11.35 acres for residential development. The land would be placed on the open market for sale in accordance with standing orders. It is anticipated that the receipts from the sale of the land would pay for the creation of the cemetery, removal of existing buildings, highways infrastructure and associated works and provide an enhanced educational facility at Fairfield Infants and Juniors and improve the vehicle access arrangements to the Fairfield Infants and Junior Schools.

3.2 Progress to date and next steps

3.2.1 Application for alternative provision

Former Fairfield High School Building

A Schedule 1 consent application, under the Academies Act 2010, for the disposal of land occupied by the buildings at Fairfield High was submitted by the Council on 19th July 2012. This was acknowledged and the Council was advised that in addition to the Schedule 1 application a Section 77 consent may be required to allow the disposal of the School Playing Fields to proceed, this is detailed below.

On 28th September 2012 the Education Funding Agency notified the Authority that the Secretary of State had confirmed consent to dispose of the land previously occupied by the former Fairfield High School on Peelhouse Lane. It is recommended that the area of land shown in Appendix A be appropriated from education purposes to be held for planning purposes in terms of sections 232 and 237 Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Former Fairfield High School Playing Fields

Section 77 consent covers the protection of school playing fields used by maintained schools (which includes community, foundation, voluntary, special and LA maintained nursery schools) in the last 10 years.

In order to use the fields for an alternative use a Section 77 application is required. It is to be noted that in order to deliver a new cemetery prior to the current cemetery reaching its capacity, the Council needs to make an early Section 77 application. This may only be applied for following an open public consultation process on the future use of the playing fields, to be considered as part of the borough's Playing Pitches Strategy.

3.2.2 Fairfield Infants and Juniors

In order to fully address the options for improvements to the current Infants and Junior sites a feasibility study has been undertaken. This will be the subject of a separate paper to Executive Board.

3.3 Key Timeline

3.3.1 An assessment of the actions required and the timescales for the proposed way forward has been undertaken and the estimated dates are highlighted in Appendix B.

3.3.2 Although the tables in Appendix B show the quickest possible delivery time, there is a high risk of slippage which could have an adverse impact on the delivery of the new graves. In addition, for both options there are risks of delays beyond the Council's control e.g. Sports England, Secretary of State for Education and the challenges to the Planning process

3.3.3 It should also be noted that the residential land values for the Peelhouse Lane site will be constrained by highways, services and access issues.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The reallocation of the Fairfield High site for community use will allow the wider Halton Borough Council aims to be achieved.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

N/A

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

N/A.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

N/A

6.4 A Safer Halton

N/A

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The reallocation of the Fairfield High site for cemetery and residential will allow the wider Halton Borough Council aims to be achieved.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is recommended that the primary call for use of capital receipts for the land sale should be as follows;

Demolition of existing buildings, estimated at £450,000

Highway works at junction of Peelhouse Lane, estimated at £685,000

Establishment of Cemetery infrastructure, estimated at £1,000,000

8.0 RISK ANALYSIS

In order to achieve the timescales, public consultation needs to commence before the tendered prices, valuations, site investigations etc. are completed. Public announcement will need to be carefully managed to retain realistic expectations since funding of both the cemetery and school works are reliant on capital receipts from housing land sales in a difficult property market.

As with all land sales there is a risk to the timing of receipts being received, this has implications on the cashflow of the Council with the potential of estimated project expenditure being fully defrayed before a receipt is received.

It is also to be noted that there are risks with the project outside of the Council's control relating to Sports England, Secretary of State for Education and the challenges to the Planning process.

9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

9.1 Consideration to access issues is given in all building projects.

10.0 REASON FOR DECISION

10.1 To allow use of the Council's land to generate capital receipts needed to bring forward the Cemetery and Fairfield Infants and Juniors site.

11.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

11.1 Alternative solutions would be to look at other uses for the land. However, a 50 year capacity cemetery is required and there are few other location options. In addition the housing solution would provide the funds to undertake the work and any surplus could be used to contribute to the Fairfield Infant and Fairfield Junior schools project. To not use the surplus land for housing would require additional funds to be made available to undertake the works needed at the cemetery and nothing would be left for the Schools.

12.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

12.1 The public consultation would need to be undertaken by the Spring of 2013.


13.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Ann McIntyre Operational Director Childrens Organisation & Provision
Schedule 1 Consent Education Funding Agency (28th September 2012)	Floor 2 Rutland House Runcorn	
Executive Board Report Fairfield High Site 7th June 2012	As above	As above

Appendix A – Former Fairfield High Site



 Site Boundary

 Indicative dividing line between residential and cemetery developments

Appendix B – Former Fairfield High School Site and Land

Key Steps

Quickest Possible delivery

High risk of delays from Sport England and challenges to the planning process

Activity	Date
SoS Approval for De-Designation from educational use received	September 2012
Executive Board Decision	March 2013
Engage appropriate agents – to advise on how to optimise re-sale potential	April 2013 to August 2013
Sports England Consultation	Playing pitch strategy completed end March 13 Public Consultation April to May 13 Section 77 application May to Sept 13 <i>Overall timescale: April 13 to Sept 13</i>
Wade Deacon vacate Fairfield site <i>(security issues / consider early demolition)</i>	April 13
Planning Process – for Residential and Cemetery	September 13 to May 14
Land sale process – for residential	May 14 to July 15
Capital Receipts – Phased over 3 years ; 33% July 15; 33% July 16; 33% July 17	

Cemetery Development	May 14 to November 15
Cemetery Completed	November 2015

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