

Petitions Committee

6 November 2015

Report title	Open Ground Rear of 36-62 Inkerman Street, Heath Town	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Peter Bilson City Assets	
Wards affected	Heath Town	
Accountable director	Lesley Roberts, Strategic Director Housing	
Originating service	Housing	
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Report to be/has been considered by	Petitions Committee	13 March 2015

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Committee is recommended to:

1. Agree that on the basis of the findings of surveys relating to the open ground rear of 36-62 Inkerman Street, the proposed development of this site for housing is unviable.
2. Support the on-going discussions regarding improvements to the existing Multi-Use Game Area (MUGA) on the Heath Town Estate.
3. Approve further discussions to find a solution for the use of the open ground rear of 36-62 Inkerman Street.

Recommendations for noting:

The Committee is asked to note:

1. The results of the Noise and Vibration survey.

2. The results of the consultation with residents on the MUGA options to include play facilities and green gym equipment.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To provide an update on the work undertaken to survey the site, the findings of these surveys, and the conclusions reached regarding the potential for residential development of the site.
- 1.2 To update on the results of the resident consultation on draft proposals for an upgraded MUGA to include play facilities and green gym equipment.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 A report was brought to Petitions Committee on 13 March 2015 in response to issues raised in a petition against the re-development of open ground to the rear of 36-62 Inkerman Street. This site was included in the overall Heath Town Regeneration Project to support the financial viability of the scheme.
- 2.2 The site was initially identified as it was not used well, as evidenced by its current condition and resident concerns about fly tipping and anti-social behaviour. Subsequent discussions with the Police Secure By-Design Officer supported these concerns about the site location and lack of natural surveillance. It was during the last consultation exercise held on 4 December 2014 that it was brought to the Heath Town Project Team's attention that the area was in fact being used by a local football team and a petition was formally lodged to the Council later that month.
- 2.3 As part of the preparation for the delivery of wider Heath Town Regeneration plans, a number of site surveys were commissioned across the proposed development area including the open ground rear of 36-62 Inkerman Street. The results of these surveys will influence the final decision on what can be delivered on this and others sites.
- 2.4 Site investigations showed no excess contaminants in the ground, no evidence of excavations or mine-workings, and the land is level and with easy access. However, for those development sites on the Masterplan boundary, a Noise and Vibration Survey was commissioned. The findings of the report indicate that for the land to the rear of 36-62 Inkerman Street, the noise level from the neighbouring plastics recycling factory on Freeman Street is extreme. The consultant who undertook the survey has advised that development of this site is rendered inappropriate in light of the consistent high noise readings obtained, and the fact that the factory runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Whilst homes can be designed to protect the occupiers from high noise levels, this would be at great expense, and would deliver units which are unlikely to be desirable. The effect of this finding is to show that the development of the Grosvenor Street site for housing is unviable.

3.0 Details of the petition

- 3.1 In December 2014, a 315 signature petition was submitted to Wolverhampton City Council by a member of the Heath Town TRA (Tenants and Residents Association). The

petition is against the re-development of this area and proposes that the open ground is retained for use by local youth for sporting activities.

- 3.2 There is an existing MUGA on the Heath Town estate which is laid out for basketball, tennis and football. Historically, the football club had organised training sessions on this games area but ceased to do so as they experienced a number of injuries to younger children on the existing hard surface. The football club organisers initially proposed that an investment in the MUGA to improve the surface might provide a compromised solution, allowing them to make better use of it as an alternative to use of the grassed site.
- 3.3 As part of the Heath Town Regeneration Project, the upgrade of the MUGA is being considered together with consolidating existing play provision into one area and installing a new Green Gym facility. Recent resident consultation has been very positive regarding the option of bringing together different outdoor play and fitness equipment into one main area which can be managed and maintained more effectively. Residents were consulted in a door-to-door survey of the estate in May 2015, and liked an option which provides for four different pitches to accommodate football, basketball and tennis. The proposals also include play equipment for 1-5 year olds, 5-9 year olds and an outdoor green gym. The Heath Town Project Team is continuing to work with colleagues from Landscape Architects to ensure the details of the scheme are sustainable, affordable, and meet the needs of the local community.
- 3.4 The open ground behind 36-62 Inkerman Street is not marked out for sport, and is currently unlit and is un-drained, causing it to be water-logged in wet weather, particularly in the winter months. Housing and Corporate Landlord Officers will discuss what alternative options may be for this site, which is currently poorly used and subject to anti-social behaviour.
- 3.5 Employees will need to consult with residents to further test opinion around the best use of this open ground if it is not being developed, taking into account the resident concerns outlined above, as well as the overall financial viability of the Heath Town regeneration proposals.

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 It was initially thought that the development and disposal of the land behind 36-62 Inkerman Street would increase the viability of the Heath Town Regeneration project and result in a receipt to the General fund. However, the Noise and Vibration survey has since delivered findings that indicate this site is not currently viable for residential development and developing the site would not therefore have a beneficial financial impact on the General fund. [JB/23102015/P]

5.0 Legal implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications to the removal of the land to the rear of 36-62 Inkerman Street from the Heath Town regeneration project. [RB/26102015/Q]

6.0 Equalities implications

- 6.1 An equalities analysis has been developed for the Heath Town Regeneration Project. This will be updated as the project progresses through the different phases of the scheme. The changed proposals around the site to the rear of 36-62 Inkerman Street will change the overall size of the development opportunity at Heath Town, but this will not impact on any one group.

7.0 Environmental implications

- 7.1 The site will remain in its current form, so there are no environmental implications arising.

8.0 Human resources implications

- 8.1 This work will be managed within existing departments and teams.

9.0 Corporate landlord implications

- 9.1 The open ground at the rear of Inkerman Street has been included in the re-development proposals for the Heath Town Project. If this does not go ahead and the site is excluded, this will have implications on the capital receipt.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

- 10.1 Heath Town Regeneration – 26 March 2014 – Cabinet

Seeking authority to declare property surplus to requirements and approval of the disposal strategies - 9 September 2014 - Cabinet (Resources) Panel

Seeking approval to progress the disposal programme including the approach to public open space – 9 December 2014 – Cabinet (Resources) Panel

Heath Town Regeneration – 11 March 2015 – Cabinet Report

Open Ground Rear of 36-62 Inkerman Street, Heath Town – 13 March 2015 – Petitions Committee