

Report of:	Kevin Parkes - Executive Director of Growth and Place Councillor Ashley Waters - Executive Member for Regeneration
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Submitted to:	Executive - 16 June 2020
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Subject:	Land at Nature’s World, Sandy Flatts Lane, Middlesbrough
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Summary

This report seeks a decision from the Executive about consulting residents on the future of land at Nature’s World, Sandy Flatts Lane, Middlesbrough.

Proposed decision(s)
It is recommended that Executive approves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to consult residents on the options for the future use of land at Nature’s World, Sandy Flatts Lane, Middlesbrough.

Report for:	Key decision:	Confidential:	Is the report urgent?¹
This report seeks a decision from the Executive about the future of land at Nature’s World, Sandy Flatts Lane, Middlesbrough.	Yes	This report is not confidential.	For the purpose of the call-in procedure, this report is not urgent.

Contribution to delivery of the 2018-22 Strategic Plan		
Business Imperatives	Physical Regeneration	Social Regeneration
We will introduce a new era of Council transparency and openness, giving local communities a real say in the future of the town, and how	We will make Middlesbrough look and feel amazing, working closely with local communities to make sure that our roads,	We will ensure our town is an absolute leader on environmental issues, working with local people to protect and create public

¹ Remove for non-Executive reports

our services are developed and delivered.	streets and open spaces are well-designed, clean and safe, and revitalising unused buildings and heritage assets.	and green spaces, and promote sustainable lifestyles.
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Ward(s) affected
The land is in Kader Ward

What is the purpose of this report?

1. This report seeks a decision from the Executive about consulting residents on the future of land at Nature’s World, Sandy Flatts Lane, Middlesbrough.

Why does this report require a Member decision?

2. The report requires an Executive decision, as per the Council’s scheme of delegation.

Report Background

3. The Nature’s World site closed in 2013 and the lease was surrendered back to the Council. Middlesbrough Environment City (MEC) lease part of the site and some of the site is used informally by the community including the Friends of Nature’s World volunteers. Friends of Nature’s World have informally used gardens and tea room on the Natures World site as a workshop/base since 2014.
4. Some preliminary investigations have taken place to help understand what is possible including a flood risk assessment undertaken in 2016 and a preliminary ecological appraisal in January 2019.
5. In the current Local Plan the sites are covered by Green Wedge and Open Space designations meaning that there are planning constraints. The potential school site is considered acceptable under Planning.
6. The site is large, approximately 5.1 hectares. Some of the plots within the site have emerging proposals for their future use and these are explained below. Consultation is needed to determine the future of the land. Appendix One shows the sites discussed in this report.
7. Friends of Natures World have submitted a proposal to Middlesbrough Council to use the part of the site they currently use on a more formal basis. This is to allow them to apply for larger funding opportunities, have greater security for the future and to explore the possibility of opening a community cafe.
8. Site One on Appendix One is seen as being important to maintaining views from Ladgate Lane across the Green Wedge/Municipal Golf Course. In Planning terms any form of residential development would not be considered acceptable in this location in the near future. There is also the complication of a high-pressure gas main running through the site which would limit any potential development of the site.

9. Site Two on Appendix One is the garden centre site. The freehold is owned by the Council but there is a ground lease of 125 years from 1st July 1989. It had the benefit of planning permission for a nursing home, albeit now expired, and the site is already partially developed as a garden centre. Given its' location adjacent to existing residential development on Sandy Flatts Lane it is considered that potential residential development could be considered.
10. Site Three on Appendix One has possible potential for residential development adjacent to the proposed school subject to planning considerations mentioned earlier in the report. Development of this site would enable some funds released from the sale to be invested in the former Nature's World site for community uses. Any potential residential development of Site Three would need to be sympathetic to the neighbouring community use and proposed school. Higher levels of environmental sustainability (eco homes) and energy efficiency should be considered.
11. Site Four is proposed for a school site, the Discovery Special Academy. The Executive Sub-Committee for Property approved the disposal of the proposed school site on 23rd January 2019. The school will provide specialist education provision for up to 84 children aged 4 to 11 with complex needs. The proposal for a school is acceptable in Planning terms, in principle, due to it being a specific exceptional form of development allowable under the existing policy. There is a shortage of places for children with complex needs.
12. It is proposed that public consultation is undertaken to determine resident's views on the potential future use of the site. If the Executive approves this decision a localised letter drop to properties nearby will be undertaken and the Council's website, social media and press releases will be utilised to engage with the wider public. If this is undertaken during the current Covid-19 situation additional time will need to be factored in to the consultation due to delays with postage of letters and receipt of replies.

What decision(s) are being asked for?

13. It is recommended that Executive approves:

to consult residents on the options for the future use of land at Nature's World, Sandy Flatts Lane, Middlesbrough.

Why is this being recommended?

14. The Council is committed to openness and transparency and giving local communities a say in how services are developed and delivered.
15. The subject has not been examined by the Overview and Scrutiny Board or by a Scrutiny Panel.

Other potential decisions and why these have not been recommended

16. Take no action. This will mean that the site continues to operate on an informal arrangement with limited community access and maintenance. It will not provide a long-term solution for the site.

Impact(s) of recommended decision(s)

Legal

17. The legal implications will be clearer when the consultation is completed and the options for the future of the site examined.

Financial

18. The consultation exercise will be undertaken within existing budgets.

19. The financial implications will be clearer when the consultation is completed and the options for the future of the site examined.

Policy Framework

20. The Council is committed to openness and transparency and giving local communities a say in how services are developed and delivered.

Equality and Diversity

21. There is no detrimental impact on a protected group.

22. An Equality Impact Assessment can be found as Appendix Two.

Risk

23. The risk if pro-active views on the future of the site are not taken is that it could continue to deteriorate and degrade.

Actions to be taken to implement the decision(s)

24. The public consultation will commence in June 2020 with a letter drop to neighbouring properties. Information about how members of the public can provide their comments on future use of the site will be placed on the Council's website. Social media channels will be used to promote the consultation and there will be a press release to mark the start of the consultation.

25. The results of the consultation will be presented to Executive in September 2020.

Appendices

Appendix One – Plan

Appendix Two – Equality Impact Assessment

Background papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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