

**Cabinet 20 October 2021**

**Agenda  
Item No.  
21a**

**Report of Economy and Environment  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Feedback from Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee 16.9.21**

**Ward(s)** All

**Portfolios:** Councillor A. Andrew – Deputy Leader of the Council and  
Regeneration

**Report:**

The Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a petition, which requested the Council to explore all options to compulsory purchase the land which runs between the Riverpoint Estate, Willenhall and the former Willenhall Sewage Works.

This report presents the comments and recommendations from the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor D Coughlan introduced the petition and was supported by local residents. The Committee were shown before and after pictures of the land in question and the history of the plot.

She highlighted the land was once a green haven filled with trees and scrubs which local residents enjoyed. Over the course of a weekend, trees and shrubs were removed and the land was flattened for development. She concluded that it was essential that the Council considers all options to save the land from development and restore the land to its original purpose.

The Committee noted that planning consent for the development of the Riverpoint Estate contained the requirements for the subject land to be landscaped stipulated for a period of 5 years from the grant of consent for the retention of the landscaping. However, it was noted that this consent had expired.

Compulsory purchase powers (CPO) enables Local Authorities to acquire land compulsorily in order to carry out a function within in the public interest. Council Officers carried out investigations on the land in question and concluded that the Council had no plan or scheme for the land. As a result, the Council was unable to utilise CPO powers.

A lengthy discussion commenced on the petition which highlighted the

following points:

- The land was previously populated with trees and scrubs as the land was designed to be a noise barrier between residential houses and the Black Country route.
- Development of the land happened without notice or consultation with the Council or local residents.
- The Council's Green Space Strategy reinforced open green spaces and was critical for mental wellbeing.
- It was noted that it took 23 years for trees and wildlife to settle on the land. Overnight the land had been flattened which had a devastating impact on local residents.
- The land was sold and transferred to a housing developer.
- A discussion was held around consultation with the residents. In response, the Executive Director confirmed that there had been some confusion between the land relating to the petition and the original application for housing on the Riverpoint Estate. There had been no planning application in respect of the clearance of the land. However, as the owner appeared to be compliant with land use, there was no recourse for the Council to undertake enforcement steps.
- Some of the residents had witnessed threatening behaviour from the land owner.

### **Recommendations:**

**That:**

**The Cabinet to explore all options to compulsory purchase the land between Riverpoint Estate and the former Willenhall Sewage Works.**

### **Contact Officer:**

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