



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Name and date of Committee	COUNCIL - 1 OCTOBER 2025
Subject	OPTIONS FOR OUT OF DISTRICT INVESTMENT PROPERTY
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance Email: <a href="mailto:alaric.smith@westoxon.gov.uk">alaric.smith@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Accountable officer	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance Email: <a href="mailto:democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk">democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Report author	Jasmine McWilliams, Assets Manager Email: <a href="mailto:democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk">democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Summary/Purpose	To request Council to consider officer recommendation to dispose of the out of district property, in accordance with the terms and reasons outlined in the report.
Annexes	Annex A – Location Plan Annex B – Council Ownership Exempt Annex C – Financial Details
Recommendations	That Council resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Approve the property disposal on the terms detailed in the report</li><li>2. Delegate authority to the Director of Finance, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance, to approve the final terms of sale including the sale price.</li></ol>
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Working Together for West Oxfordshire</li></ul>
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	Exempt Annex C only
Consultees/ Consultation	Executive Member for Finance, Executive Member for Housing and Social Care, Director of Finance, Interim Managing Director (Publica), Interim Executive Director (Publica)

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1** Officers recommend the disposal of Knights Court, 21 Between Towns Road Cowley to Oxford City Council on the terms detailed in the report.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** In 2008, the Council acquired the freehold of Knights Court, 21 Between Towns Road, Oxford (the property) for £5.26m. The property came with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) as a tenant.
- 2.2** The property is a three-storey building, constructed during the 1980s as part of a block of three similar style buildings in this location. The structure comprises a reinforced concrete frame with brick external facing. The internal floors are a mixture of solid concrete and suspended block and beam. They are mostly open plan with a gross internal area (GIA) of approx. 2,652 sqm. There is a small private car park to the rear of the building which could support around 10 parking spaces.
- 2.3** OCC vacated the property in November 2023, after a small extension beyond the end of the lease. The property remains vacant, at a cost to the Council of approximately £150,000 per annum covering rates and security.
- 2.4** The property team have been working with CBRE, a national agent, to market the property on a commercial basis while investigating alternative uses to make best use of the asset.

## **3.0 MAIN POINTS**

- 3.1** With no offers from a commercial tenant and the changing landscape in the surrounding area, a residential development is the best approach, but to do this the Council would need to secure a delivery partner to proceed. Therefore the most viable option is disposal.
- 3.2** Even though the Council has not been marketing the property for sale, our agent has had conversations with parties who have shown an interest in the property should it become available on the open market. This includes the private property developer who purchased one of the other similar style buildings. Any offer from such parties would usually be on a conditional basis on planning.

## **4 STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSIONS**

- 4.1** Officers have carried out discussions with stakeholder partners in the area in respect of use or purchase of the property and carried out marketing to let the property. The discussion with Oxford City Council have resulted in the offer to purchase for redevelopment for use as affordable housing

## **5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 5.1** The Council could decide to retain the property and progress obtaining planning permission for change of use to residential. The estimated timeline for the property to be ready to market would be autumn 2026. This would result in a longer void period with associated costs.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1** The Council has received an offer from Oxford City Council for the property which means that the risk regarding planning would be with the City Council as buyer. The offer is at the level advised by the Council's agents that would be obtained if planning permission for change of use was already obtained.
- 6.2** Holding the asset would prove to be a costly liability as the building begins to deteriorate and maintenance is required. Disposal would link into the Council's Asset Management Strategy, ensuring the Council is achieving the maximum benefit from its assets.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1** The Council would receive a capital receipt and reduce its revenue costs by £150,000 per annum. This capital receipt would support the delivery of the wider Capital Programme i.e. the purchase of temporary Emergency Accommodation in the District, upgrading and improvement works to the Councils building assets and reduce the need to take out external borrowing.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1** The Council would no longer be the owner of the property or be entitled to any income from it.
- 8.2** The Council's legal team would complete the legal work required for a sale.

## **9. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 9.1** The proposed disposal is deemed low risk as the property is recommended to be sold and therefore the Council is divesting itself of liability. Mitigation of risk will be around correct responses to the legal enquiries from any buyer.
- 9.2** If the Council retained the property there would be risks, such as continuation of the void costs.

## **10. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 10.1** No equalities impacts are envisaged as a result of this decision.

## **11. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1** No climate and ecological emergencies implications are envisaged as part of this decision except for the removal of a carbon inefficient property from its portfolio.

## **12. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 12.1** None

(END)