

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Executive Committee (Special)
Date of Meeting:	9 March 2016
Subject:	Use of Spring Gardens and Oldbury Road
Report of:	Simon Dix, Finance and Asset Management Group Manager Julie Wood, Development Services Group Manager
Corporate Lead:	Rachel North, Deputy Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Councillor D J Waters, Lead Member for Finance and Asset Management
Number of Appendices:	One

Executive Summary:

The Borough Council is the freehold owner of both the Oldbury Road car park site and the Spring Gardens car park site including the lease of land to the Swimming Bath Trust for the Cascades leisure facility in Tewkesbury town. Both sites are key strategic sites within the town centre and yet the quality of place in both locations is poor and they do not generate a positive contribution towards the overall attractiveness of the town.

The development of a new leisure facility on Lincoln Green Lane, Tewkesbury has been delivered in association with the Swimming Bath Trust and will enable the surrender of the lease on the Cascades site.

This has presented the Borough Council with an opportunity to review the current use of the site and investigate the potential for redevelopment. In addition, the recent termination of an agreement to sell the Oldbury Road car park site has provided an opportunity to look at the wider area and provide a holistic approach to potential redevelopment.

The Borough Council is committed to working with partners to further enhance the economic and social future of Tewkesbury town as laid out in the Tewkesbury Masterplan. This report explores a framework for effective utilisation of these key sites to further promote a sustainable and attractive town centre.

Recommendation:

That the Executive Committee RESOLVES to instruct the Finance and Asset Management Group Manager, in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive:

- I. to prepare development proposals for the areas edged red on the attached plan, and the wider environment, having regard to the Tewkesbury Town Centre Masterplan: Strategic Framework Document and the primary considerations as highlighted in Paragraph 5.4 of the report;**

- II. having regard to the current and future requirements for car parking in the town centre, the Tewkesbury Town Centre Masterplan: Strategic Framework Document and the primary considerations highlighted in Paragraph 5.4 of this report, to**

identify areas within the sites edged red on the attached plan which may be declared surplus to service requirements; and

III. to return to a future meeting of this Committee with the information required by Paragraphs I and II of this resolution.

Reasons for Recommendation:

The combined factors of leisure provision relocation, the inability to complete the sale of Oldbury Road car park and the current oversupply of service led amenity on these sites presents the Borough Council, its partners and stakeholders, a unique opportunity to consider the future use of these sites in order to maximise their benefit to the town of Tewkesbury.

Resource Implications:

None directly associated with this report but there is an opportunity to better use the assets owned by the Council to help meet the financial deficit projected over the next five years and the potential partial withdrawal of the New Homes Bonus.

Legal Implications:

None arising directly from this report.

Risk Management Implications:

None directly associated with this report.

Performance Management Follow-up:

Any potential project which emanates from the exploration of options for this key site will be reported through the Tewkesbury Town Regeneration Partnership in addition to the normal reporting mechanisms of the Borough Council.

Environmental Implications:

The opportunity presented from the situation as outlined in this report creates the ability to significantly enhance and improve the current environmental amenity of this location within Tewkesbury town. A key component of any scheme will include enhanced environmental considerations.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

1.1 The Borough Council is the freeholder owner of the sites edged red on the attached plans with the exception of a small site situated on the west side of Spring Gardens car park which is the toilet block constructed and transferred to Tewkesbury Town Council in March 2013. The Spring Gardens site came into the Borough Council's ownership following local government reorganisation in 1974 whilst the Oldbury Road site was purchased in 1994 with the intention of future development. The two sites have a number of current uses as described in the following Paragraphs.

1.2 The Spring Gardens and Oldbury Road site are extensively used for providing hardstanding car parking facilities. The Spring Gardens site has provision for 286 cars on non-market days and Oldbury Road provides a total of 96 spaces. The Council also provides parking of 46 spaces on the nearby Bishop's Walk site but as this site is on leasehold it has been excluded from this review.

- 1.3 A large proportion of the Spring Gardens site is currently leased to the Swimming Bath Trust for provision of the Cascades facility. In addition to car parking and the swimming pool, the Spring Gardens site also hosts a twice weekly market and a large part of the annual Mop Fair, which has long historic roots within the town.
- 1.4 In July 2012 the Council adopted the Tewkesbury Town Centre Masterplan: Strategic Framework Document and, specifically, the appended Spring Gardens and Bishop's Walk Design and Development Principles document. The documents were developed in partnership with the Community Engagement Advisory Group and following consultation with local people. The documents set out the design principles for any redevelopment of the sites and communicate a vision for how the redeveloped sites will contribute to the wider enhancement and regeneration of Tewkesbury.
- 1.5 The documents identify both sites as being suitable for a mixed use development whilst also concentrating on re-establishing the historic grain of Tewkesbury town. Other principles established include preserving and enhancing the character of the town, maintaining and mending the continuity of building frontages, improving the quality of the public realm and maintaining sufficient levels of car parking.

2.0 LATEST POSITION

- 2.1 In March 2014, the Council agreed a conditional contract of sale for the Oldbury Road car park site to McCarthy and Stone for the development of later living accommodation. The sale was conditional on the approval of planning permission within eighteen months of the agreement. As this period expired without planning permission being granted, the agreement fell and the Borough Council retained ownership of the site. This has provided an opportunity to review the options for the site as part of a wider scheme incorporating Spring Gardens.
- 2.2 The development of a new leisure centre on the Public Service Centre site in Tewkesbury continues apace and is expected to result in the new centre being open to the public on 30 May 2016. It is at this point that the Cascades facility will close and the Swimming Bath Trust will surrender its current lease back to the Borough Council. The facility will not be required by the Borough Council, having developed the new leisure centre, and is therefore earmarked for demolition at the earliest opportunity.
- 2.3 The Borough Council conducted a review of its car parking strategy in 2014. The review included an independent assessment of the usage level of all Borough owned parking facilities and recommended a series of measures aimed at increasing the usage of car parks and ensuring visitors stay longer within our towns. The new strategy was introduced in April 2015 and has had a positive effect with an increase in ticket sales of 3.4% in the first nine months of the year and in particular an increase in the longer stay categories. However, in general, there still remains a significant under usage of car parks across Tewkesbury.

3.0 CURRENT USAGE

- 3.1 The Cascades facility occupies a space of approximately 0.56 acres of the Spring Gardens site and, as explained in Paragraph 2.2, will not be required by either the Swimming Bath Trust or Tewkesbury Borough Council for the provision of leisure from 30 May 2016. The area occupied by the current facility is significant in terms of size but

also in terms of the parking provision required for staff and customers. Analysis of the refunds issued by Cascades for customers parking in Spring Gardens indicates that approximately 30% of all ticket sales in Spring Gardens are related to this use. It is expected that current parking requirements for leisure usage will migrate, in their entirety, to the new location on the Public Service Centre site, thereby significantly reducing the parking requirement within Spring Gardens. A simple extrapolation of the current usage would suggest approximately 95 less spaces will be required as a result of this migration.

- 3.2** The 2014 survey of car parks, commissioned from Gloucestershire County Council, indicated that levels of parking within Spring Gardens and Oldbury Road, including the current use related to Cascades, ranged from 25% to 40% and 50% to 65% respectively between a mid-week usage and a Saturday morning slot. Given that the survey was carried out in May 2014 the figures can be inflated to allow for the busier periods throughout the summer. In addition, a further allowance can be made for the increased ticket sales experienced over the last nine months. Making these allowances, suggests a usage ranging between 40% and 60% for the combined site in the busier summer months whilst usage outside of the summer reduces to 34% to 50% in an average month and 26% to 39% in the lower winter months.
- 3.3** For a car park to operate efficiently an allowance needs to be made for circulation, usually taken to be 20%, to enable visitors to park with relative ease. Even with allowing for circulation and for further potential increases in usage, the figures suggest that there is a significant oversupply of parking provision within the area. Added to this, the spare capacity within the other town parking facilities, and the usage associated with the Cascades facility that will be lost in June, highlight that the Council is not and will not be making the best use of its assets in its current provision and is not gaining the best return from holding those assets.
- 3.4** This analysis is clearly based on average figures and it is acknowledged that at peak times, e.g. mid Saturday morning in the summer, car parking usage can be high in the Oldbury Road and Spring Gardens sites. However, the converse is also true that the car parks are frequently less utilised than the analysis highlights with early morning, afternoons and months outside of the summer peak period reflecting significantly less usage.

4.0 SUMMARY

- 4.1** It is clear from the preceding Paragraphs that the current underutilisation of Council assets for car parking provision will soon increase as the Cascades complex closes and the subsequent demolition of the site will add significantly to the over provision of service related amenity.
- 4.2** There is currently no identified need, within current service activities, to utilise the spare capacity available for service provision. It can therefore be concluded that the combined site has the potential for partial redevelopment opportunities.

- 4.3** An opportunity exists to explore additional usages of the current sites occupied by the two car parks to enhance the attractiveness and amenity of the whole town centre. Maintaining adequate car parking capacity, access to the weekly markets and the annual Mop Fair are key, but a redesign and effective review may provide options which would significantly improve the attractiveness of this area of the town and attract new facilities.

5.0 DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- 5.1** The effective use of assets is crucial for all public sector bodies in meeting the challenge of reducing core government support as well as providing effective services. It is important that the Borough Council utilises all of the assets it holds to extract value from all of its land and property holdings in order to support continued service delivery to the taxpayers of the Borough.

- 5.2** The combined site described within this report provides an exciting opportunity to investigate the potential for redevelopment to meet these aims but crucially also meet the Council's wider aspirations to further develop an economically successful town centre and support both the cultural development and the regeneration of an area of Tewkesbury that has been neglected for many years.

- 5.3** A brief for investigating these opportunities needs to be mindful of the principles established within the Masterplan:

Principle 1: Access and ease of movement - Repairing the historic grain of Tewkesbury by making places that connect with each other at the town scale and at local level.

Principle 2: Mixed uses - A complementary mix of uses that add to the life and vitality of the Town Centre.

Principle 3: Character - Preservation and enhancement of Tewkesbury's unique built and natural heritage.

Principle 4: Wayfinding - Connecting and making distinctive and memorable streets, spaces, buildings and landscape to create a strong sense of place.

Principle 5: Continuity and enclosure - maintaining and mending the continuity of building frontages to enclose streets and other public spaces and to ensure lively and safe streets.

Principle 6: Quality of the public realm - Creating attractive, safe and uncluttered streets and spaces for all users of the town centre, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists.

Principle 7: Sustainability - Encouraging resource and energy efficient construction and reducing the need to travel by car for short journeys.

Principle 8: Functionality - Maintain sufficient levels of car parking, access and servicing for the town centre and new development as it comes forward.

- 5.4** The development brief will have a vision to create a sustainable, mixed-use development that provides the highest standards of public realm and architecture and embraces the historic character of Tewkesbury in an innovative and modern approach. The potential development should provide a complimentary mix of facilities, including retail, housing, car parking and public space as well as improving the existing connections within Tewkesbury town.
- 5.5** It is also critical to the success of any redevelopment that current uses are recognised and protected. These include provision of space for a twice weekly market, provision of space for the annual Mop Fair, provision of public conveniences and provision of sufficient car parking.
- 5.6** It also needs to be acknowledged that both car parking sites are currently listed as community assets under the Right-to-Bid scheme and any development proposals made that include a relevant disposal of land within the listed assets will need to comply with the requirements of that scheme.
- 5.7** It is suggested that Officers investigate the opportunities for the combined site and bring back proposals for consideration at the earliest opportunity. It is further suggested that the Lead Member for Finance and Asset Management takes an oversight role in the development of these proposals.

6.0 CONSULTATION

- 6.1** Discussions have taken place within the Tewkesbury Regeneration Partnership which includes the Tewkesbury Town Council and Chamber of Commerce. Full dialogue and consultation with the local community will be carried out when proposals are developed.

7.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

- 7.1** Asset Management Strategy approved in November 2015.
Tewkesbury Town Centre Masterplan: Strategic Framework Document.

8.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

- 8.1** The government expects all public bodies to rationalise their asset base and make the best use out of the assets they choose to retain.

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

- 9.1** Property implications as set out within the report. In addition, significant human resource from within the Council will need to be deployed to the project.

10.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

- 10.1** A potential beneficial impact on sustainability implications from any redevelopment of the site proposed.

11.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

11.1 A potential increase in the value extracted from the assets dependent on any proposals put forward.

12.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

12.1 None.

Background Papers: None.

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Appendices: A – Plan of Sites.