

The Warwick District Council
(Leper Hospital Site, Saltisford, Warwick) Compulsory Purchase
Order 2021

Reference APP/PCU/CPOP/T3725/3268581

SUMMARY PROOF OF EVIDENCE
OF
ANDREW JONES OF WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL
ON BEHALF OF THE ACQUIRING AUTHORITY

1. Introduction

- 1.1. My name is Andrew Jones. I hold a Chartered Qualification of The Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation.
- 1.2. I am the Deputy Chief Executive at Warwick District Council (“the Council”) and Stratford-on-Avon District Council. I have held this position since 2009 and have been a strategic lead for the Councils on projects including land acquisition, housing development, public amenity provision (leisure, community and information centres, green space and playing pitches) and along with Corporate Management colleagues, oversaw the development and adoption of the Council’s Local Plan. I am operationally ultimately accountable for c500 staff and a myriad of Council services. I have been a local government employee for over 30 years and have worked for District, Metropolitan and City Councils.
- 1.3. I have been involved with the Leper Hospital site since April 2012. On behalf of the Council, I have overseen a comprehensive body of work examining many options for the regeneration of the site. These options include an extra care housing scheme; a micro-museum; an artisan workshop space; and gardens. None of these options has proven viable. Funding to undertake feasibility studies has been provided wholly by the Council with no financial support from the Owner. Historic England and the Architectural Heritage Fund have provided grants to enable a forensic examination of the state of the buildings. All this funding has been secured by my work with no assistance from the Owner. I have been involved in the measures that Warwick District Council has been required to take in order to protect the Grade II* listed building, the development of the compulsory purchase scheme and the various attempts to negotiate with the Owner.
- 1.4. I am aware of the Guidance on Compulsory Purchase and the Crichel Down Rules (“the Guidance”) and in particular paragraph 106 of the guidance that sets out the factors that the Secretary of State will take into account when deciding whether to confirm an order under section 226 (1) (a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. Summary of the Evidence and Conclusions

- 2.1. I have prepared this summary proof of evidence in support of Warwick District Council (Leper Hospital Site, Saltisford, Warwick) Compulsory Purchase Order 2021 (“the Order”) which was made on 14 January 2021. The land subject to the Order is situated on a main route into Warwick Town Centre (“the Order Land”). It is unoccupied and contains 2 Grade II* listed buildings known as St Michael’s Chapel and the Master’s House. Part of the site is registered as a Scheduled Monument. The Council’s aim is to acquire the Order Land for the purpose of redeveloping it and bringing the listed buildings back into a long term, viable use.

- 2.2. The Order Land is owned by Coventry Turned Parts Ltd who have owned the freehold since 1987. The land and buildings have been left unoccupied since the Owner's acquisition. Planning permission for the conversion of the listed buildings to offices with the construction of an office block to the rear was obtained by the Owner in 2007 but was not implemented and has now expired. The Grade II* listed building known as the Master's House is on the Historic England Heritage at Risk Register (and has been ever since the creation of the register in 1998) and its condition is described as "very bad" and "at immediate risk of rapid deterioration or loss of fabric". The buildings are at risk of vandalism and unauthorised occupation. In August 2019, following unsuccessful attempts to negotiate with the Owner, the Council, considering that Master's House was at imminent risk of destruction, served an Urgent Works Notice¹ on the Owner. The notice was not complied with and the Council were required to carry out the essential works at a cost of £67,607.30 and serve further notice in order to secure repayment².
- 2.3. The Order Land is historically very significant. There have been buildings on the site since the 12th century with the first known reference to a leper hospital in 1275. The listed buildings are believed to date from the 15th century with 12th century foundations. The area of the Order Land on which the buildings sit is designated as a Scheduled Monument. The buildings have survived throughout the development of the medieval suburb of Saltisford, industrial development in the 18th and 19th centuries including the development of the nearby canal and railway and the demolition of many of the surrounding buildings during the 20th century. It is believed to be one of only very few leper hospitals from the early middle ages that still survives.
- 2.4. The Scheme that the Council hope can be achieved following the acquisition of the Order Land comprises the conversion of both Grade II* listed buildings into individual affordable housing units and the construction of a two/three-storey building of eight affordable apartments together with access, parking and amenity space ("the Scheme").
- 2.5. I consider that there is a compelling public interest in acquiring the Order Land and implementing the Scheme. There is a real risk that if the Scheme cannot be implemented then the buildings will continue to deteriorate and will be lost. The Scheme will also provide much needed affordable housing in a sustainable and accessible location and transform a derelict site situated on a main throughfare into the historic market town of Warwick.
- 2.6. I do not believe that the purpose of the Order could be achieved by any other means. The Council has been working with Platform Housing Group and the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust to develop the Scheme for three years. Platform Housing Group are a large and experienced Registered Provider of Social Housing who have worked with the Council to deliver other complex projects. West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust are a charity and not for profit developer who have the

¹ CD 20

² CD 21

necessary expertise in the restoration of heritage assets at risk. The Owner has not demonstrated any tangible progress towards the development of the land and has only very recently sought to re-engage with a very limited proposal that lacks detail.

- 2.7. The Scheme is deliverable because of the grant funding that the Council has secured and the expert input from West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust. The Scheme will be financed by a combination of loan and grants from the Council, Historic England, Platform Housing Group and the Architectural Heritage Fund. The Council will also be able to use developer contributions paid under section 106 agreements in order to facilitate the delivery of affordable housing in the District. The funding is immediately available and Scheme would be delivered via the appointment of a suitably qualified contractor and as West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust and Platform Housing Group both sit on the Project Board they will be able to ensure that the development can be appropriately aligned. It is anticipated that the Scheme can be delivered within 18 months of the confirmation of the compulsory purchase order. Once completed it is intended that West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust will take ownership of the Grade II* listed buildings and they will be managed under a long lease by Platform Housing Group. Platform Housing Group will own the freehold of rear of the site containing the newly constructed affordable housing. Platform Housing Group will let and manage all of the affordable housing units
- 2.8. I do not consider that there any physical or legal impediments to the Scheme. An application for Scheduled Monument Consent has been submitted, the planning applications and listed building applications are about to be determined and positive negotiations as to the amendment or removal of a restrictive covenant held by Warwickshire County Council that applies to the Order Land are on-going.
- 2.9. My proof of evidence contains detailed evidence of the attempts that have been made to acquire the Order Land by agreement. I have been the single point of contact throughout, and I am firmly of the view that the Council has done all it can to attempt to acquire the site. Various offers have been made in excess of the market value figure but there has been no resolution.
- 2.10. In conclusion I consider that the case for a compulsory purchase order has been fully justified in accordance with the Guidance.

17 August 2021