	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Executive</b> <b>18 January 2010</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Report from the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources and Director of Children and Families</b></p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Ward Affected: Fryent</p>	
<p><b>Former Scouts Hall Site, Coniston Gardens, Kingsbury NW9</b></p>	

Forward Plan Ref: F&CR-09/10-8

**Not for publication ('below the line')**

Appendix 2 is not for publication

## **1.0 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report outlines options for the future use of the former scouts' hut site on 2 Coniston Gardens, NW9 OBB (adjacent to Oliver Goldsmith Primary School) to be either:
- a) Disposed of to a Housing Association to deliver two five bedroom affordable housing units for rent.
  - b) Retained in the council portfolio for use as an extended services facility
- and having considered the options makes recommendations to dispose of the site.
- 1.2 The Council received a petition on 23 January 2008 initiated by the Springfield Estate Residents Association. The petition was supported by 35 signatories and the prayer to the petition signified the opposition of the Association to the proposal to sell the site for re-development and instead proposed a community facility be developed which would be the headquarters for the association and be used to promote/facilitate local youth activities and other community facilities. The feasibility study undertaken by the Director of Children & Families and set out in more detail in the body of this report highlights the cost to the council of providing a community facility on this site and instead

identifies the proposed Kingsbury Intergenerational Centre as a more appropriate and planned initiative to the provision of community space and facilities in this area.

- 1.3 The scout hut site is not needed for future school or community educational purposes. There is a need for extended services generally in the area such as parenting support including family learning and study support, sport and music clubs. However, these will be provided more cost effectively at the new Kingsbury Intergenerational Centre, already funded and due to be completed in Autumn 2010, and a possible adaptation or extension to the existing Oliver Goldsmith school; the school can bid for grant of up to £25,000 from a DCSF fund of £816,000 available for bids from all schools in the Borough. In any case, there are no available capital resources for a freestanding community education building on the scout hut site. Further the proposed minimum size of the building for viability is considered to be out of scale with surrounding housing and would be an overdevelopment of the site. The Kingsbury Intergenerational Centre will provide for children, young people and the wider community.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That this site is disposed to a Housing Association on the terms set out in this report and on such other terms (including price) as considered appropriate by the Head of Property & Asset Management.

## **3.0 DETAIL**

### **3.1 The Site**

- 3.1.1 The site is situated at the junction of Coniston Gardens and Kenton Road and is shown on the attached location plan edged red.
- 3.1.2 A strip of land running along Kenton Lane has been designated for the potential future widening of Kenton Road. The proposals contained in this report preserves that potential.
- 3.1.3 The site is currently occupied by a hut that was formerly used by the Scouts Association. The Association vacated this site in 2007. The hut is in a derelict state and is beyond repair. The remainder of the site is overgrown with brambles, sycamore trees and weeds.
- 3.1.4 At the request of officers a Housing Association has obtained a topographical survey on the basis that they would pay for this and would be reimbursed if the Council should decide not to proceed with the sale of the site to them. As the site is banked in two directions this survey would be required whatever future development use of the site is determined by the Council.

### 3.2 Option A - The Proposals for Housing Development

- 3.2.1 The Housing Association's architects and Planning Services have reviewed a number of scheme proposals including apartment blocks of various scales. The Planning Service's recommendation is that a pair of semi-detached houses best replicates the form of the street and can be supported by suitable parking arrangements within the site.
- 3.2.2 The proposed scheme comprises 2 five bedroomed houses that can accommodate up to 9 persons each. There will be off-street parking and each house will have a private rear garden. The properties will be let on to Council nominees under an assured tenancy at affordable rents, which are regulated by the Tenants Services Authority.
- 3.2.3 The provision of two large family homes for rent is positively welcomed given the shortage of this type and size of accommodation in the borough. At present the Council has over 200 households registered on its waiting list that require five bedroom accommodation or larger, of which 18 households have an urgent or priority need for rehousing into suitable accommodation. Under the Council's current development programme, housing association partners are only expected to develop 2 newly built five bedroom homes over the next two years. The number of void properties available for reletting is also expected to reduce as the new supply of family housing diminishes. Given this, the provision of these two new large family units could assist the council create further voids in order to increase the number of households that can be rehoused into suitable accommodation.

### 3.3 The Disposal Process

- 3.3.1 Officers consider that if this option was pursued, the optimum means of ensuring that the Council receives best value consideration for the land is that sale contracts should be exchanged with the Housing Association which proposes to purchase the land on the basis of estimated costs and Social Housing Grant. Following the grant and issuing of planning consent, the Housing Association in question can undertake a tendering exercise to find a building contractor and the actual level of SHG can be confirmed by the HCA. The resulting residual land value can then be calculated accurately.
- 3.3.2 This process de-risks the planning process, which the Housing Association will need to finance, both architect's and planning fees. It de-risks the construction and related fees etc costs estimation as these can be obtained when the proposals have been fully developed. As a result the housing association will not need to allow any other than a very modest level of contingency pricing, thus maximising the value of the land.
- 3.3.3. As well as the land receipt, the S106 contributions set out below are likely to be payable. Details of the estimated land receipt are set out in Appendix 2.

### 3.4 s106 Requirements

- 3.4.1 It is anticipated that in determining the planning application for the development the Council will apply its standard affordable housing charge of £2,400 per bedroom to be expended on a range of works and initiatives that has still to be determined by planning officers. This contribution will total £24,400.
- 3.4.2 Planning policy does not support the loss of community facilities generally but has accepted their loss where compensatory provision is made either on site or elsewhere. The site does not lend itself to a mixed development and therefore a contribution towards replacement or improvement of other community facilities would be required. This could for example include a contribution towards improvements to school facilities but it could be used on other projects that provided or improved community facilities, usually in the local area. The council disposed of another former scouts hut site at Morland Gardens to a housing association. The specific community purposes s106 contribution resulting from this was £50,000 and although the other site was bigger and was able to accommodate a larger housing scheme, officers are working on the assumption that the same level of contribution will be required from this site.

### 3.5 Scheme Delivery

- 3.5.1 A Housing Association which is interested in taking forward the development has advised that following the Council's agreement to proceed with the disposal to them that their architect will need 4 weeks to produce the planning drawings, a further 4 to 6 weeks of finalising the drawings in conjunction with planning officers, 13 weeks to obtain a resolution to grant permission and 4 weeks to conclude a s106 agreement and for the planning consent to be issued. There will then be the 12 week period for any objector to seek a judicial review of the issuing of the planning consent. Once this period has expired and assuming that no judicial review commences the housing association will be able to complete the sale agreement. This adds up to 36 weeks, which means that the disposal will fall outside of the current financial year.
- 3.5.2 Confirming SHG, tendering the scheme and finalising the land value with the Council will all occur during the judicial review 10 week window.
- 3.5.3 Following the expiry of the judicial review "window" a Housing Association will be able to place a building contract with the successful tenderer. It is likely that the contractor will require 52 weeks to set up the site, obtain building supplies and commence and complete the works and landscaping.

### 3.6 Option B – The Proposals for Extended Services Use

#### Background

- 3.6.1 Oliver Goldsmith Primary School have voiced their preference for the subject site to be retained by the Council for education/ community facility, such as extended services/school use. This preference was reiterated in a letter dated 28 July 2009 from the school to the Director of Finance. This report demonstrates that this preference has been further explored by the Children and Families Department to consider first the feasibility of providing such a facility on the site and second how extended services could be provided for the community within the existing school facilities. It is considered that this feasibility study
- 3.6.2 In terms of statutory education, the school currently has two forms of entry and has no plan to expand pupil numbers. The current pressure for additional school places is not in the Kingsbury area.
- 3.6.3 This report focuses on the provision of Extended Services from this site. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) expects all schools to provide the Extended Services Core Offer by 2010. Schools are not expected to provide these services alone, or necessarily to deliver them on site. Instead, they should work in partnership with other schools and agencies, including voluntary and community organisations, signposting existing services where appropriate. The core offer is made up of five elements:
- childcare (in primary and special schools)
  - a varied menu of activities including study support, sport and music clubs
  - swift and easy access to targeted and specialist services
  - parenting support including family learning, and
  - community access to facilities including adult and family learning, ICT and sports facilities.
- 3.6.4 The Kingsbury Locality Partnership Board has identified leisure opportunities for young people and support for parents to raise young people's attainment as priorities for the locality. In the Fryent ward, where Oliver Goldsmith School is located, there are currently no static, regular youth clubs or sports clubs for children and young people. There is a need for additional facilities for extended services across the locality; primarily for parenting support including family learning, and for a varied menu of activities including study support, sport and music clubs. A development at Oliver Goldsmith Primary School could support improved community access to facilities including adult and family learning and ICT, subject to the school ensuring that these facilities are made available and accessed by parents and young people beyond their school population.

- 3.6.5 The Kingsbury Intergenerational Centre due to be developed on the site of Kingsbury High School (approved by the Executive in January 2009 as part of the phase 3 Children's Centre programme) is due to be completed in Autumn 2010 and will provide significant additional facilities for this locality with opportunities to develop many, if not all, of these activities.

#### Proposal

- 3.6.6 A feasibility study of the Coniston Gardens site carried out with the school shows that the required accommodation for a new extended services facility would take up 75% of the site area and leave a small external area. The building foot print generated would be larger than the existing scout hall and the architects view is that it is likely to be considered to be out of scale with the surrounding housing and represent an over development of the site. The estimated total cost of the proposal to create a new build extended services facility is £725,000. The facility would provide a hall, training room, kitchen, small office and WCs. This is not recommended as an option as without additional sources of capital funding from the school it is not economically feasible.
- 3.6.7 All of the schools in Kingsbury are fully extended core offer schools, however there is still the need for improved opportunities to access recreational activities, childcare and parent support for young people and their families across Kingsbury. A new build extended services facility would enable a full and varied menu of activities for young people to take place including sports, dance, art and drama, and community groups such as brownies and scouts. It would provide a facility for parenting groups, adult education and family learning. The facility would also allow increased capacity of before and after-school, and holiday childcare provision if staffing and resources were in place for increased delivery. It is proposed that the school would manage the building as part of the school site and would manage the use of it, working with the Locality Co-ordinator and other partners in the locality, to ensure that service providers use the facility to meet the needs of local young people and their families. This would require the school having the significant operational resources required to ensure that the facility was available before, during and after school, during the evenings, at weekends and through school holidays. The school would also require the capacity to seek out and forge partnerships with the third sector to ensure the full potential and added value of the facility was reached. A full business case has not been prepared. In the event that the building was not used to capacity it could be used by the school for a range of other curriculum-led activities. The building could be available for community use throughout the week and in particular at evenings and weekends; subject to the school having the resources to ensure that it was utilised.



3.6.8 An options appraisal has also been undertaken to review how additional extended services could be provided within the existing school facilities. The first option covers adaptations to an existing room to create a designated training/parents room with additional kitchenette facility. This space could be used for training courses for parents and staff, parenting groups and cook and eat sessions as well as for the existing range of school based activities such as governors meetings, reading volunteers and school council meetings. This provision for parents is a key part of the extended services offer and the locality would benefit from increased opportunities for parent support. This option is estimated to cost £45,000. The second option is to provide a new build extension in the courtyard including a training room, small consultation room, kitchen and WC. Once parents have entered the building this would be a relatively self contained space so access and security would be easier to manage. This option is estimated to cost £210,000. This option allows for the same services to be provided as option one but has less impact on the school and allows the existing meeting room to be retained additionally for school use. Again, the accessibility for parents from the school, and from the wider community, will be subject to the school having the operational resources to make the facility available, and the links with the local community to encourage them to utilise the facility.

### Conclusion

Following an evaluation of the scheme, officers concluded that a stand alone development on this site would not represent best value for money. In arriving at this assessment officers considered the sheer scale of the proposed building together with the associated construction costs (£725,000) when set against other potential solutions in this locality such as the Kingsbury Inter-generational Centre and a possible extension of the existing Oliver Goldsmith Primary School.

## **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The capital receipt derived from the sale of the land will contribute towards achieving the Council's overall disposals programme target and will therefore provide resources to the Council's capital programme.
- 4.2 In respect of the extended services proposal, the local authority has a capital grant from DCSF to support the provision of extended services. In 2009-2011 this grant totals £816,677. This funding could be used to support any of the options for extended services provision described above. However, all schools were invited to express an interest in receiving a grant from this allocation to support their provision of extended services. Bids were received from 29 schools before the deadline of 27<sup>th</sup> November 2009. The bids totalled £941,909 and the majority of these bids met the eligibility criteria. In addition to this total,

three bids were received from Oliver Goldsmith; one for £25,000, one for £200,000 and one for £700,000.

## **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The Council has the power under Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 to dispose of land in its ownership. However, when it disposes of a freehold interest, it must do so for the best consideration reasonably obtainable unless it obtains the consent of the Secretary of State to a disposal at a lesser value. However, in this case the Head of Property and Asset Management is satisfied that a disposal to a registered social landlord for the construction of affordable housing, will achieve the best consideration reasonably obtainable, since in current market conditions, a disposal for open market housing would not generate a higher receipt.

## **6.0 DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 None.

## **7.0 STAFFING/ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 None.

## **8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

8.1 Location Plan attached at appendix 1.

### **Contact Officers**

Richard Barrett, Head of Property & Asset Management  
Cheryl Painting, Capital Projects Manager, Children's Centres


Duncan McLeod  
Director of Finance and Corporate  
Resources

John Christie  
Director of Children and Families





**Scout Hut, Coniston Gardens**




**BRENT  
COUNCIL**

**PREPARED BY PROPERTY  
& ASSET MANAGEMENT**

**"Unlocking the Potential"**

**1:500**

**NORTH**



Reproduced from Ordnance Survey mapping data with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office (c) Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
 London Borough of Brent, 100025260, 2008