

NORTH DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE

DATE: 3rd DECEMBER 2003

REQUEST TO LEASE COUNCIL OWNED LAND

LOCATION: PLAYING FIELD AT CENTRAL DRIVE, COSELEY

(As shown on the plan attached)

BACKGROUND

A report regarding this application was submitted to the North Dudley Area Committee at its meeting on the 23rd October 2003 where it was deferred pending a site visit. A verbal briefing on the site visit will be presented to the Committee at its meeting on the 3rd December 2003.

A request has been received from Coseley Town Football Club to lease the Playing field at Central Drive, Coseley for a term of 25 years. The Club would be responsible for the operation and maintenance of the site and would create a community amateur sports club in Coseley. Few organisations with their own facilities exist in this area. It is anticipated that once the club has control of their own ground, additional funding and sponsorship would be forthcoming. The proposal will result in land that is being under utilised being restored for the benefit of all the community.

The land was purchased for housing purposes in 1957, though it was formerly used for football pitches. The land was treated for contamination in 1988 by way of a derelict land grant and has subsequently been out of use for football. It has been used for the last 15 years as Public Open Space. The reclamation work was completed with a 100% grant from the Government. Under the terms of the agreement some or all of the money may have to be repaid.

The land has been enclosed with a fence and access has been via pedestrian and vehicle gates in Martin Close. The pedestrian gate was open until recently. However, due to anti-social behaviour on the site, it was requested that the gate be locked. No complaints have been received since access to the site has been stopped.

COMMENTS

All the relevant Council Departments have been consulted.

The Directorate of Law and Property has advised that as the land is laid out and maintained as public open space, any disposal of either part or all by way of a sale or a lease is subject to Section 123(a) of the Local Government Act 1972, which requires that the Council, prior to any disposal, to advertise notice of its intention to do so for two consecutive weeks in a newspaper circulating in the area in which the land is situated and to consider any objections which may be made. The applicant is required to bear the cost of advertising.

The Directorate of Housing, whilst having no objection to the proposal, has stated that account will have to be taken of local tenants. A good proportion of local tenants are mature and elderly people. There are also concerns regarding parking in the area and off street parking would have to be provided.

The Directorate the Urban Environment have stated that they support clubs desires to develop such independent facilities in order that they can progress as clubs up the football league structure. They have the opportunity to access Football Foundation funding to improve facilities. As the existing site is currently out of commission this proposal would bring the open space back into use for a positive sporting purpose – this would be unlikely to happen directly through the local authority, as there will be higher priorities for funding of existing facilities.

The Directorate of the Urban Environment have also recommended that the Council's approval be sought for any future works on this land. As part of the remediation scheme a capping layer was added, no ground disturbance or excavations should be carried out without first gaining permission of the council.

The Director of Finance has advised that as no Council funds will be used in implementing the proposal and as the land is currently used as Public Open Space the proposal has no cost to the Council.

PROPOSAL

That the Area Committee advises the Lead Member for Housing to approve the application to lease the land on terms and conditions to be negotiated and agreed by the Director of Law and Property. The lease would be subject to the public open space advertising procedure, planning permission and any clawback by English Partnership would have to be paid for by Coseley FC.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Letter from the applicant dated 8th February, 29th August, & 16th September 2003.
2. Letters, memos and e-mails from the Director of Law & Property dated 5th & 20th March, 28th August, 1st & 16th September 2003.
3. Memos and e-mails from the Directorate of the Urban Environment dated 8th February, 18th July, 20th August, 1st, 8th, 9th, 16th, 17th, 24th & 26th September 2003.
4. E-mail from Directorate of Housing dated 15th September 2003.
5. E-mail from the Directorate of Finance dated 26th September 2003.

Contact Officer: Alan Nugent, Property Manager, and Ext 5351.