

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM 6

SOUTHERN WILTSHIRE AREA BOARD 17 DECEMBER 2009

Coombe Bissett Chalk Pit Site

Report

Wiltshire Council have identified the Chalk Pit site at Coombe Bissett as a possible site for disposal. Within the arrangements for asset disposal, as approved by Cabinet, the area boards are given the opportunity to identify potential alternative community uses for the sites or properties. Coombe Bissett and Homington Parish Council have approached the Southern Wiltshire Area Board to seek its support in securing affordable housing on the Chalk Pit site.

Specifically regarding Coombe Bissett, a housing needs survey was completed in 2007 (enclosed – appendix 1) which shows the need for affordable housing in the area. According to Gill Shell, who is Director of the Wiltshire Rural Housing Association, assuming:

1. That the site could fit 4 houses,
 2. That Wiltshire Council would allow WRHA to lease the site for 125 years on the same terms as the 2 sites that they are in the process of acquiring from them
 3. That grant funding is available
- WRHA would deem this site to be viable.

As part of this adopted process Strategic Property Services (SPS) will issue a report listing the properties, the views of service departments in relation to them, outlining informal planning advice where appropriate and advising of the proposals for sale. The Area Board manager will liaise with the relevant local Members on the board regarding their response.

Based on their local knowledge, the Area Board elected Members have an opportunity to consider whether there are any potential alternative Community uses for any of the properties. If not, the Area Board manager can announce that decision at the next meeting of the Area Board and refer the matter back to the SPS to enable the disposal process to begin.

If local Members believe there is a potential alternative Community opportunity which warrants further consideration, a period of 3 months will be made available for the Area Board Members to liaise with local partners and Community organisations and prepare a clear and reasoned case for the retention of the property for that purpose, assisted as necessary by Council officers. A report to that effect can then be submitted by the Area Board manager as a recommendation from the Area Board to

Cabinet. On receipt of this report, SPS, Legal and Finance officers comments will be appended to the report prior to it being formally considered by Cabinet, who will then make a final decision on the future of the property.

Where an alternative use is identified and agreed by Cabinet this will be taken forward by Strategic Property Services in conjunction with the Area Board Manager and Members, in accordance with the Community Asset Transfer Strategy.

This report, as outlined above, is yet to be received by the board. In preparation for the receipt of this report, the Chairman of the Southern Wiltshire area board would like this issue to be discussed at this meeting in order to set out the Southern Wiltshire Area Boards view in light of Coombe Bissett Parish Council's judgement that this site should be used for affordable housing.

Recommendation:

- 1) That the Southern Wiltshire area board recognises the need for more affordable housing in the area and therefore identifies affordable housing as a potential alternative community use for the site.

Reason for Proposal

This proposal would increase the supply of affordable housing to help meet a proven need.

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