

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Securing Land for Leisure Use (Minehead)

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Members Cllr Marcus Kravis and Cllr Derek Perry

1.0 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The Council has a standing contractual arrangement with Sport Leisure Management (SLM) trading as Everyone Active to deliver leisure services for Somerset West and Taunton Council. The provision of leisure infrastructure is focussed within the former boundary of Taunton Deane Borough Council. The Council underwrite the delivery of two (2) swimming pools within that contract. The Council do not currently have a role in swimming pool delivery within the former area of West Somerset Council.
- 1.2 Since the closure of the West Somerset Council swimming pool in Minehead there has been considerable local interest to bring forward a replacement for that lost facility.

2.0 Land Request¹

- 2.1 The land in question is a parcel of land in Minehead at the junction of Bircham Road and Seaward Way. In total the site covers approximately 8000 m². As shown below at Annex A.
- 2.2 The site is not allocated in the adopted West Somerset Local Plan 2016 (WSLP) which sets out the proposals for growth in the West Somerset area up to 2032. Whilst the site is a green, grassed area containing mature trees, it is not designated as amenity land. There is no relevant planning history for the site save for an Article 4 Direction which restricts the use of the land to the use of the land for not more than 14 days in total for the purposes of the holding of markets. It should be noted that the northern half of the site is in the Tidal Flood Zone 3A and Fluvial Flood Zone 3 and therefore a Sequential Test will be required to establish if this is the most appropriate location for any development in the context of that half the site being in Flood Zone 3 and an Exceptions Test may be required. The site is also in a sensitive location being near to the Exmoor National Park Boundary and near Dunster Marshes Local Wildlife Site.
- 2.3 The relevant policies in the WSLP which would need to be considered in any proposal for a swimming pool on this site are: Policy CF1: Maximising Access to Health, Sport, Recreation and Cultural Facilities; Policy CC2: Flood Risk Management Policy NH8: Protection of Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land Policy NH14 Nationally Designated Landscape; Policy NH6: Nature Conservation and the Protection and enhancement of Biodiversity; Policy SC5: Self Containment of Settlements; Policy MD1: Minehead/Alcombe Development and Policy TR2: Reducing Reliance on the Private Car.

¹ Planning Background shown at Annex B

- 2.4 To support the Local Plan the former West Somerset Council commissioned the Sport and Recreation Facilities Assessment 2012. This commented that “*There remains a community desire to see a new 25m 4-6 lane swimming pool in Minehead... However, there is no new evidence to suggest that the conclusions of the swimming pool feasibility study [undertaken in 2010], have changed: i.e. that even if a pool could be built, it would not be financially viable to run... The network of small pools has filled the gap, to a large degree, of community group needs...Work should continue to help ensure that privately run pools support the network of pools by allowing an increasing use of their pools for the community. In addition, efforts should continue to improve accessibility and capacity (in terms of physical access and extending opening hours where possible)*”.
- 2.5 The land is recorded in the fixed asset register with a value of £45,000 as at 31 March 2021.
- 2.6 In terms of alternative locations Minehead is challenging, being bounded by the sea on one side and the hills of Exmoor National Park on two others. Somerset West and Taunton Council has limited land holding following West Somerset Council’s programme of disposals. Potential alternative sites:
- 2.6.1 The Coach Park to the rear of Station Car Park has a restriction on the title restricting its use for parking. The total area is approximately 2,300m².
- 2.6.2 The Council has land at Seaward Way with planning permission for 54 dwellings. That land being identified for social housing to be held in the HRA.
- 2.6.3 The Sawmills site on Mart Road is not owned by Somerset West and Taunton Council.

List of Annexes

Annex A



Annex B



Planning history for Article 4 Direction.pdf
land adjacent to Ellico

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