

Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
Castle and Spinney Hill

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:
Cabinet

16 June 2003

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY CENTRE – ADDENDUM REPORT

Report of the Corporate Director of Housing

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 On 5th June 2003, the City Council resolved:

“That the decisions of the Cabinet in relation to the proposed Multi-Disciplinary Centre in Pocklington’s Walk be referred back to Cabinet with a recommendation that Cabinet reject the Pocklington’s Walk site and review alternative sites which could be utilized for the provision of the proposed Multi-Disciplinary Centre.”

1.2 This report seeks to guide Cabinet about the implications of the Council decision. A copy of the previous report and resolution of Cabinet is included in the Cabinet agenda.

2. Summary

2.1 The report explains the problems with the current location of the Nightshelter and the limits on it providing a future facility. It also describes a site on Conduit Street, which had previously been considered unsuitable on planning grounds.

3. Recommendations

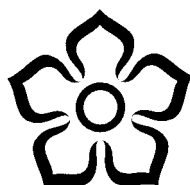
3.1 It is recommended that members agree a way forward in principle.

4. Headline Financial and legal Implications

4.1 If the Pocklington’s Walk site is not agreed, the property would need to be sold on to the open market or an alternative Council use found, which may vary the capital receipt previously anticipated. If the grant of £750k from the Rough Sleepers Unit is not spent by 31st March 2003, then we are currently advised it will be lost.

4.2 The costs of the scheme cannot be identified until a site has been agreed, scheme designed and costed. Funding will be basically the same as in the previous Cabinet report subject to the above comments about the £750k grant from the Rough Sleepers Unit.

- 4.3 Any decision to proceed with a new location for the facility will require planning permission. The Council's decision to pursue a scheme from a service point of view does not alter the distinct role the Council has to approve or not the planning application for that facility. The advice of the Planning Officer in respect of Conduit Street is included at paragraph 1.10 of the Supporting Information.



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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. Report

- 1.1 Leicester's Single Homeless Strategy 1999-2002 identified the need for a "one stop shop" for services for homeless people and, in the light of the inadequacy of the current Nightshelter and primary healthcare accommodation, the City Council and its partners proposed to create a new Multi-Disciplinary Centre for homeless people in Leicester. The aim is to create a range of opportunities for homeless people to achieve positive life changes towards stable integration with mainstream society.

The requirement is that the MDC will be a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary one stop shop, which will provide integrated and accessible services to homeless people. Health, Housing, Social Care and Health, Education and Benefits provision will be brought together, along with a voluntary sector run drop-in centre, in a One Stop Healthy Living Centre for homeless people. Services to be relocated include Nightshelter, Day Centre, Homeless Primary Healthcare Team (including Mental Health Outreach Workers). The Centre would also offer a wide range of other services to help homeless people resettle, create and sustain a home and take a constructive part in community life. These would include services such as literacy skills training, budgeting and money management, cookery, how to manage a tenancy, how to be a good neighbour, fitness training, relaxation, arts and drama.

- 1.2 Pocklington's Walk met the requirements of the scheme in full. However, the choice of site, rather than the scheme, was opposed by the business community and the Leicester Regeneration Company who perceived Pocklington's Walk to be part of the City Centre retail and leisure core.
- 1.3 The alternatives to Pocklington's Walk are to improve the current Nightshelter or find a new location.

- 1.4 The existing **Nightshelter** is to be subject to a full survey by the Council's Architectural professionals. This will cover dilapidation issues and consider Health and Safety issues and the needs of the Disability Discrimination Act. The rationale for this is that if no suitable Multi-Disciplinary Centre site can be found, at least the existing Nightshelter premises could be modernised. However, this would not meet the objectives of the proposed Multi-Disciplinary Centre in terms of joined up support to street homeless people.
- 1.5 The Nightshelter is currently located in a Grade II listed building and it may not be possible to provide the necessary wheelchair accessibility, lift, etc. to meet current standards. The modernisation work could also greatly reduce the possible numbers accommodated, having a negative impact on the numbers of people sleeping rough in the City. Currently 35-50 beds are available in the Nightshelter compared with 41-50 beds planned for the MDC and 20 beds if the Nightshelter were improved. The average nightly numbers in the Nightshelter are running at 41. It is estimated that full modernization would result in a loss of at least half of the number of bed spaces available. The Council would also lose £750k of funding from Government as this was targeted at a Multi-Disciplinary Centre not an improved Nightshelter. However it is estimated that the improvements could be restricted to the remaining budget previously identified for the Pocklington's Walk site.
- 1.6 Since the decision on 5th June, Property Services has undertaken an initial examination of Council owned sites / buildings within or adjacent to the Central Ring Road. A number of possibilities are currently being evaluated from cost, service and planning perspectives. The availability of privately owned sites / buildings is also being considered, but given the timescales involved this would be a high risk approach in that the MDC will require planning permission and vendors would be looking to sell unconditionally. If an alternative site is found, Cabinet approval will be sought. Within this context one site is worthy of further investigation because conditions have changed.
- 1.7 There is an acre of land in **Conduit Street** owned by the Council. It is currently part vacant and part used for car parking. A map showing the site location is included at Appendix A.
- 1.8 Planning advice had been that this land fell within the LRC Masterplan proposals and would encounter planning difficulties because the land was also zoned in the Local Plan for office and industry mix and subject to the Restricted Zones for Hostels and Residential Care Homes Policy.
- 1.9 The Leicester Regeneration Company's (LRC) position on Conduit Street is that their Masterplan indicates a diversion of one leg of the inner ring road via Swain Street bridge and Conduit Street. Diverting the ring road is fundamentally important to delivery of the Prime Office Core, but the actual alignment still remains to be resolved; Conduit Street was only a preliminary suggestion by the Masterplan consultants. It is certainly a fairly tortuous route, and there may be better alternatives.

These alternatives are being examined by LRC, and a firm recommendation will be made, as part of the detailed development framework for the Prime Office Core, which is now in progress. It is led by urban designers, Benoy, with Ove Arup providing the highway expertise, and is due to report in September. However, the first examination of

road options will take place before that and Council officers will continue to liaise with LRC on this matter to establish timescales, and potential difficulties.

1.10 Whether this location would meet with the Local Plan would be determined by the Councils Development Control Sub-Committee. Advice from the planning officer is that:

- Conduit Street is in the office core area and there would be a presumption against development unless certain criteria can be met – mainly whether the use proposed is a local facility for which there are no alternative sites available.
- The Restricted Zones for Hostels and Residential Care Homes policy would count against this location unless it could be demonstrated that there was an overriding need for this location – i.e. whether an exhaustive search had been carried out and failed to identify a suitable alternative.

1.11 From a service delivery point of view, the inter-agency partnership, who would manage the new Multi-Disciplinary Centre, consider that a new build scheme on the Conduit Street site would be a satisfactory alternative to Pocklington’s Walk.

1.12 A scheme for Conduit Street would need to be designed and costed within the current budget, planning approval would be required and building contractors engaged before work could start on site. The extent to which site works are progressed before 31st March 2003 would determine how much of the £750k Rough Sleepers Unit grant could be spent. Given the tight timescale involved, it is possible that the Council will lose some or all of the £750k grant from Government for this project.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph Within Supporting information	References
Equal Opportunities	Yes	4	
Policy	Yes	1.1	
Sustainable and Environmental			
Crime and Disorder			
Human Rights Act			
Elderly/People on Low Income	Yes	1.1	

2. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

None

3. Consultations

3.1 The Chief Financial Officer, Head of Legal Services and Planning Officers have been consulted on the report.

4. Aims and Objectives

The aim of the housing services is ***“a decent home within the reach of every citizen in Leicester”***.

This report contributes to that aim through objectives No. 4 ***“To enable all the citizens of Leicester to find and retain a home which suits their needs.”***

Specifically in relation to:

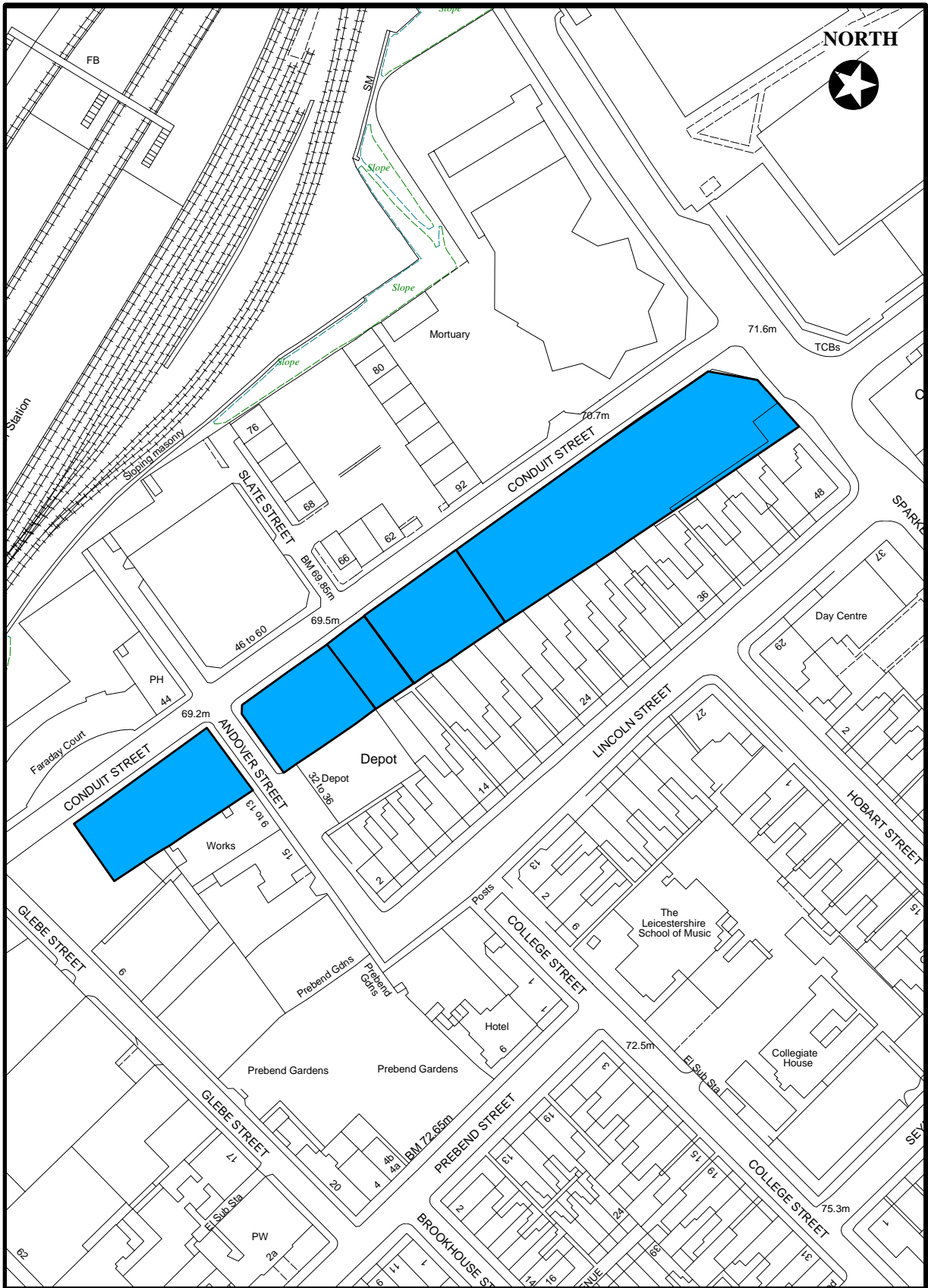
“preventing increases and reoccurring homelessness”

and

“Providing a multi-disciplinary approach to assist and act on the needs of single homeless”.

7. Report Author

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 CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF
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