

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT

Decision Made: 10 June 2011

MAIDSTONE CEMETERY - SUPERVISOR'S HOUSE DISPOSAL

Issue for Decision

To consider the freehold disposal of The Supervisor's House and garden (the property), at the Maidstone Cemetery.

Decision Made

1. That the property, as shown on the plan set out at Appendix A of the report of the Assistant Director of Environment and Regulatory Services, be declared non operational.
2. That the Director of Change, Planning and the Environment be given delegated authority to place a public notice pursuant to Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 in respect of the disposal of open space and that any objections or representations which might be received in response to the advertisement be considered by me.
3. That the final decision on disposal be made when the property has been advertised as a disposal of open space and any representations have been considered.

Reasons for Decision

The property is located adjacent to the cemetery car park and access is currently via the main entrance gates to the cemetery. The property has an extensive garden and the rear boundary wall backs onto Pheasant Lane with another boundary adjacent to the cemetery grounds.

The property was originally provided as an on site residence for the cemetery supervisor. The supervisor retired approximately ten years ago, but remained in the property fulfilling a gate locking duty. The property is now vacant and the gate locking duties have been absorbed into the general operation and management of the site and there is no specific need identified for an on-site employee.

The building is a Hawthorn Leslie steel framed detached house with an integral garage. These buildings were developed in the mid 1960's and are basic in design and in quality of construction. The cemetery house is not in a good condition and it would require considerable funds to bring it up to an acceptable modern condition and this is considered uneconomical.

Consequently, as there is no operational requirement for the property, it is considered that disposal of the property's freehold by way of a private treaty arrangement would be the best option at the earliest opportunity to avoid any on going maintenance issues, subject to the following.

1. The consideration of any response to a Section 123 (Local Government Act 1972) public notice advertising the intention to dispose of public open space.
2. Appropriate consents for the disposal/demolition being obtained.
3. The production of a development brief.

It is envisaged that any development brief would include the demolition of the house and consideration for a number of dwellings to be built on the available land and for access to be achieved via Pheasant Lane or by realigning the main entrance to the cemetery.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

The property occupies land that adjoins the cemetery and one alternative for its use would be to demolish the house and integrate the land holding into the cemetery to provide burial space in the future. The potential future demand for grave space at the cemetery has been reviewed and based on the present usage trends and the number of available new grave plots indicates that there is a minimum of fifty years space available. There is also the likelihood that within this time frame burial legislation will change due to the acute shortages experienced, especially in the London boroughs, to allow other ways to extend the use of the current land bank in cemeteries therefore removing the need for burial authorities to provide more ground for burial in the future. It is not considered necessary, or appropriate, at this time to secure the land for future burial use.

Currently there is a wooden site hut located in the cemetery close to the main entrance and car park. This hut is used as the base for the Maidstone Borough Services ground staff working in the cemetery. The hut provides very basic facilities and does not have any mains drainage. Upgrading this facility, or providing an alternative, would be desirable although this is estimated to cost in excess of £50,000. However, it is not considered that the Supervisor's house would be a suitable alternative due to the problems reported above and the potentially high cost to undertake the necessary upgrading.

Background Papers

Cemetery burial records – held in the Bereavement Services office at the Vinters Park Crematorium.

Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call in form signed by any two Non-Executive Members to the Head of Change and Scrutiny by: 17 June 2011
