

MARCH – ESTOVER ROAD SITE – DECLARATION SURPLUS

To: **General Purposes Committee**

Meeting Date: **2nd December 2014**

From: **Director of Finance**

Electoral division(s): **March North**

Forward Plan ref: **2014/009** *Key decision:* **Yes**

Purpose: **To approve the disposal of assets exceeding the Director of Finance's delegated limits.**

Recommendation: **General Purposes Committee is recommended to:**

- a) **Declare the Estover Road site in March surplus to requirements and authorise the disposal of the property.**
- b) **Authorise the Director of Finance to agree the detailed terms for the disposal, in consultation with the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee.**

<i>Officer contact:</i>	
Name:	Roger Moore
Post:	Head of Strategic Assets
Email:	roger.moore@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel:	07748 930805

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The Estover Road site in March is not required for operational delivery by the County Council, and has been held as a strategic site for a number of years.
- 1.2 An opportunity has arisen within the Fenland Local Plan to seek planning consent for development and to dispose of the site, for which the site needs to be confirmed as formally surplus to the council's requirements.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site is currently used as playing fields and informal open space. It was let for a number of years to the Estover Playing Fields Association. The lease has expired but the Association continues to manage the playing fields, although they do not pay any rent.
- 2.2 The site has been held by the council as a strategic site, and is considered to have development potential. The council's planning consultants had been promoting the site for development as part of the emerging Fenland District Council Local Plan process.
- 2.3 Originally allocated as part of a wider development opportunity for North East March, for some 450 homes (including land to the east of the Council's site which is owned by St John's College and land to the North held by a private landowner), the allocation of the site was withdrawn at the last minute from the Local Plan at the instigation of Fenland Members. However, the adopted Local Plan contains a general 'windfall sites' policy permitting the development of under 250 dwellings in certain sustainable locations.
- 2.4 There is significant local opposition to the development of the site on the basis of concern about the loss of playing fields and amenity to adjacent residents.
- 2.5 Two reports on sport provision in recent years have deemed the use of the existing playing fields in their current condition as unsustainable, and the site and facilities are poor quality. Proposals for development of approximately half the area would allow for some of the proceeds of sale to be invested in the reduced area, but would deliver a new Sports Hub including significantly improved sports pitches, multi-use areas, changing facilities and car parking.
- 2.6 The intention is to submit a planning application for development of sufficient housing to fund infrastructure and sports facilities, and generate a receipt for the County Council. Should planning consent be granted by the District or on appeal, the net receipt will be in excess of the delegated threshold for officers to authorise the disposal of the site
- 2.7 Should planning consent be granted the Council proposes to grant a long lease of that part of the site allocated for the sports facilities at a peppercorn rent. This would also facilitate the securing of grant aid for further enhancements if desired. The term would exceed the length provided for in the delegation to officers for disposals at less than best value, and would require a further decision from General Purposes Committee.
- 2.8 The Council needs to press ahead with its own application, as the windfall provisions only allow for up to 249 dwellings, and as and when granted these

will be counted on a cumulative basis. Once consents in this area of March reach 249 units, there will be no planning justification for development on the County Council's site.

- 2.9 If planning consent is not granted at this juncture, it is proposed that the council will continue to hold the site as a strategic landholding, and manage its use in the short to medium term.

3. MAIN ISSUES

- 3.1 The Council's Constitution provides that the authority for all property transactions rests with the General Purposes Committee, but there is an agreed delegation to the Director of Finance to exercise that authority for transactions where the capital value is less than £500,000.
- 3.2 The value of the whole site with an acceptable planning consent for development will exceed the Director of Finance's delegated limit.

4. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

4.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

Housing development will generate employment opportunities, provide affordable housing and contribute to the growth of the town.

4.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

Capital receipts and revenue savings can reduce the financial impact of budget pressures on front-line services, including helping people live healthy and independent lives. In addition, the proposals provide for significant improvement in local sports facilities

4.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

Capital receipts and revenue savings can reduce the financial impact of budget pressures on front-line services, including supporting and protecting vulnerable people.

5. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Resource Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

5.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

5.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

5.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications

Detailed engagement and consultation with the local community and local and national interest groups will be undertaken as part of any planning application for development of the site.

5.5 Localism and Local Member Involvement

The local County Council Member for March is aware of the proposals for redevelopment of the site, and will be kept informed of progress.

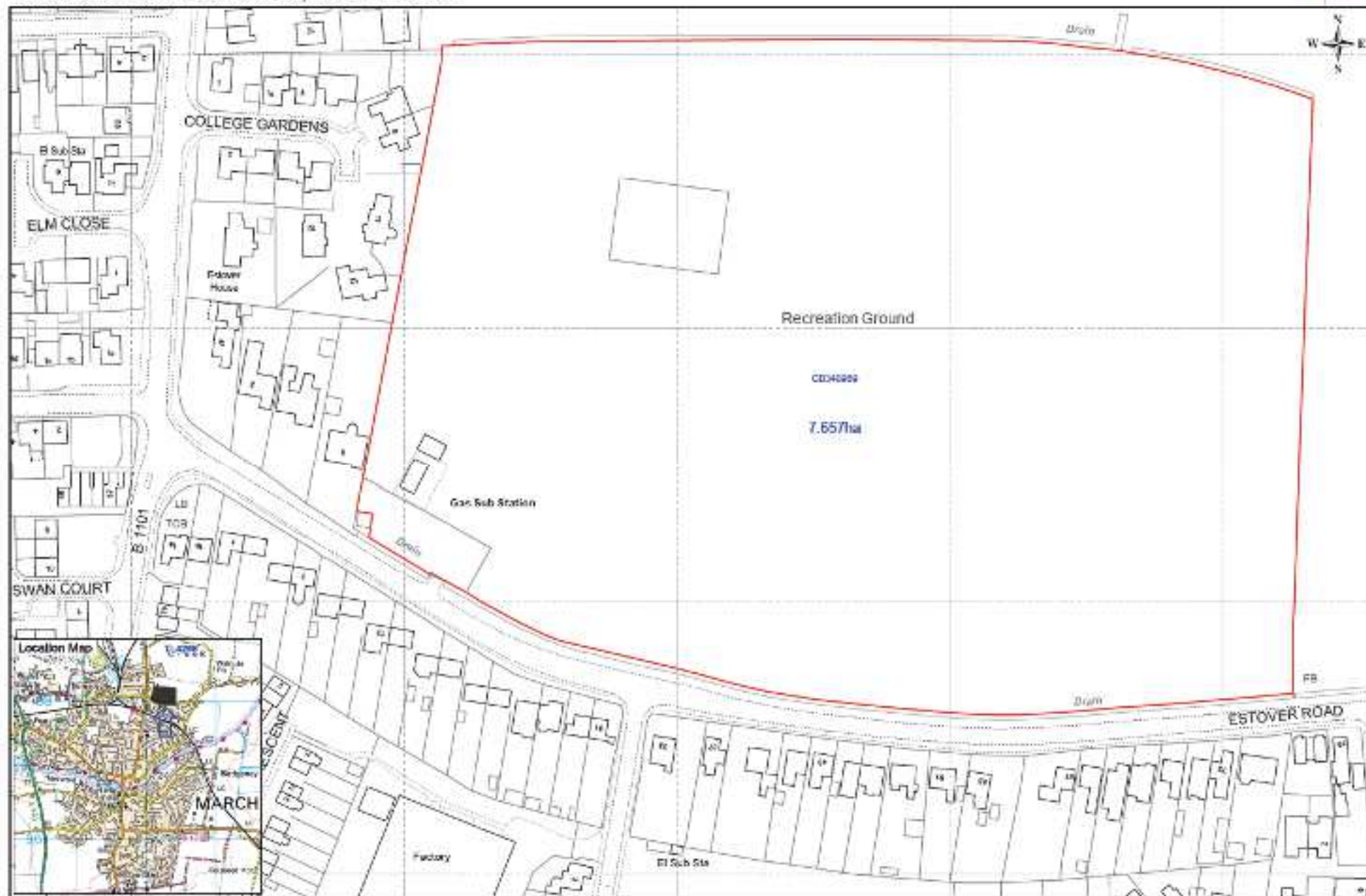
Group Leaders have been consulted on the proposal to declare the site surplus to requirements.

The local community including District and Town Council Members are aware of the proposals and will be consulted in detail as part of the planning process.

5.6 Public Health Implications

The proposals provide for significant improvement to local sports facilities and the long lease coupled with high quality of what will be created will help to ensure the long term sustainability of the facility.

Source Documents	Location
Fenland Local Development Framework plan	http://www.fenland.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=10010&p=0



Scale (1:1000) 1:1000
 Date: 08 September 2014
 By: [illegible]
 File: \\GCC.Cambridge.gov.uk\GIS\Red\PE158SF\PE158SF_V04_08-08_Land at Estover Rd, March.dwg (Job No.2808)

© Crown copyright and database rights 2014 Ordnance Survey 100012088

LGSS