

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**RESOURCES, PROPERTY & THE ECONOMY CABINET PANEL
WEDNESDAY, 14 FEBRUARY 2018 AT 10:00AM**

**WHEATSHEAF FARM, HIGH CANONS, BOREHAMWOOD – TO
CONSIDER THE FUTURE OF THE FARMHOUSE AND FARM BUILDINGS**

Report of the Director of Resources

Report Author: Sharon Roskilly, Senior Estates Officer
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Executive Member: David Williams, Leader of the Council (as
responsible for the Resources, Property and the
Economy portfolio)

Local Member: Morris Bright, Potters Bar West & Shenley

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To enable Members to consider the future of the farmhouse and farm buildings at Wheatsheaf Farm, High Canons, Borehamwood.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The County Council holds freehold title to the farmhouse and farm buildings at Wheatsheaf Farm Borehamwood. The farm was held as part of the County Council's Rural Estate and declared surplus to service needs in 2017.
- 2.2 Wheatsheaf Farm is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt and the Farmhouse is Grade 2 listed. The farm also contains an identified County Wildlife Site (the pond). All of the buildings are in a poor state of repair and significant capital expenditure would be required to permit reoccupation.
- 2.3 The property was taken out of use by the Rural Estate and is now managed as part of the County Council's Property Management Agreement (PMA) contract whilst town planning issues and opportunities for future use of the listed building have been more fully investigated.
- 2.4 Early discussions with Hertsmere Borough Council as Local Planning Authority have identified the potential for two/ three additional dwellings (as additions to that of the Farmhouse Block). The approval of the Secretary of State will also be required as the property is subject to the Green Belt Act 1938.

- 2.5 Approval is sought to allow disposal of the farmhouse block and farm buildings once outline planning permission and all other relevant consents have been obtained.
- 2.6 The disposal would reflect the enhanced value of the site due to the outline planning consent and result in the realisation of a capital receipt for the County Council.
- 2.7 The remaining 15 acres of grazing land at Wheatsheaf Farm are adjacent to other areas of farm land held by the County Council's Rural Estate. The 15 acres are to be retained by the County Council and re-let as part of the County's Rural Estate.

3. Recommendations.

- 3.1 The Resources, Property and The Economy Cabinet Panel is invited to recommend to Cabinet that Cabinet :-
 - i) approves that the farmhouse block and farm buildings at Wheatsheaf Farm, as marked red and blue on the Site Location Plan (EM 14446) at Appendix 1 to the report are declared surplus and to requirements and disposed of subject to 3.1 (ii).
 - ii) delegates to the Director of Resources in consultation the Leader of the Council (as responsible for the Resources, Property and the Economy portfolio) and the Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport to agree and approve the terms of the sale and disposal of the farmhouse block and farm buildings at Wheatsheaf Farm and take such other steps as are appropriate to secure disposal of the site.

4. Background

- 4.1 The County Council holds the freehold interest of the farmhouse and farm buildings at Wheatsheaf Farm, High Canons, Borehamwood. A Site Location Plan number EM14446 is attached at Appendix 1. The holding includes a Grade 2 listed farmhouse, annexe and outer buildings (edged red) and various equestrian buildings, yards and hard standing areas (edged blue).
- 4.2 The Grade 2 listed farmhouse dates from the 17th Century and has been extended to the north east to include a bedsit, additional rooms and a garage. There is a further range of small ancillary outer buildings and a garden to the rear.
- 4.3 The Wheatsheaf Farm stables are immediately adjacent to the farmhouse and comprise 22 stables, indoor menage, various associated outer buildings and hard standing area, together with

curtilage and yard areas. The farmhouse and stables areas have separate but adjoining access from the highway.

- 4.4 The County Council acquired the land as part of the High Canons Estate in 1937. A Green Belt Scheme deed between Hertfordshire County Council and London County Council dated 3rd March 1938 referred to these said lands as “hereby declared to be part of the Green Belt around London”.
- 4.5 The farm was identified in the Rural Estates Improvement Plan (REIP) in November 2003 (and 2011 plan review) as Non-Core, as it did not meet the service’s core objectives.
- 4.6 The land and buildings were previously let out to a tenant with an equestrian business but were subsequently vacated. The property was declared surplus to service needs in 2017 and currently forms part of the County Council’s Corporately Managed Property estate managed by its retained Property Management Agent.
- 4.7 The options for the future of the land are to;
 - a) Do nothing; the buildings continue to be managed as part of the County’s Corporately Managed Estate incurring management charges and the need for essential repairs and maintenance to keep the main buildings wind and weather tight,
 - b) The buildings are brought up to a tenantable standard and re-let; with the County Council providing a significant capital sum to fund the repair and refurbishment of the Grade 2 listed farmhouse and ancillary buildings.
 - c) To declare the buildings surplus and dispose of them subject to a satisfactory planning permission consent and completion of all necessary approvals and pre-sale processes.
- 4.8 Option a) is not recommended due to deteriorating condition of the listed buildings.
- 4.9 Option b) is not recommended as this would involve a considerable capital sum to fund the required works.
- 4.10 Option c) considers the sale of farmhouse and buildings, which with the benefit of outline planning permission consent for additional houses will yield a significant capital receipt.

5. Town Planning

- 5.1 Wheatsheaf Farm is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The farm also contains an identified County Wildlife Site (the pond).

Planning enquiries have identified the potential for additional dwellings (in addition to that of the Grade 2 listed farmhouse and annexe).

- 5.2 The planning consultation with Hertsmere Borough Council is against the backdrop of the Grade 2 listed farmhouse and a heritage specialist is to be consulted with regard to this building and its immediate curtilage prior to submission of an outline planning application for replacement of the farm buildings with two or three new dwellings. Regard is also to be had to the rural location and the setting which incorporates the County Wildlife site (the pond).

6. Property Implications

- 6.1 The County Council will be disposing of potentially surplus buildings with significant repairing liabilities and gaining an enhanced capital receipt.
- 6.2 The adjoining grazing land will be retained by the County Council and re let for farming use as part of its Rural Estate.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The County Council has and will continue to seek independent property and valuation advice regarding the disposal of the Wheatsheaf farmhouse block and farm buildings and will ensure compliance with section 123 of Local Government Act 1972 to ensure best consideration is received on disposal of the land.
- 7.2 This report should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Part II report which sets out existing and alternative use valuation detail.

8. Equality Act Implications

- 8.1 When considering proposals placed before Members it is important that they are fully aware of, and have themselves rigorously considered the Equality implications of the decision that they are making.
- 8.2 Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the County Council's statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) produced by officers.
- 8.3 The Equality Act 2010 requires the County Council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The protected

characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

- 8.4 An EqlA has not been completed at this stage of the process. This will remain under review although there are not any direct equality implications arising from this report.

Background Information

None.