

Property Disposal - Hawthorns, Cambridge

- To: Assets and Procurement Committee
- Meeting Date: 11 March 2026
- From: Executive Director of Finance and Resources
- Electoral division(s): King's Hedges
- Key decision: Yes
- Forward Plan ref: 2026/049
- Executive Summary: This report considers the disposal of The Hawthorns, Haviland Way, Cambridge, CB4 2RA (the subject property).
- The Council's disposal policy requires the Assets and Procurement Committee approval for the disposal of any land or property interest where the consideration received is greater than £750,000.
- Cambridgeshire County Council is bound by the requirements of Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 in its decision making to dispose of any property interests.
- Recommendation: The Assets and Procurement Committee is invited to:
- a) Review and approve the recommended offer in accordance with Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.
 - b) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Finance and Resources in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Assets and Procurement Committee to agree terms, execute the necessary documentation, and complete the disposal of this property.

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1. A healthy, fair and sustainable Cambridgeshire

1.1 This proposal aims to indirectly support all the Council's key ambitions and vision set out in the Strategic Framework 2026-29, by disposing of a surplus property to provide a capital receipt which will support wider service delivery.

2. Background

2.1 The subject property is the freehold land and buildings known as the Hawthorns, Haviland Way, Cambridge, CB4 2RA, shown edged in red on the plan provided below. The property is registered at HM Land Registry under title number CB62 and Cambridgeshire County Council is the registered owner, and the class of title is absolute freehold. The property is situated in Kings Hedges within a predominantly residential area and is bound by residential dwellings to the north and east, with a care home to the south and playing fields to the west which form part of the North Cambridge Academy.



2.2 The property consists of a former care home premises, comprised of a two-storey building on a self-contained site of 0.4 hectares (0.98 acres) with associated parking and landscaping. The current building is understood to date from the 1960's and is of brickwork construction under a pitched roof with a single storey rear addition. The existing building has a gross internal floor area of 767.62 sq m (8,262.65 sq ft). The current planning use falls within Use Class C2 (Residential Institutions). A regulation 3 planning permission was granted in August 2020 for a change of use from a care home to a supervised contact and social care centre, including meeting rooms and office use, with the construction of an extended car park (Planning ref: FMW/082/19). Please refer to the photographs of the property provided below.



- 2.3 The Hawthorns property is no longer used by the County Council for operational purposes and has been declared surplus to the Council's requirements. The property had previously been used as a supervised contact centre; however, this activity has since been re-located to the Bottisham Locality Centre. The supervised contact service were using this property up until the Autumn of 2022 when they subsequently moved to Bottisham, and they were the last occupants to use the property. After they vacated, the property had been earmarked for a respite project to create an intensive therapeutic support hub. However, this project did not move to full design stages and was aborted due to the excessive cost of the refurbishment and after an unsuccessful bid to the NHS for grant funding which made the scheme financially unviable. After this, the Council's adults' social care team expressed a new interest in the property, however a viable business case in support of the proposal and the capital funding required was not approved and therefore this project was not commissioned and the decision was made to declare the property as being surplus to the County Council's requirements.
- 2.4 In accordance with the County Council's current disposal policy and prior to disposal on the open market, it was necessary to offer the property to This Land (the County Council's housing development company) and to Cambridge City Council. This process took place in July 2025 with This Land declining the pre-emptive option to purchase. Cambridge City Council did express an initial interest in acquiring this property but were subsequently unwilling to commit to the purchase despite having been given the opportunity to appraise

and consider the purchase for a period of 2 months and therefore in September 2025, the decision was made to offer the property for sale on the open market.

- 2.5 Given that the Cambridge City Council's initial interest in purchasing the property had not come to fruition and in line with the Council's member engagement protocol for property transactions, the local member for King's Hedges was informed on the 17th September 2025 that it was the County Council's intention to market the property for sale given that it had been declared surplus to the County Council's requirements.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1 A suitable agent was appointed in accordance with the Council's procurement policies and formal marketing activities commenced during November 2025. The appointed agent is particularly active in the local commercial property market in the Cambridge area and County Council officers were satisfied with the chosen agent's ability to execute and deliver a comprehensive marketing campaign and disposal strategy on appointment.
- 3.2 After an encouragingly high level of early interest and after a significant number of viewings having taken place during the first stage of the marketing process, the agent recommended that a bids deadline be established which would give the parties sufficient time to complete all necessary due diligence and for any new interest in the property to also come forward. The interested parties were all invited to submit written bids by the bids deadline and all bids were to include the following information: identity of the purchaser; their best offer; details of any conditions attached to the offer and the anticipated timescales for clearing these conditions; proposed timescales for completion; details of funding and proof of funds; the due diligence undertaken and details of the solicitors acting on their behalf. As part of this process, all bids submitted were on a "subject to contract" basis and subject to any stated conditions and on the basis that the Council (as the seller) reserved the right not to accept the highest offer, or any of the offers received.
- 3.3 This process attracted a total of eight separate bids to purchase the property. In line with best consideration requirements, all bids were assessed in respect of the capital receipt that the County Council would receive from the sale of the property and the deliverability of each bid in terms of planning risk, conditionality, funding implications, and timescales for completion.
- 3.4 The agent went back to the top 5 bidders on the list and asked for best and final offers by 5 pm on Friday 13th February. Three bids were increased and two bids were unchanged. Please see confidential **Appendix 1** for a summary of the bids received
- 3.5 The Council is bound in its decision making to dispose of any property interests under the requirements of section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972. This includes that disposals of land and property must be for the best consideration that can be reasonably obtained.

4. Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 There were no suitable alternative options to consider, the property had been declared surplus to the County Council's requirements and therefore in accordance with the Council's current disposal policy, the property needed to be disposed of on the open market at the best consideration achievable.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

5.1 Not stated.

6. Significant Implications

6.1 Finance Implications

Accepting the recommendations within this report will deliver a further revenue saving albeit small and a significant capital receipt during the first half of the financial year 2026/27. The recommended bid is slightly higher than the estimate included within the 2026-27 Business Plan.

6.2 Legal Implications

The contracts for sale will be completed by legal representatives from both seller and buyer which will be aligned to the Council's legal requirements in respect of the sale and Pathfinder Legal Services are already instructed to advise the Council on all aspects of the disposal.

The Council's core policy is that all surplus property should be disposed of, and that disposals should be at best consideration to meet the requirements of s.123 of the Local Government Act 1972. A disposal is defined as the transfer of a legal interest in land or property, other than the grant of a lease of less than 7 years in duration which are exempt from the requirements of s.123. Best consideration is accepted as being the best price, which would be expected to follow an open marketing process, or as certified in a formal valuation by an appropriately qualified RICS Registered Valuer (a 'Red Book' valuation).

There are instances where the Council may want to consider a disposal at less than best consideration. Such a disposal would require the consent of the Secretary of State (SoS). There is however a General Disposal Consent (GDC) granted by the SoS, which gives the Council the ability to forego up to a maximum of £2m of value. Despite this, the Council's current policy remains that all disposals should be at best consideration. In accordance with the current disposal policy, surplus land and property will be disposed of on the open market, using appropriate agents as selected by the Head of Assets.

6.3 Risk Implications

There are no significant risks to the Council other than the buyer not completing the sale. In such circumstances, the property would be re-marketed for sale or revert to the second bidder. This may result in a decreased sale price or the second bidder no longer being available/renegeing their offer.

The buyer has not yet supplied evidence of funding and whilst this will be resolved during the legal process this could lead to an increased risk of the transaction falling through where funds have not been evidenced at the outset.

6.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

None stated.

6.5 Climate Change and Environment Implications

There are no direct climate change and environment implications from disposal of the property.

7. Source Documents

7.1 None