

## **Cabinet – 30 April 2014**

### **Petition: Neighbourhood Office at Lower Farm/Car Park**

#### **Portfolio Holder Response to the Recommendation of Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel 6 March 2014**

<b>Portfolio:</b>	Councillor A Andrew
<b>Service:</b>	Regeneration and Transport
<b>Wards:</b>	Bloxwich East
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Forward plan:</b>	No

#### **1. Summary**

The purpose of this report is to advise Cabinet of the resolution of Regeneration & Scrutiny Panel on the 6 March 2014, following their consideration of a public petition seeking the creation of a car park on the site of the former Neighbourhood Office and adjoining land at Buxton Road/Bakewell Close.

#### **2.0 Recommendation**

That Cabinet agree to the recommendation of the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel in that approval be given to the creation of a car park (subject to planning approval) on the site of the former Neighbourhood Office and adjoining land at Buxton Road/Bakewell Close, in accordance with the Council's procurement processes, to be financed from the sale of the site of the former Millfield Nursery.

#### **3. Resolution of Scrutiny Panel**

Regeneration & Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on the 6 March 2014 received a Briefing Note – copy attached at Appendix 1- from the Asset Manager outlining the circumstances surrounding a public petition presented by Councillor Phillips to Council on the 13 January 2014.

The Panel RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet give further consideration to the use of the capital receipt from the sale of the site of the former Millfield Nursery to fund the creation of a car park on the site of the former Neighbourhood office at Lower Farm;


2. the Panel receives an update report regarding this matter; and
3. the report be noted.

A copy of this resolution and notes from the Panel meeting are attached at Appendix 2.

#### **4 Financial Implications**

As indicated in the Briefing Note to Panel, although no detailed designs, and therefore costings, are available, it is anticipated that the works would cost in the region of £40,000.

Cabinet is advised that since the Panel met, the tender period for interested parties to bid to acquire the site of the former Millfields Nursery has closed. It is not appropriate to identify the level of bids received, but Cabinet is advised that the sale of the site is expected to generate sufficient capital funds to pay for the works, should Cabinet be minded to support the ring fencing of part of the receipt.



Simon Neilson  
Executive Director

11 April 2014



Councillor Adrian Andrew  
Deputy Leader  
Regeneration Portfolio Holder –  
Regeneration and Transport

22 April 2014

**BRIEFING NOTE**

**TO: REGENERATION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**  
**DATE: 6 March 2014**

**RE: PETITION; NEIGHBOURHOOD OFFICE AT LOWER FARM/CAR PARK****Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to provide the Panel with information regarding the circumstances that have resulted in the presentation of a public petition seeking the creation of a car park on the site of the former Neighbourhood Office and adjoining land at Buxton Road/Bakewell Close.

**Background**

In November 2011, whg approached the Council with a scheme to create a car park on the site of the former Neighbourhood Office at the corner of Buxton Road and Bakewell Close to address parking issues experienced by both shop customers and parents visiting Lower Farm Primary School. The proposal was that the Council would make its land available and whg would provide the required funding, estimated at the time to be in the region of £25-30,000.

Various draft designs were produced, which also included the green space in front of the shops and the refurbishment of the whg owned garage court to the rear of the shops. Unfortunately, however, in 2012 whg advised that they no longer had the funding to carry out the project and so it was not progressed.

At its meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 2014, Councillor Phillips presented Council with a petition of over 500 signatures asking the Council to provide a car park on the Council land at Buxton Road/ Buxton Close to meet the parking needs of shop customers and parents of children at Lower Farm Primary School.

At its meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> February 2014, Councillor R Andrew presented Council with a petition proposing that the Council creates the requested car park, with whg providing a funding contribution from the sale of the site of the former Wiggin House and the Council contribution from the proceeds of the sale of the former Millfield Nursery site. The latter is currently being marketed for disposal.

Officers have since approached whg to discuss this proposal but they have indicated that they are not in a position to offer funding for this project.

Officers shall give further consideration to the proposal but panel should note that if supported, it shall be necessary for funding to be sought through the Council's capital programme process. Although no current cost estimates are available, it is anticipated that the cost of the scheme would be in the region of £40,000

**Author**

Steve Law  
Asset Manager



### 322 /13 **PETITION: NEIGHBOURHOOD OFFICE AT LOWER FARM/ CAR PARK**

The Asset Manager introduced the update. The following is a summary of the presentation and subsequent discussion:

- It was explained that in November 2011 whg had approached the council with a proposal for a car park on the site. It was highlighted that the scheme would address parking issues experienced by both local shop customers and parents visiting Lower Farm Primary School. The proposal was that the council would make the land available and whg would provide the required construction funding, estimated at between £25k - £30k. It was further explained that various designs were produced, including refurbishment of the whg owned garage to the rear of the shops. However, in 2012 whg advised that they no longer had the funding to carry out the project and subsequently no further progress was made;
- It was explained that a petition led by Councillor Phillips was received at Council in January 2014 seeking the creation of a car park on the site of the former Neighbourhood Office and adjoining land at Buxton Road/ Bakewell Close. This was followed by a petition to Council on 27 February led by Councillor Rachel Andrew which proposed that the council create the car park with whg providing funding from the sale of the site of the former Wiggin House and a council contribution from proceeds of the sale of the former Millfield Nursery site. It was further explained that the latter is currently being marketed for disposal. In addition it was explained that the cost of funding the works was estimated at £40,000;
- The Portfolio Holder expressed the view that the proposal to use the capital receipt from the sale of the former Millfield Nursery site offered a good solution to this issue. He also explained that possible discussions with whg which involved Members had the potential to prove more fruitful in terms of seeking funding for the scheme. The Portfolio Holder encouraged the Panel to recommend this course of action to Cabinet;
- Councillor Phillips explained that the Neighbourhood Office at Lower Farm had previously been demolished and a commitment had been made that a car park would be created. She explained that she subsequently received notification in 2012 that funding was no longer available and expressed strong concerns regarding these works not being undertaken. Councillor Phillips further explained that as a consequence a petition which included the signatures of shop keepers, residents, together with local business owners and GPs had been submitted. Councillor Phillips expressed strong concern that in spite of the original petition being presented to Council on 13 January she had received notice that a verbal rather than written response would be provided. Councillor Phillips further explained her strong concerns given that the car park had not been created in spite of it being two and a half years on from the original commitment. She also emphasised the importance of the creation of a car park to the local community;
- The Portfolio Holder explained that in his view it would be in the interests of whg to assist in the funding of the works given the number of their tenants in the area. It was further explained that the works would be completed either by the council acting on its own, using the capital receipt from the sale of Millfield

Nursery, or in conjunction with funding from whg. However, officers explained that following submission of the second petition contact was made with whg who explained that they had no funding available to support the scheme. The Portfolio Holder agreed with a Panel Member that a car park would assist the local school managing traffic at the beginning and end of the school day, as well as encouraging people to use local shops and amenities. The Portfolio Holder also agreed that approaching the local school and businesses for funding was a good idea which had not previously been explored. In response to a further query it was explained that s.106 funding was not available in relation to a recent local development as it was below the fourteen unit threshold. The Panel recommended that Cabinet give further consideration to the use of the capital receipt from the anticipated sale of the site of the former Millfield Nursery to fund the creation of a car park on the site of the former Neighbourhood office at Lower Farm.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. That Cabinet give further consideration to the use of the capital receipt from the sale of the site of the former Millfield Nursery to fund the creation of a car park on the site of the former Neighbourhood office at Lower Farm;**
- 2. the Panel receives an update report regarding this matter; and**
- 3. the report be noted.**