



Cabinet

22 January 2025

REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Subject Heading:

Comments of Overview and Scrutiny Board on Requisition of Cabinet Decision - Office to residential conversion to accommodate homeless families – Chesham House

SLT Lead:

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Report Author and contact details:

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Policy context:

The report deals with a statutory process.

Financial summary:

There is no significant financial impact from the statutory processes as these requirements are being met by existing budgets.

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well **X**

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy **X**

Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council

SUMMARY

Following the recent upholding of a requisition of a Cabinet decision and using its Constitutional powers under the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, the Overview and Scrutiny Board has made a series of comments and recommendations to Cabinet. Cabinet is recommended to respond to each of these.

RECOMMENDATION

That Cabinet confirms whether it wishes to reconsider the original Cabinet decision and responds to the following recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Board:

- 1. There are concerns over the financial position of National Housing Group with a lack of liquidity and low levels of cash at bank demonstrated in the Cabinet report. The recent departure of three directors of the company, without apparent replacement, is also of concern.**
- 2. No agreement should be entered into for the site until more detail is known of the precise elements of the scheme or planning permission has been granted.**
- 3. More detail is required on whether the location of the development in an industrial estate is suitable and conducive to the quality of life of residents. In particular, more precise detail should be given of the noise mitigation measures to be taken to reduce disturbance from nearby industrial units. The Board is also concerned that the development may set an unwanted precedent for locating residential units in industrial areas.**
- 4. The Board is disappointed that it was not presented for scrutiny the legal advice received by Cabinet on this matter (this has since been provided) and feels that this significantly hindered the scrutiny process.**
- 5. Confirmation should be given that the scheme will be solely for Havering residents.**
- 6. Further detail should be given on the quality aspects of the scheme and the risk of not reaching these should be established.**

- 7. A specific explanation is requested of why Mercury Land Holdings does not have Public Liability Insurance and hence cannot be considered as an option for this scheme.**
- 8. Clarity should be given over whether Stamp Duty needs to be paid for the Chesham House development as the report is unclear on this point.**
- 9. It is essential that adequate security arrangements are in place to safeguard tenants at Chesham House, including external and internal CCTV cameras as required.**
- 10. The Board requests to see any pre-planning application discussions that may have taken place.**
- 11. Briefings on the development should be given as soon as possible to Strategic Planning Committee and to Places Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSSC). The briefing to Places OSSC to cover compliance with housing law as part of the development.**
- 12. Details should be provided on the impact of the scheme of the Council's Risk Register.**

REPORT DETAIL

At its meeting on 8 January 2025, the Overview and Scrutiny Board unanimously upheld the requisition of the Cabinet Decision of 11 December 2024 re Office to residential conversion to accommodate homeless families – Chesham House.

Under the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, a report must be submitted to Cabinet giving the Board's comments and recommendations on the proposals. These are shown above and Cabinet is asked to give a response to each of these as well as indicate whether it wishes to change or continue with the original Cabinet decision.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks: None of this report which purely seeks an initial response from Cabinet. Should Cabinet be minded to consider revised proposals in response to the Board's recommendations, these may require a separate report with full implications.

Legal implications and risks: None of this report which purely seeks an initial response from Cabinet. Should Cabinet be minded to consider revised in response to the Board's recommendations, these may require a separate report with full implications.

Human Resources implications and risks: None of this report which purely seeks an initial response from Cabinet. Should Cabinet be minded to consider revised proposals in response to the Board's recommendations, these may require a separate report with full implications.

Equalities implications and risks: None of this report which purely seeks an initial response from Cabinet. Should Cabinet be minded to consider revised proposals in response to the Board's recommendations, these may require a separate report with full implications.

Environmental and Climate Change implications and risks: None of this report which purely seeks an initial response from Cabinet. Should Cabinet be minded to consider revised proposals in response to the Board's recommendations, these may require a separate report with full implications.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.