

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**RESOURCES, PROPERTY AND THE ECONOMY CABINET PANEL
THURSDAY, 15 MARCH 2018 AT 10:00AM****TO CONSIDER THE ACQUISITION OF LAND TO THE SOUTH OF BYGRAVE ROAD,
BALDOCK**Report of the Director of Resources

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Executive Member: David Williams, Leader of the Council (as responsible for the
Resources, Property and the Economy portfolio)

Local Member: Steve Jarvis, Royston West and Rural

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek authority for the acquisition of the land to the South of Bygrave Road, Baldock.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The County Council owns a large area of land to the North and East of Baldock which is held for the purposes of the Rural Estate and currently the subject of several agricultural tenancies. This land has been subject of a Local Plan allocation for a large urban extension as a result of the Call for Sites from North Herts District Council (NHDC) within their Local Plan (which is currently undergoing Examination in Public).
- 2.2 NHDC will require a level of investment in local infrastructure; this will include works to improve access to the railway station and the town centre. Acquisition of this parcel of land will aid in the delivery of a choice of economically viable access routes adjacent to the railway line.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 The Resources, Property and the Economy Cabinet Panel is invited to recommend that Cabinet:
- i) authorises acquisition of the freehold interest in the Land to the south of Bygrave Road, Baldock, as is shown on the attached Title Plan HD349670 at Appendix A;
 - ii) delegates to the Director of Resources authority to agree the terms of the acquisition, in consultation with the Leader of the Council (as responsible for the Resources, Property and the Economy portfolio); and

iii) authorises capital funding for the acquisition and subsequent overage from the Invest to Transform Capital Spend to Achieve reserve.

4. Background

- 4.1 The County Council has been requested to advance land at Baldock for development to assist North Hertfordshire District Council in meeting its housing supply and other growth requirements within the new Local Plan period. The County Council owns a large area of agricultural land to the east and north of Baldock (currently let as farms and managed by Hertfordshire County Council's Rural Estate team such land subsequently referred to as the Baldock Rural Estate) which can be made available to meet proportion of the requirement. Initial planning indicates a likelihood of the ability to provide lands to accommodate some 3,300 dwellings with associated infrastructure and local facilities, together with a substantial area of employment land.
- 4.2 The initial infrastructure design work at the Baldock Rural Estate site indicates the need for rail crossings at strategic points and the need for pedestrian/cycle access to Baldock Station from the Baldock Rural Estate Northern site.
- 4.3 WYG, a firm of town planning and engineering consultants was appointed by the County Council in 2016 to produce a masterplan for the whole of the Baldock lands and undertake discussions with NHDC and other interested parties have informed the required development infrastructure. They advise that there is a need for a road crossing on the railway to provide access to the development areas together with potentially up to 3 crossings for pedestrians/cycles. The road crossing and footways can be serviced from County Council owned land, and there may be better options facilitated by acquisition of this land.
- 4.4 Acquisition of this land would provide an option for pedestrian access to be gained to Baldock Station along the northern side of the railway line as well as removing any design constraints with regard to the third crossing. This will allow designers to produce a more cost effective solution to meet the anticipated planning requirements.
- 4.5 Commercial terms have been provisionally agreed, subject to Cabinet agreeing in principle the land is acquired.
- 4.6 The proposed purchase of the land presents the County Council with an opportunity to ensure flexibility in the provision of infrastructure works on proposed Urban Extension development.

5. Town Planning

- 5.1 An application for Outline Planning Application for the Urban Extension site has been submitted. The application will be fully considered upon adoption of the new Local Plan, which will confirm the removal of the land from the Green Belt.

5.2 At this time, the land to be acquired is not included within the application. Once the purchase has been completed consideration will be given to the most appropriate way to secure permission for its development.

6. Financial Implications

6.1. A valuation of the land will confirm the terms are appropriate for a purchase by a local authority. Such transactions are governed by the compensation principles that would apply if the land were being acquired by compulsory purchase processes. The general principle being that acquisition should be at market value.

6.2 The costs of the acquisition are addressed in the accompanying Part II report and will be met from the Invest to Transform 'Spend to Achieve' capital budget.

7. Equality Act Implications

7.1 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.

7.2 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.

7.3 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.

7.4 An EqIA 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.