

Executive
22 April 2021

Title: Review of Assets at Adelaide Bridge / Clubland
Lead Officer: Russell Marsden
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Jan Matecki
Public report / Confidential report: Public
Wards of the District directly affected:

Contrary to the policy framework: No
 Contrary to the budgetary framework: No
 Key Decision: Yes
 Included within the Forward Plan: Yes
 Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken: No
 Consultation & Community Engagement: Yes
 Final Decision: No
 Accessibility checked: Yes

Officer/Councillor Approval

| Officer Approval | Date | Name |
|--|-------------|------------------|
| Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive | 01.04.21 | Bill Hunt |
| Head of Service | 05.03.21 | S Partner |
| CMT | 01.04.21 | |
| Section 151 Officer | 01.04.21 | Mike Snow |
| Monitoring Officer | 01.04.21 | Andy Jones |
| Finance | 01.04.21 | Victoria Bamber |
| Portfolio Holder(s) | 01.04.21 | Cllr Jan Matecki |

1. Summary

- 1.1 Warwick District Council owns the freehold to the Adelaide Road/ Clubland site that incorporates eight buildings (& a sub-station) held by a variety of third party interests comprised of long leaseholds and traditional leases, a number of which are nearing expiry.
- 1.2 This, combined with the poor condition and general aesthetic value of a number of the properties has given the Council the opportunity to undertake a review of the site.
- 1.3 Appendix One to this report provides a general overview of the site, a review of lease interests and a summary of the condition of the built assets. It also sets out a review of each organisation, currently occupying a property on the site, future aspirations and an assessment of how those aspirations might affect the available options for how the site is used in the future.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Executive notes the contents of Appendix One.
- 2.2 That Executive agrees that officers investigate the mechanism, financial & strategic context of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association acquiring the Former-RNA site in order to refurbish or redevelop the site, with findings to be presented to a future Executive meeting and that in the mean-time the Council offers to extend the existing lease by 5 years
- 2.3 That Executive requests further detail from the Royal Leamington Spa Canoe Club to support their aspiration to acquire their current site for refurbishment or redevelopment with findings to be presented to a future Executive meeting and that in the mean-time the Council offers to extend the existing lease by 5 years.
- 2.4 That, subject to approval of recommendation 2.1, Executive agrees that Leamington LAMP is advised of its intent, with a view to LAMP being encouraged to relocate to off-site accommodation more appropriate for an Independent School, assisted where possible by the District and County Council and in the mean-time Council offers to extend the existing lease by 5 years.
- 2.5 That the Executive agrees that the Council continues to work with the Leamington & Warwick Sea Cadets in view of their existing lease end date (2027) and expansion plans potentially involving the neighbouring Sub Aqua Club site.
- 2.6 That Executive agrees that the Council explores how to expand existing river access from the north bank by examining and revising existing demises or future leases.
- 2.7 That Executive agrees that the long term benefits and mechanisms of a Community Asset Transfer are investigated and the findings reported back to a future meeting.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

3.1 Recommendation 2.1

3.1.1 The recommendations in this report have been agreed by the Council's Asset Steering Group, based on the information set out in Appendix One.

3.2 Recommendation 2.2: Ahmadiyya Muslim Association (AMA)

3.2.1 The Ahmadiyya Muslim Association has occupied Site 3 (Figure 1 on the attached document) since 2007 when the former Warwickshire Clubs for Young People was sold on long-lease and subject to significant works to provide a new Mosque funded by the Association. They have also occupied the Former-RNA (Site 2, Figure 1) since 2018, where an opportunity to take a short lease (allowing for an outcome of the Creative Quarter project) which enabled expansion of AMA's activities (to include major functions, meeting spaces, activities for women, a public Islamic exhibition centre and potential accommodation for a local Imam).

3.2.2 The AMA calculate they have undertaken works to a value of around £25,000 since taking the lease, with the Council having spent a further £20,000 to resolve historic defects, install a fire alarm and resolve compartmentation issues.

3.2.3 A statement of intent has been provided by the Association, with proposals for the future use of the Former-RNA building, providing benefits to the local Ahmadiyyan Muslim community as well as other local community groups. Specific reference is made to seeking agreement to allow LAMP to continue their use of the building.

3.2.4 Whilst the AMA understand that there is interest in the Former-RNA site from other organisations, they also believe that some assurances have been given by the Council regarding their future on this site, with the consolidated benefit with their existing building (Site 3) already presenting proof of concept.

3.2.5 At present it would seem that the Association believes their only solution is the acquisition of Site 2 on a long term basis, either as a 99-year lease or freehold purchase. They would like to redevelop the site via refurbishment or rebuild with funding for such an opportunity is likely to come from the AMA UK.

3.3 Recommendation 2.3: Royal Leamington Spa Canoe Club (RLSCC)

3.3.1 They have been located on the site since early 1970s, and currently have circa 250 members, with an aspiration to expand membership.

3.3.2 It is a highly successful club with important community outreach and vision to become a leading centre of excellence within UK with a significant history in national and international racing and it is part of the UK talent pathway programme. They have highlighted that their current location (Site 4, Figure 1) is ideal for access into various stretches of the River Leam, enabling a wide variety of canoeing activities and have confirmed that the

Former-RNA building (Site 2), at a higher elevation above the river, which is far less suited to their activities, as such is not part of their future plans.

3.3.3 The club is looking to expand membership and enhance access to the river including improved facilities for para canoeing and the current building is no longer fit for purpose if club is to expand as it requires additional storage and welfare facilities plus general refurbishment and Mechanical & Electrical upgrades.

3.3.4 The club has an aspiration to expand current pontoons/ jetties alongside Sites 2 and 3 (the AMA, Former-RNA) and perhaps Site 5 (St Patrick's Irish Club) if agreement can be reached and a draft Business Plan has been shared, including concept drawings to add an additional floor level to the current site plus other refurbishments. In order to do so, the club indicate the need for the gift of the freehold or a long-leasehold at a minimal / peppercorn rent but the current document amounts to more of a statement of intent and would require substantially more detail regarding costs for redevelopment, funding strategies etc. before the Council could make a final decision.

3.3.5 However, the limited remaining lease term (currently less than 1yr, secured tenure) has hindered the club's funding opportunities.

3.4 Recommendation 2.4: Leamington LAMP

3.4.1 LAMP has been a tenant since 2012, and is an alternative education provider for young people with autism or high anxiety and is currently seeking Independent School status.

3.4.2 Its existing building running to capacity, with additional teaching and examination space licenced from Site 2 (the AMA in the Former RNA building).

3.4.3 Development of the existing building to increase space and range of teaching facilities (requisite in terms of future expansion of age groups, numbers and requirements of an Independent School curriculum) is limited by planning constraints in a conservation area and of the existing building layout (which is long and thin).

3.4.4 LAMP has approached the Council to move to or expand operation into the Former RNA Club but acknowledge that there are limited funds available to refurbish the Former-RNA into an educational establishment (Appendix 4, Atkins study commissioned by the Council has suggested circa £1.6M to meet Building Bulletin (BB) 104 standards). Their Business Case, provided to the Council in 2018 regarding their plans for the Former-RNA, was more a statement of intent, arguably lacking clear financial, redevelopment, and asset management data but suggests that current short lease terms on LAMP building has limited their access to funding.

3.4.5 LAMP have been open to the prospect of moving to more suitable premises off-site, though market rents appear unaffordable. The Council has assisted with meeting with WCC's One Public Estate team.

3.5 Recommendation 2.5: Leamington & Warwick Sea Cadets (LWSC)

3.5.1 LWSC has been in existence for over 75 years, having had a presence in Clubland for 50 years and they effectively run a Sea Cadets 'franchise' existing as an independent charity, with trustees overseeing the groups own assets, finances and development.

3.5.2 The Marine Society and Sea Cadets (MSSC) provides advice to the group regarding property matters and fundraising, whilst also providing small funds for annual maintenance if required.

3.5.3 The Sea Cadets previously occupied Site 6: LAMP, vacating this space during a drop in membership with the currently occupied building having been leased in when the Sub Aqua club moved out and currently have 35 members between the ages of 10 to 18 years, and 15 volunteers. Numbers have dropped slightly during non-active recruitment due to COVID-19, but the Sea Cadets are keen to expand their numbers.

3.5.4 The current building houses a first floor meeting room (or Main Deck - capacity for just about 35 members) and classroom facilities, WCs, showers and changing facilities. There is limited disabled access, with only stair access to the first floor and the meeting space is not large enough to undertake a marching drill, with external areas around the Sea Cadets building, providing an alternative in good weather.

3.5.5 The group submitted proposals to expand the current building over the adjacent Sub Aqua Club garage in order to provide additional space. Planning permission was granted. This was deemed to be the best option at the time for expansion but work did not proceed following the inclusion of Clubland into the Cultural Quarter project (since excluded, giving uncertainty regarding the future of Clubland). In addition to this, a lack of clarity regarding permission to build above the Sub Aqua garage (with whom productive discussions were held), lead to a loss of available grant funding.

3.4.6 The group has invested in the existing building, having undertaken roof repairs, the installation of PV panels, new WCs, showers, a kitchen, replacement windows and internal decorations and the Sea Cadets still have an aspiration to expand the floor space of the existing building or relocate to another building, though their preference is to remain in the Clubland area.

3.5.7 The Sea Cadets have a long history of working in the community to help young people, including those from a disadvantaged background, develop in a safe and friendly environment. An external impact assessment report has recently been published that details their successes in this area.

3.6 Recommendation 2.6: Explore how to expand river access from the north bank

3.6.1 Improved access to the river could be mediated by improvements to the north bank of the Leam that borders the Clubland site and the addition of specialist pontoons and jetties would enhance access for disabled persons.

Such improvements would be significantly enhanced by the proposals to introduce a new 'Commonwealth Bridge' linking the adjacent Riverside Walk and Adelaide Road sites to Victoria Park and Bowls Pavilion.

3.6.2 An associated bank-side habitat management plan would enable the maintenance of the built assets alongside the adjacent habitat.

3.6.3 The Environment Agency have confirmed that a bespoke flood risk activity permit would be necessary for such work.

3.7 Recommendation 2.7: Investigate the long term benefits of a Community Asset Transfer

3.7.1 This would involve a review with the long term aim to transfer the Council held Clubland assets via a Community Asset Transfer.

3.7.2 This would transfer of management/ ownership at less than market value to enable regeneration of the area given that Planned and Preventative Maintenance liabilities appear to exceed asset valuations.

4. Policy Framework

4.1 Fit for the Future (FFF)

The Council's FFF Strategy is designed to deliver the Vision for the District of making it a Great Place to Live, Work and Visit. To that end amongst other things the FFF Strategy contains several Key projects.

The FFF Strategy has 3 strands, People, Services and Money, and each has an external and internal element to it, the details of which can be found on the Council's website. The table below illustrates the impact of this proposal if any in relation to the Council's FFF Strategy.

4.2 FFF Strands

External impacts of proposal(s)

People - Health, Homes, Communities – The Adelaide Road / Clubland location and associated assets is the home to a number of diverse organisations but all of which have a common theme of providing facilities and services to key sections of the local community.

Services - Green, Clean, Safe – The proposals contained in this report aim to facilitate access to external funds and security for a number of organisations, and of any plans to upgrade existing assets would take in to account the need for additional energy efficiency with the aim to move towards the Council's aim of emissions within Warwick District are as close to zero as possible by 2030.

Money- Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment – The aim is to nurture and support a vibrant and diverse community based facility Internal impacts of the proposal(s)

People - Effective Staff – - N/A

Services - Maintain or Improve Services – The proposals would aim to securing and developing community based services for the benefit of the District and wider community.

Money - Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term – The proposals in this report seek to reduce the financial impact of future maintenance and upkeep of existing assets whilst enabling organisations to access external funds through additional length of tenure or asset disposal.

4.3 Supporting Strategies

Each strand of the FFF Strategy has several supporting strategies and the relevant ones for this proposal are Contained in the Asset Management Strategy.

4.4 Changes to Existing Policies

This report proposes the adoption of a new Strategy.

4.5 Impact Assessments

N/A

5. Budgetary Framework

- 5.1.** There are no specific budget implications in this document other than extension of leases provides continuation of rental / lease income.

6. Risks

- 6.1.** Risks include one or more important community based services and organisations are lost to the district with potential for increased liability for premises upgrades falling on the Council.
- 6.2.** Also potential for lost income if organisations are forced to leave / close.
- 6.3.** Longer term proposals for a Community Asset Transfer would help to secure the future of community organisations whilst reducing potential liability falling on the Council.

7. Alternative Option(s) considered

- 7.1.** Continuation of short term lease arrangements. This would have the downside of not providing organisations with the security of tenure needed to secure external funding.