

## Cabinet – 24 June 2009

### Young Peoples Centre – St. Matthews/Paddock Ward

**Portfolio:** Councillor Mike Flower, Children's Services  
Councillor Adrian Andrew, Deputy Leader and Regeneration

**Service:** Children's Services  
Regeneration

**Wards:** St Matthews/Paddock

**Key decision:** Yes

**Forward plan:** Yes

#### 1. Summary of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on progress on the delivery of the Young Peoples Centre project, and in particular to report on the outcome of consultation with the local community and changes to the project as a result.
- 1.2 The project will be delivered with the help of DCSF Youth Capital Fund Plus aimed at creating new youth facilities in neighbourhoods with high levels of deprivation, crime and anti-social behaviour and which currently lack good quality youth provision. The new Young People's Centre in St Matthews/Paddock Ward will secure young people's access to positive activities, offer a range of social, educational and leisure opportunities at times of most need including weekends.

#### 2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- (i) Note the outcome of consultation with the local community as set out in the attached **Appendix 1**.
- (ii) Support delivery of the Young Peoples Centre on the former bakery site, Paddock Lane.
- (iii) Approve the acquisition of the former bakery site in Paddock Lane, indicated on plan no. EPMS 3256, on terms to be agreed, to enable delivery of the Young Peoples Centre.
- iv) Approve the funding allocation as set out in paragraph 4.1 which includes the minor change in the capital programme.

### 3. Background information

- 3.1 Cabinet at its meeting on 22 April 2009 received a report outlining a proposal to create a new Young Peoples Centre in Chuckery, and resolved:

(1) That Cabinet recognises the importance of appropriate service provision for young people and is keen to develop this in accordance with reference to young people and local residents including investigation into alternative sites.

(2) That Cabinet also recognises that a rare opportunity to fund a new facility now exists and that there is a very tight timetable for accessing the grant finance. Accordingly, Cabinet authorises officers to continue preparation of the facility in accordance with the report and;

(3) That local consultation continues in order to seek to accommodate the needs of both young people and local residents. A further report to be presented to Cabinet in June at which time a final decision will be taken.

The project to construct a young peoples centre is largely funded by grant made available by the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) through the Youth Capital Fund Plus. The requirement of this successful funding bid is that the project must be implemented during 2009/10. To ensure delivery within this timetable it is essential that an appropriate site is readily available.

- 3.2 A 0.4 acre site at Charlotte Street / Walhouse Road was originally identified as an appropriate location for the facility. The rationale for selecting this site was that:

- It is of sufficient size to accommodate the proposed young peoples centre.
- It is centrally located and accessible for the local young people who will use the centre in the future.
- The land is Council owned and this assists the delivery of the project.
- The land is an informal area of open space but its size and location are not particularly suited to formal games. The proximity of the two roads clearly presents a danger to young people while the adjoining houses are liable to experience disturbance from unsupervised activity on the site.

A draft proposal for the site was produced and was the subject of extensive consultation with the local community. Youth Service staff made individual contact with many residents in the immediate vicinity of the site. These residents were also invited to a drop-in session at Chuckery School on 5 May 2009 which was open to the wider community. At this session, held in both the afternoon and evening, officers were available to explain the plans for the facility and record feedback. **Appendix 1** summarises the consultation process and the comments that were received.

- 3.3 From the outset the consultation process generated considerable opposition to the construction of the facility on the site at Charlotte Street / Walhouse Road. Objections have primarily related to the loss of the open space but also to impact on parking, anti-social behaviour and future management of the centre. In an attempt to alleviate these concerns the initial design was amended with the building being repositioned within the site so that a larger area of open space



would remain accessible. Despite this revision the local community has remained steadfast in its opposition to the proposal to the extent that a campaign group has been established to encourage the Council to identify an alternative location for the facility.

3.4 The consultation process has therefore provided a clear message that the local community does not support development of the site at Charlotte Street / Walhouse Road. As a responsible Authority that listens to the views of its citizens there is a need to respond positively to this feedback and consider other locations for the young peoples centre as the site at Charlotte Street / Walhouse Road can no longer be considered a viable option. In this context two alternative sites have been identified for consideration, the former bakery, Paddock Lane and Paddock Lane Multi-Storey Car Park.

3.5 The former bakery site is located at the corner of Paddock Lane / Holtshill Lane and is therefore well positioned to serve the young people who are expected to use the centre. It is owned by Accord Housing Association and is being marketed for sale. This building is vacant and derelict and has a detrimental impact on the local environment. A study that was produced to accompany a previous planning application for the site indicated that:

- Holes in the roof had allowed water to enter the premises causing damage and deterioration to the fabric of the building and partial ceiling collapse.
- The external walls had started to spall to the extent that it was necessary to wrap the side elevation in netting to stop material falling.
- The foundations of the building are very shallow and if the building were retained then underpinning is required.

In view of the above any young peoples centre on this site would have to be a new build.

The principle of development of a young peoples centre on the former bakery site is considered to be acceptable in planning terms. Such development would result in the removal of a building which is detrimental to the local area and there is the opportunity to replace this with a landmark building that has a prominent frontage to both Paddock Lane and Holtshill Lane. In order to create a facility with near equivalent floorspace to that proposed at Charlotte Street / Walhouse Road it is likely that any new building would need to be a largely 2-storey development but this would need to be carefully designed so as not to impact detrimentally on no.48 Paddock Lane. The size of the site is insufficient to provide amenity space that was included in the original proposal. Furthermore, there is no opportunity to provide dedicated on-site car parking but this may be considered acceptable, subject to an assessment of the number of vehicles visiting the site.

There will be a need to undertake pre-planning application consultation with local residents regarding any scheme for the bakery site, which is likely to be led by Ward Councillors. However, it would seem unlikely that such a proposal would meet with the level of opposition experienced for the Charlotte Street / Walhouse Road site. Consultation with local young people will be important to ensure that their views are considered as part of any design process. There will be formal consultation with the local residents following the submission of any planning application.



- 3.6 Two development options exist in relation to Paddock Lane Multi-Storey Car Park. Demolition of the building and the erection of a young peoples centre or construction of the facility on the roof of the existing car park.

Given the size of the site demolition of the building would allow the construction of a young peoples centre with an associated amenity area and sufficient car parking. While the principle of development is acceptable a key issue in the determination of any planning application will be the loss of car parking spaces. This is a Council owned facility that offers parking provision for Council staff. Each staff member pays a fee for use of the car park and all spaces are occupied on a daily basis. This car park is one of a number within the town centre that help the Council meet its obligation to provide staff parking. On this basis any proposal that would lead to the loss of this car park and a parking space shortfall in the town centre may not be supported. Notwithstanding this, the costs of demolition are likely to be substantial. There is also an issue of removing existing WHG garage tenants from the basement of the car park.

Development of the young peoples centre on the roof of the existing car park is acceptable in principle. However, the viability of this would be dependent on a structural assessment of the building and the costs of construction are likely to be substantial. Furthermore, the facility would be isolated and difficult to access.

Development at the Paddock Lane Multi-Storey Car Park therefore presents a number of complications and as such this does not appear to be a viable option for the development of a young peoples centre given the budget for the project and the timescale for delivery.

- 3.7 While there is a need to acquire the former bakery it is recommended as the most appropriate site option for the facility. The site is in a sustainable location and its development would enhance the local environment. On this basis, and given the short timescale for delivery of this project, officers have commenced discussions and made a formal offer regarding acquisition of the old bakery with agents acting for Accord Housing Association.

#### **4. Resource considerations**

- 4.1 **Financial:** The estimate cost of the project is £0.603m. This is to be financed by a grant of £0.452m from the DCSF Youth Capital Plus Fund; £0.081m from a combination of Youth Capital Grant from 2008/09, 2009/10 and Youth mainstream capital programme; and £0.07m from the deferment of the Redhouse community project to 2010/11. The Redhouse project will be first call on the 2010/11 capital programme.

The grant conditions for the £0.452m state that all expenditure must be complete by 31 December 2009 but discussions will take place with DCSF to demonstrate that the project is committed well within this timescale and completed by 31 March 2010. Strong project management will be in place to ensure that Walsall Council is not exposed to loss of grant for missing the grant deadline. The design of the Centre will ensure that the project is delivered within that £0.603m budget.



An offer has been submitted for the property and a response is awaited. A number of abnormal costs have been identified which relate to:

- a) Repairs to a retaining wall
- b) Additional foundation works
- c) Infilling the basement of the existing building.

Ongoing revenue costs associated with running the building will be provided by existing service budgets and in collaboration with key partners ie Health, Police, etc.

- 4.2 **Legal:** Design consultants will be engaged from Property Services Consultancy framework and tenders for construction will be invited in accordance with the Council's Financial and Contract Rules from the Council's Standing approved list.

Estates will need to be satisfied that an appropriate value is agreed in the acquisition of the premises, and that good title can be secured. In this context title details have been requested from the Land Registry and will be assessed accordingly. The acquisition of the premises would not be completed until planning consent was secured. A judicial review of any decision to grant planning consent could be mounted by objectors to the proposal up to 3 months from the date of that decision.

- 4.3 **Staffing:** Officers in Children's Services and Regeneration are working together as part of a Project Board to manage the inception, design and consultation stages of the process.

Further officer input will be involved in the planning application process, contract and build stages, and management of the centre.

## **5. Citizen impact**

- 5.1 The Youth Capital Fund Plus (YCF Plus) will help give a voice and influence to young people, particularly those facing disadvantage, in relation to things to do and places to go and convey a powerful message to young people that their needs and aspirations are important. The St Matthews/Paddock ward facility will increase young people's engagement with their services more generally and with democratic processes at the local level.

## **6. Community safety**

- 6.1 One of the key challenges for local authorities is to improve the provision of positive activities for young people, particularly those who are disadvantaged. Section 507B of The Education Act 1996 placed a new duty on local authorities to secure young people's access to positive activities, and that authorities ascertain young people's views on provision and consider alternative providers.

## **7. Environmental impact**

- 7.1 Development of the former bakery would result in the removal of a building that is in a very poor condition and detrimental to the local environment. The new building will be designed with a BREEAM rating of Very Good. It is expected that

the scheme will include a high quality building and landscaping proposals to enhance the amenity of the area and contribute to wider regeneration.

## **8. Performance and risk management issues**

### **8.1 Risk:**

The principle risks are:

#### **8.1.1 Risk 1 – Local concern that the project will impact on amenity.**

Consultation will both inform residents of the project and attempt to resolve concerns by amendments to the design of the building or introducing management changes where appropriate.

#### **8.1.2 Risk 2 – The former bakery site cannot be acquired**

Detailed negotiations with the agents acting for the owners will take place with the aim of reaching a mutually acceptable agreement.

#### **8.1.3 Risk 3 – The project does not secure planning permission.**

Both the consultation process referred to above together with further consultation as part of the planning application process will aim to minimise local concerns to deliver a planning application that can be supported. Pre-application discussions have taken place with planning officers.

#### **8.1.4 Risk 4 – The centre does not meet the expectations of the user group.**

The costs associated with development of the bakery site are more significant than at Charlotte Street / Walhouse Road. As such it is unlikely that the facility originally proposed can be provided at this site. Further consultation with local young people will take place to ensure that their views are considered as part of any development proposal.

#### **8.1.5 Risk 5 – The project is not delivered on time or budget.**

The delivery of the project is reliant on DCSF grant which must be committed in 2009/10. Failure to do so will result in the loss of grant of £452,000. There is no further capital provision for the project so meticulous project management is essential. The timeframe for acquisition of the privately owned former bakery site cannot be definitely estimated and has the potential to delay the project.

### **8.2 Performance management:**

#### **8.2.1 A project manger, within Property Services, has been appointed to coordinate the project which will be monitored through the Council's Project Register.**

#### **8.2.2 The project will be overseen by a Project Board, which includes relevant senior Council officers, councillors and key partners. A young people's reference group will also be established and ensure representation from end users.**



## 9. Equality implications

- 9.1 It will be necessary to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment – not yet completed due to the challenging delivery timetable – but the intention will be to ensure the centre is available to all 13-19 year olds in the area. There may also be scope for the centre to be used by other community groups.

## 10. Consultation

- 10.1 The report explains the nature and level of consultation that has been undertaken with the local community to date. There will be a need to carry out further consultation with local residents both prior to and as part of any planning application process for the former bakery site. It is anticipated that ward councillors will take a role in this consultation process (with the exception of those who are members of Development Control Committee). It will also be necessary to fully engage with the community during the construction stage and as part of any future management arrangements.
- 10.2 Ward councillors have received regular briefings as the project develops; Councillor Sanders is a member of the Project Board.

## Background papers

- DCSF Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Fund Guidance
- Provision of a new Youth Centre in Chuckery – Cabinet report 22 April 2009

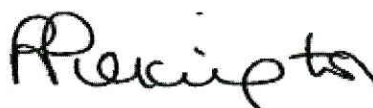
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### **Consultation with young people.**

Consultation was undertaken throughout March 2009 with approximately 30 young people and one youth work provider in the area of St Matthews and Paddock wards to seek views and opinions on the proposed design of the centre and its future usage. The consultation group comprised those young people who attend the one night a week delivery at Central Hall, Ablewell Street, and those who attend Street Star Academy (voluntary sector). The group of young people involved were aged between 11-19 years (10 female and 20 male) and from a range of ethnic backgrounds, with the majority living in close proximity to the site at Charlotte Street/Walhouse Road.

Following initial introduction sessions, two main events were undertaken on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2009 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009 at Central Hall Ablewell Street. Indicative plans were produced which were based on the existing Young Peoples' Information Centre in Blakenall. At these sessions young people developed and adapted the plans with reference to their needs, the funding criteria and information and advice provided by Youth Workers, Amjid Raza, (Property Services Design and Management) and Steve Davies (Project Architect) who were all in attendance.

Officers have indicated to the young people that consultation will continue throughout all stages of the project.

### **Community consultations**

Consultation was undertaken with local residents as soon as draft working plans for the centre were available. Officers from the Youth Service and Property Services undertook door to door discussions with residents of the immediate neighbouring houses. These commenced on 3/4/09 and resulted in some return visits, including meeting small groups of residents on 21/4/09. Following these consultations the proposal was refined to respond to comments received. Two drop in consultation sessions were then organised for 5/5/09 to present the revised scheme.

Please refer to the consultation plan.

There are 52 properties in Area A which was designated for more intensive consultation than Area B. Through the consultation process officers had dialogue with residents from 35 of these 52 properties (of the remaining 17, 6 are in Charlotte Street, 9 in Rowley Street and 2 in Walhouse Road).

Residents from 11 of these 35 properties attended both a meeting on 21/4/09 and the drop-in session on 5/5/09.

Within Area B there are a further 230 properties resulting in a total of 282 properties.

All 282 properties received an invite to attend the drop-in sessions on 5/5/09. The attendance register shows that 97 people attended, 18 in the afternoon and 79 in the evening. However, not all attendees signed the register and it has been estimated that over 100 people attended the evening session.

### **Initial feedback from resident's consultations**



As part of the consultation process local residents have offered their observations on the site in question and its surroundings:

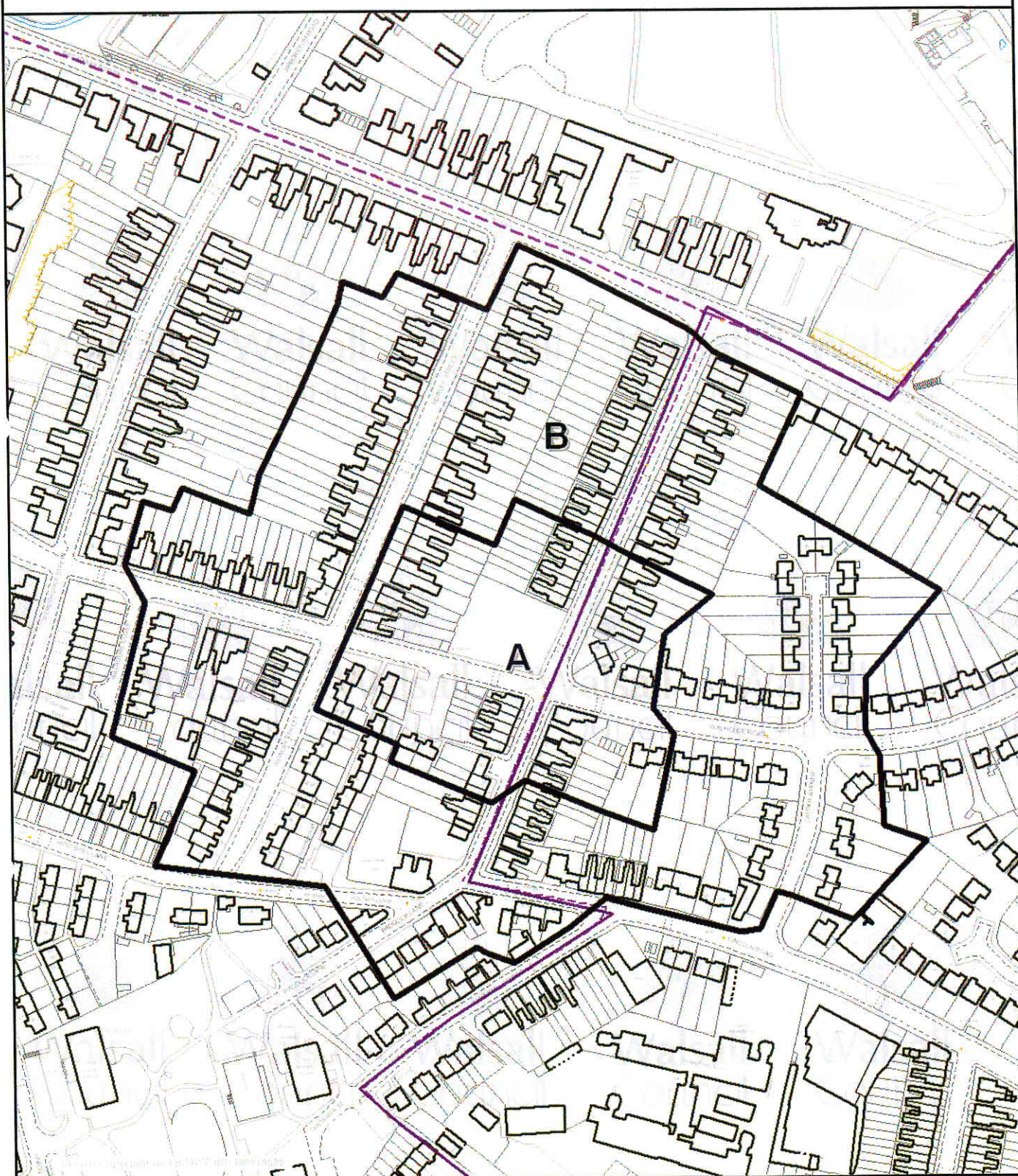
1. Parking, particularly in Charlotte Street, is very difficult; residents feel that on too many occasions they cannot park near their homes because people visiting the Arboretum at weekends and staff from the Hydesville Tower School during the school day use Charlotte Street to park in.
2. There is a perception that the current green space attracts 'undesirable' young people who cause nuisance by making noise, dropping litter, taking and dealing drugs and consuming alcohol. It has been stated that some arrive by car and are not local. The nearby pub is seen to contribute to this situation.
3. Younger children use the area to play, up to the time of the day that older young people arrive. The site is near to their homes so parents can monitor their activity.

These views set the context for the comments received on the proposal to develop a Young Peoples Centre. These are summarised below:

1. More suitable sites exist in the local area (a number of suggestions were put forward by individual residents)
2. Problems are already experienced with on-street parking and the facility will exacerbate this.
3. Development will lead to the loss of a valuable green space.
4. Incidences of anti social behaviour by young people in the area will increase.
5. Does the Council have a budget to operate the centre in future years?
6. Can the centre be used by other community groups?
7. House prices will be adversely affected.
8. **General support for the principle of the proposal but concern regarding its location.**



## Consultation plan



**Walsall Council**

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LICENCE NO: 100019529

Scale 1/2500 Date 12/6/2009

Centre = 402080 E 298714 N





**Walsall Council**

AREA EDGED BOLD = 226 SQ METRES (OR THEREABOUTS)

Spring Cottage  
(PH)

BM 151.38m

BM 148.93m

HOLTSHILL LANE

150.9m

PADDOCK LANE

PADDOCK LANE

PADDOCK LANE

2a

2

52

53

54

55

56

57

50

6

Sovereign Walk

22

146.6m

47

49

48

45

49

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DRAWING NO : EPMS 3256  
DATE : 16/06/2009  
DRAWN BY : SSP



SCALE 1:500

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