

**REPORT FOR  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE FIRE & RESCUE  
SERVICE**

**Disposal Options and Marketing  
Strategy in Respect of**

**Freehold Property at Hartford Road,  
Huntingdon, PE29 3RH**



## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Instructions and Basis of Report:**  
To consider method of sale, potential end users, pre-marketing and marketing recommendations, timing considerations, pricing and disposal options in respect of the subject property. This is not a formal valuation report.
- **The Property:**  
Well located within the central ring road of Huntingdon. Existing operational fire station and training centre totalling c. 18,000 sq ft on a site of around 1.16 acres. Additionally, four semi-detached houses on a site of around 0.47 acres (total site area around 1.63 acres).
- **Planning Background:**  
Allocated for residential development (operational site only) in emerging local plan – for around 20 homes.
- **Market Sectors:**  
The site is suitable for residential development but could also be suitable for care home, hotel or retail uses, subject to planning.
- **Appraisal and Pricing:**  
Initial appraisal advice suggests a likely land value of around £750,000 for the fire station/training centre development site. The four properties at The Brow are estimated at £700,000 in total.

We consider a care home might pay in the order of £1.25 million for a site of between 1 – 1.5 acres. We have not at this stage appraised hotel or retail use.

- **Marketing Strategy:**  
We recommend the compilation of a full pack of background information prior to marketing. The property should be offered 'as is' to the market seeking conditional or unconditional offers. Conditional offers are likely to be higher. We recommend the property is offered in two lots. Allow around six months for unconditional sale and up to 15 months for a conditional sale (subject to planning). A full targeted marketing campaign is advised with a budget cost £5,000 - £7,500 plus VAT.

Agents sale fees would be calculated at 1.5% of the sale price.

- **Conclusion:**  
Hartford Road is likely to generate considerable interest from the residential development market. There may be other uses generating high land value which should also be targeted.

## 2. INSTRUCTIONS AND BASIS OF REPORT

In connection with the possible relocation of the Fire Service HQ, Training Centre and operational Fire Station in Huntingdon, we are asked to consider the disposal strategy for the current operational fire station and training centre at Hartford Road.

This report will consider the method of sale, potential end users, pre-marketing recommendations, timing issues and likely sale proceeds. We will consider some alternative disposal options.

Please note that this is not a formal valuation and is provided for guidance purposes only. The Practise Statements of the RICS Valuation Appraisal Manual ("The Red Book") do not apply.

We have had regard to information provided including a formal valuation report carried out by Messrs Wilks Head and Eve, dated 1<sup>st</sup> November 2012, floor plans and title plan. Cheffins has previously supplied some planning appraisal background in respect of this property in a report dated 30<sup>th</sup> October 2014.

## 3. THE PROPERTY

### a) Location

Located just to the east of Huntingdon Town Centre within the inner ring road which encircles the centre of the town. It is located at the junction of Hartford Road and Nursery Road, bordering the eastern side of the ring road. It is a mixed residential and commercial location with nearby commercial occupiers including ATS Tyre Centre and a large Sainsbury's supermarket.

Currently the access into the site is from the town centre along Hartford Road and there is no direct access from the ring road.

### b) Description

The property comprises a large purpose built fire station of brick construction with five appliance bays and a two storey office. Later additions include training buildings including drill tower and smoke house. There is a separate detached block including training accommodation, workshops, and garaging to the rear of the large drill yard.

The property also includes four semi-detached residential dwellings located at The Brow situated to the rear of the main station and training buildings which include large private gardens. We have not at this stage inspected the residential properties which are understood to be occupied by service personnel.

We have not carried out a measured survey of any of the buildings, but from plans provided we understand that the total gross internal area of the fire station and training facilities is around 17,976 sq ft (1,670 sq m).

From measurements taken from Promap Ordnance Survey Plans we understand the total site area including the residential properties at The Brow to be around 0.658 hectares (1.63 acres).

The area of the operational fire station (excluding the residential properties) is around 0.47 hectares (1.16 acres).

c) Services

We have not made enquiries into service connections at the property but assume that all mains services are available.

d) Tenure

We understand that the property is owned freehold and that vacant possession can be provided upon completion of a sale.

We are not aware of any restrictive covenants or other matters affecting title which may impact on the marketability of the property.

We would recommend that prior to offering the property for sale that your solicitors are instructed to provide a report on title.



## 4. PLANNING BACKGROUND

### a) Policy

The Huntingdon Core Strategy was adopted in 2009. There is an emerging Local Plan which is at draft stage.

Within the emerging Local Plan proposed allocation HU10 relates specifically to the Fire Station site (excluding the existing residential element). The proposed allocation is 0.4 hectares for residential development of around 20 homes. The policy goes on to state that successful development of the site will require:

- No development commencing until details of alternative premises for the fire and rescue services have been agreed with the local planning authority.
- Provision of the main access from Hartford Road.
- Development proposals avoiding built development within the functional flood plain for Barracks Brook.
- Incorporation of the protected trees into a comprehensive landscaping scheme.



### b) Potential Uses

Clearly, the proposed allocation of the property for residential development is very helpful.

Alternative uses which might be considered in this location could include care/nursing home, hotel and possibly retail.

### c) Constraints

The site has a number of constraints including:

Flooding – risk of flooding from Barracks Brook requires investigation and building solution.

Heritage – the site is situated on the edge of a conservation area. There may be interest in archaeology at the site.

Trees – three trees have Tree Preservation Orders.

Access – access is to be stipulated from Hartford Road only.

We would recommend that pre-application advice is sought from the LPA to establish the range of potentially suitable uses and to discuss specific planning constraints.

## 5. MARKET SECTORS

The property could be suitable for a number of possible end uses although some form of residential development would seem to be the most likely.

New Build Residential Scheme – we consider that the site would be an attractive development opportunity given its central location and proximity to amenities. There appears to be potential for a relatively dense scheme, notwithstanding the constraints of the flood risk, TPO's and current proposed allocation for around 20 units on the operational/training centre part.

Hotel – this site may be suitable for a hotel use (probably budget style). The site has prominence and could accommodate hotel use which usually require sites of 1 – 1.5 acres. There are a limited number of such operators, however Travelodge currently have a requirement for Huntingdon.

Nursing/Care Home – Care Home operators have been active in the Huntingdon market recently. The site may be attractive for the development of a purpose built facility given its prominence and proximity to amenities.

Retail – it is possible there could be demand from retail end users for this location, although planning policy may not support such use. A mixed retail and residential scheme might be more appropriate with perhaps a convenience store at ground floor and residential above.

## 6. APPRAISAL AND PRICING

### a) Residential New Build

We do not consider the current operational building suitable for residential conversion.

Recent land sales for residential development in Huntingdon show a range of values from around £500,000 to over £1 million pounds per developable acre. A nearby site of around 2.42 acres (gross) of Edison Bell Way is understood to be under offer to a developer at a price reflecting in excess of £1 million per acre. The site has outline planning permission for 84 residential units. CIL and S106 payments are applicable, but no affordable housing was required due to high costs of developing the site.

A smaller site situated adjacent to the Huntingdon ring road was sold recently with planning permission for 14 private apartments at a price of £430,000.

In appraising the value of the subject site for residential redevelopment it must be borne in mind the constraints outlined above and the assumption that there will be a requirement for up to 40% affordable housing.

We consider that the property should achieve a price in the order of £1.5 million with planning permission for residential redevelopment and to include the sale of the four existing houses at The Brow. At this stage we have estimated the value of the houses at around £175,000 each, assuming them to be in need of refurbishment and also that vacant possession is available. We can advise more accurately on the value of the houses upon internal inspection in due course.

We appraise the site value based on 20 dwellings (including eight affordable) at around £750,000 at this stage.

If the requirement for affordable housing was reduced or a greater density of development was achieved then this would increase the value of the development site.

b) Care/Nursing Home

There have been two recent land transactions in Edison Bell Way, Huntingdon to care home operators which reflect land values between £1.1 and £1.5 million per acre. Both sites were cleared, highly visible and close to the town centre, similar to the subject property. Subject to demand from an operator for the subject property we would hope to achieve a price in the order of £1 million to £1.25 million for the operational site, excluding the existing residential dwellings.

c) Retail

If retail uses were acceptable in planning terms, this site could provide a suitable location for a smaller scale supermarket. The size requirement tends to be around 1.5 acres for discounters such as Lidl and Aldi. Both Lidl and Aldi have identified sites in Huntingdon already, with the latter recently reportedly agreeing a price of £2.5 million for a 1.5 acre site. Given this potential level of land value we consider it worth exploring retail demand as part of the marketing exercise.

d) Hotel

The site may be suitable for a budget hotel. Travelodge currently have a requirement in Huntingdon, Premier Inn have an existing hotel at Brampton Hut, but may consider a more central location. There are few other multiple operators in the market which might generate sufficient land value. Our experience has been that care homes, private residential and retail uses generally out-bid hotel operators in market town locations.

e) Summary

The above figures are given for guidance purposes only and do not constitute formal valuation advice.

We have adopted a relatively conservative approach to value which reflects the uncertainty over some key development issues and the requirement to provide robust advice to allow CFRS confidence in business planning and budgeting.

Dependent on market conditions at the time of marketing we would expect to achieve a price of at least £1.5 million for the site to include the properties at The Brow.

It is possible that this figure could be exceeded following a well-executed marketing campaign.



## 7. MARKETING STRATEGY

### a) Pre-marketing Stage

There are a number of actions we would recommend prior to offering the property to market which will help to inform the marketing strategy and assist in the sale process:

Pre-application Planning Advice – it is important to understand the LPA's position in respect of the key planning issues, including the range of uses which might be acceptable and the density of development which could be achieved. We would recommend that a meeting is organised with a Senior Planning Officer at HDC at the earliest opportunity.

Other items required include:

- Report on Title
- Topographical Survey
- Environmental Reports/Ground Conditions Survey
- Asbestos Survey
- Flood Risk Survey
- Current Floor Plans/Building Survey
- Services Report
- Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)

### b) Timing and Method of Sale

The sale of Hartford Road is dependent on securing suitable alternative accommodation. We are currently working to a date for a relocation at some stage during 2017. Marketing of this property could commence in advance of your move, allowing time for a full marketing campaign.

Given the range of possible alternative uses (and dependent on pre-application planning advice) we would advise that the property is offered for sale "as is", i.e. without obtaining any further planning permissions, and to pursue a full marketing campaign which will target all the market sectors outlined above.

We recommend that the property is offered for sale as two "lots":

- 1) The development opportunity comprising the operational fire station and training centre.
- 2) The four residential dwellings at The Brow.

In this way we should achieve full value for both elements and if a purchaser requires a larger site area they can bid for both lots.

In order to maximise the price received you may need to consider offers made on a conditional basis, i.e. "subject to planning", where these are for redevelopment/change of use. Conditional offers carry additional risk and require a longer period of time to complete to allow for the planning process, but are likely to exceed any offers made on an unconditional basis. Clearly, at the stage where offers are being made, we will carefully advise on the merits of each bid.



The timing for the receipt of proceeds from a sale will depend on a number of factors, not least when the property is offered to the market, the level of demand generated and whether an offer is conditional on planning.

Once the pre-marketing work has been carried out and the property is ready to be marketed, we would expect a marketing period of around three months should be sufficient to generate offers, based on a full marketing campaign, outlined below. We would expect there to be good interest in this property.

If an unconditional offer is accepted we would allow a further three months to conclude a sale (although some offers may be conditional upon CFRS providing vacant possession and so completion may be delayed until you are able to vacate).

In the case of a conditional offer you may need to allow 9 – 15 months from acceptance of an offer (which allows three months to conclude legals to exchange conditional contracts and a further 6 – 12 months for a planning application to be determined). If the planning application is taken to appeal this timescale will be extended.

If CFRS required more certainty over the timing of a sale and were prepared to accept a lower price then we could focus on an unconditional sale. It may be possible to interest developers on this basis, perhaps with some form of 'overage' arrangement which would allow CFRS to benefit from future development profits. Whilst we have not, at this stage, discussed the possibility with the two developers involved in the relocation sites it is possible they could be interested in a purchase of the subject property under such an arrangement.

We would welcome further discussion with you on these issues in order to clearly understand your objectives and tailor our marketing advice accordingly.

#### c) Marketing Initiatives

We would recommend a full marketing campaign aimed at both the regional and national markets offering the property for a range of potential uses as outlined above. The campaign should include the following:

- Production of quality property brochure in hard copy and PDF version.
- Background information available in dedicated online "data room".
- National and regional advertising – to include Estates Gazette/Property Week and local newspapers.
- Mailing/emailing – extensive mailing campaign to target market groups including regional/national house builders and developers, care/nursing home operators, hotel operators and major retailers.
- Web Site Profile – details of the property will be made available through Rightmove, EG Property Link and Cheffins web site.
- Press Release – the availability of the property could be highlighted through PR to local/regional/national press.
- Agent Board – at the appropriate time it may be beneficial to erect an agent's board fronting Nursery Road, highlighting the availability of the property.

We can provide a detailed marketing budget in due course but would advise on an overall marketing budget of £5,000 - £7,500 to include all the above initiatives.

d) Asking Price

Our proposed asking price, at this stage, would be to seek offers in excess of £750,000 for the fire station site and offers over £700,000 for the properties at The Brow, although we would wish to review this closer to the point when the property is ready to market.

e) Fee Proposal

Cheffins would of course be pleased to advise on the marketing and sale of the property and consider we are well placed to do so.

Our fees would be calculated at 1.5% of the sale price achieved in the case of a freehold or long-leasehold sale, or 10% of the normal yearly rent agreed (ignoring the effects of any rent free periods or other tenant incentives) in the case of a letting.

Marketing and out of pocket expenditures and VAT is payable in addition.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The Hartford Road property is currently allocated for residential development, and there is likely to be good demand for this opportunity.

As highlighted above there are other alternative uses which might also be acceptable in planning terms and which would generate good levels of value, and the market for these should also be explored.

By offering the property in two lots you should be able to ensure that the full value of each part of the asset is realised, and this provides maximum flexibility for a purchaser.

Our approach would be to carry out a good deal of "due diligence" prior to marketing in order to understand the planning potential and constraints more clearly and to identify any other issues including legal restrictions, ground conditions, asbestos, servicing or any other matter which may affect the sale price and the marketing process.

We are recommending offers are considered on both a conditional and unconditional basis, since conditional bids are likely to be considerably higher. You will note the extended time frame and additional uncertainty which accompanies a conditional offer. There are alternative ways of structuring a sale which could give greater certainty, but which may not produce the higher price for the property. We would be happy to explore these with you.

We would of course be delighted to advise you through this process and look forward to discussing this with you.