

LAVERSTOCK & FORD PARISH COUNCIL

Report for Agenda Item 23.112 Longhedge Football Pitch & Changing Rooms.

Subject: Adoption of Longhedge Football Pitch & Changing Rooms
Date: 17th September 2023
Author: Andrew Prince, RFO

1. Report Summary.

- 1.1 This report explains the background to the initial refusal of the Council to adopt the Football Pitch and Changing Rooms at Longhedge and recommends that the Council reverses that decision and proceeds with the eventual adoption.

2. Background.

- 2.1 In 2016 a planning consultant for Linden/Bovis asked for an indication from the Council of the areas of public open space that we were prepared to adopt. A resolution was passed on 22 August 2016 and this included Area F, which includes the Football Pitch, the Changing Rooms and Play Area 4.
- 2.2 In 2019 the developer stated that the method of calculating the maintenance funding for open space was incorrect and unaffordable. After protracted negotiations and discussions including during Exempt Business the Council agreed a revised level of maintenance funding. This was £319k for all areas excluding Area A (the Community Open Space), Area B (the Western Boundary) and Area F (the Football Pitch and Changing Rooms). The Exempt Business Minutes are attached in the confidential version of this report.
- 2.3 The agreed maintenance funds amounted to 76.88% of the original funding calculated in accordance with the S106 SPON methodology.
- 2.4 Area F was excluded from these negotiations until a management proposal was in place, a business plan had been prepared and a suitable tenant identified. The developer was informed of this decision.
- 2.5 The developer's stated intention was to identify a suitable tenant and hand ownership of Area F to the Longhedge Management Company.

3. Current Situation.

- 3.1 By 2021 the developer had not yet been able to identify a suitable tenant. The Council expressed the view that we were against a transfer to the Management Company because of the potential financial liability imposed on residents.
- 3.2 The developer was asked to indicate what maintenance funding would be available if Area F was transferred to the Council. They initially suggested £123k. Applying the same percentage of S106 funding agreed in 2019 (76.88%) the Council proposed the sum of £192,760, which would be subject

to indexation from the date of the 2019 agreement until the date of transfer. In February 2023 the developer agreed to the revised maintenance funding. As of 18th September 2023, the indexed funds provision would be £249,415, or £12,470 per year over 20 years.

4. Potential Adoption Plan.

- 4.1 Work to build the football pitch was deferred from 2022 and is due to start this autumn. The developer has agreed to the S106 process, which requires a Practical Completion Certificate to be issued by Wiltshire Council. This would be followed by a Maintenance Period of a minimum of 12 months. During the Maintenance Period the developer will be responsible for the process of preparing the pitch for adoption. The earliest date for adoption is likely to be December 2024. Spring 2025 is more likely.
- 4.2 The Changing Room is virtually complete and will remain in the care and custody of the developer until the pitch is ready for adoption.
- 4.3 Having agreed to the funding demands of the Council the developer is asking for confirmation that the Council will adopt the Football Pitch and Changing Room in due course. Any delay in this confirmation is likely to lead to a further delay in provision and a possible transfer of these assets to the Management Company.

5. Financial Planning.

- 5.1 Hire Income is very difficult to forecast. All that can be said is that several individuals and organisations have indicated an interest in using the facilities. Hopefully the income would at least cover extra costs (heat, light, cleaning etc). Optimistically voluntary work by users will reduce maintenance costs.
- 5.2 At current values the agreed maintenance funding will provide an income of £12.5k per annum for the next 20 years.
- 5.3 Pitch Maintenance. The original proposal by the developer (£123k) was based on four quotes from contractors in 2019. Inflated to current prices this would indicate an annual cost of £6.5k. Some online quotes have indicated the cost of pitch maintenance at, from £350 pcm, or £4.2k pa.
- 5.4 Changing Room operation, maintenance and insurance. The size of the Changing Room is 157 sqm, which is less than half the size of the Old Sarum Community Centre or Hampton Park Pavilion. A budget of £6k should be sufficient.
- 5.5 Notwithstanding the above estimates there is a risk that these facilities will require a subsidy from the Council in the future.

6. Recommendation.

- 6.1 That the Council resolve to adopt the Football Pitch and Changing Rooms and provide them as a facility for the use of Longhedge residents, the Parish and the greater Salisbury area.

Annex A to Report 23.112

Extract of Exempt Business Minutes from Council Meeting on 18th March 2019

19.052 EXEMPT BUSINESS.

Resolved: That in view of the COMMERCIAL-IN-CONFIDENCE nature of the business about to be transacted the public and press be temporarily excluded from this meeting under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and the Local Government Act 1972.

The Chairman introduced this item and summarised the current dispute between the developers, the Council and Wiltshire Council. The purpose of this Exempt Business was to consider, in confidence, what level of Maintenance Contributions the Council might accept for Open Space at Longhedge. The Chairman gave reasons why he thought Area B, the Western Boundary, and Area F, which includes the Football Pitch, should be left out of this consideration. He said that Area A, the Community Open Space, is definitely not included. It is covered by separate provisions within the S106 agreement.

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