

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET26 April 2018Report by Director of Environment,KIRKSTYLE LANE, NEILSTON**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to retain Kirkstyle Lane within the ownership of the Council and acquire from Barrhead Housing Association ownership of various site investigations and studies commissioned by them in relation to Kirkstyle Lane, Neilston which will allow the Council to consider future options for the site.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Cabinet is asked to:
- (a) Note the proposal to retain ownership of Kirkstyle Lane; and
 - (b) Authorise the Director of Environment to acquire from Barrhead Housing Association various site investigations and studies commissioned by them in relation to Kirkstyle Lane, Neilston at a cost of £87,000.

BACKGROUND

3. On 10 November 2016, the Cabinet approved the East Renfrewshire Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) for the period 2017/18 to 2021/22. The SHIP identifies where land, public subsidy and other resources will be used to address affordable housing needs in the local housing market and drives the allocation of Scottish Government Affordable Housing Programme in East Renfrewshire.

4. The report noted that the proposed SHIP programme “must be developed in partnership with local stakeholders to ensure it can be delivered successfully – notably Registered Social Landlords (RSLs).....”.

5. The report identified amongst others a site at Kirkstyle Lane (locally known as “Pig Square”) as being suitable for the delivery of socially rented housing (up to 24 units) and identified Barrhead Housing Association as the Registered Social Landlord (“RSL”) to take the site forward.

6. Following on from this Cabinet decision, Barrhead Housing Association subsequently engaged its own development agents and commissioned all the studies and other work which would be a necessary requirement to deliver such a development including any planning application.

7. In July 2017, Barrhead Housing Association submitted a planning application in respect of the Kirkstyle Lane site for the development of 14 socially rented units at an estimated development cost of around £1.5 to £1.6m. The planning application has not yet been determined but in terms of existing planning policies including the Local Development Plan a recommendation for approval would be anticipated.

8. Barrhead Housing Association have confirmed that its total prior development costs incurred to date in relation to this site are in excess of £106,000.

9. The site was and remains in the ownership of the Council. A report would therefore have been required in due course transferring the land from the Council to Barrhead Housing Association.

REPORT

10. In February 2017 the Council approved the General Fund Capital Plan for the period 2017/18 to 2024/25. Included within the Capital Plan was provision of £85,000 in 2017/18 to allow for a study to be undertaken to consider the potential for Education Provision in Neilston (Campus Development Study).

11. The work associated with this study is wide ranging and the scope includes both of the current primary schools, the existing nursery and nearby properties used by the Leisure Trust. This study is currently ongoing. However, early indications are that the Kirkstyle Lane site is likely to be integral to the scope of the project, either on a temporary or permanent basis, should the project proceed.

12. In October 2017 the Cabinet considered the proposed Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2018 to 2023. As part of that report members were asked to note that although the site at Kirkstyle Lane Neilston was being included in this year's SHIP (as previously approved by the Cabinet in November 2016) the position was under review and the site may be removed due to a feasibility study being undertaken in relation to a shared education campus in Neilston.

13. The current situation is therefore that Barrhead Housing Association have acted in good faith and only progressed development of the site once the Council had agreed to include the site in the SHIP and identified Barrhead Housing Association as the RSL partner (i.e. as was agreed in November 2016). The Association therefore quite correctly assumed that the development was supported (at least in principle) by the Council. However, as explained above circumstances have changed.

14. Discussions are ongoing with Barrhead Housing Association regarding the current situation and the development of a long term strategic relationship with the Council with a view to supporting the Association's ambitions for a longer term residential development programme. This is important given they are a key employer and a provider of socially rented housing.

15. Given the change in circumstances, the scope of the study and the fact that it is ongoing it is considered sensible not to progress the development of this site (or any other site within Neilston which might be needed to facilitate/accommodate a new campus or any relevant related infrastructure/facilities). It is proposed therefore that the site at Kirkstyle Lane should:

- Be retained within the Council's ownership; and
- No longer (at least in the meantime) be progressed for residential development.

16. As stated above Barrhead Housing Association have already commissioned various site investigations and studies in relation to Kirkstyle Lane Neilston. These include:

- Topographical Surveys
- Engineering reports
- Ground and CCTV investigations
- Architectural development services
- Geo-environmental and ground investigation studies
- Quantity surveying services
- Flood, drainage and transport studies
- Bat survey
- Financial modelling costs

17. Should the Council wish to consider its future development options for the site then this is the type of information which would have to be commissioned. The existing information would therefore be useful and relevant. It is proposed therefore that the Council acquire the ownership of these studies from Barrhead Housing Association at a cost of around £87,000 which is the basic cost that Barrhead Housing Association incurred in commissioning them. Barrhead Housing Association can produce detailed receipts and would be required to do so prior to any payment being made. There are no intellectual property issues with regard to Barrhead Housing Association passing ownership of the site studies and investigations to the Council.

18. Barrhead Housing Association have given the circumstances and the proposal that the Council acquires the studies expressed a willingness to withdraw both their planning application and their interest in the Kirkstyle Lane site. However, it should be noted that in terms of the outcome of the Campus Development Study there may be other scope to work with Barrhead Housing Association to identify alternative development opportunities in the future within Neilston.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

19. Acquisition of ownership of the site studies will be met from existing financial resources.

CONSULTATION AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

20. The Council will continue to work in partnership with Barrhead Housing Association, in their role as a key partner in the delivery of socially rented housing in the area. The Chief Legal and Procurement Officer has been consulted on the proposal.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSAL

21. There are no staffing, IT, sustainability, state aid or other implications associated with this report.

CONCLUSIONS

22. Given the circumstances described in this report it is considered essential to retain ownership of the site. However, it is also considered appropriate to acquire ownership of the site investigations and other related studies from Barrhead Housing Association with regard to Kirkstyle Lane. This information will be used by the Council to help consider future options for the site.

RECOMMENDATIONS

23. The Cabinet is asked to:

- (a) Note the proposal to retain ownership of Kirkstyle Lane; and
- (b) Authorise the Director of Environment to acquire from Barrhead Housing Association various site investigations and studies commissioned by them in relation to Kirkstyle Lane, Neilston at a cost of £87,000.

Director of Environment

Further information can be obtained from: Andrew Cahill, Director of Environment, 0141 577 3036 or Andrew.cahill@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

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