

RECORD OF OFFICER DECISION

Local Government (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information)
(England) Regulations 2012.

Decision Date: 12 March 2025

Decision Maker: Executive Director of Communities and Housing

Decision status: Is Key decision?: No

Is subject to call in?: No

Decision details:

1. The council's brownfield sites Revolving Fund is funded via Norwich's Town Deal Fund programme and seeks to acquire stalled and derelict sites and enable their development in cases where the market fails to do so. Where a negotiated acquisition proves unsuccessful and there is no reasonable prospect of the market delivering the site, CPO may be pursued.
2. In February 2022 Cabinet agreed to delegate acquisition of sites to the Executive director of development and city services. Following the departure of the Executive director of development and city services, the Executive Director of Communities and Housing now holds the delegation authority.
3. Avison Young were appointed in 2022 to provide expert advice on property valuation, delivery options and Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) for sites identified by the Revolving Fund. They are acting on the council's behalf in engagement with the site owners and commencing negotiation on acquisitions for an initial tranche of sites (the phase 1 sites).
4. Accordingly, in 2024 the site of Florida Shoe Factory, Dibden Road, Norwich, NR3 4RR was identified as a candidate for acquisition. This had lain undeveloped for some years, and benefits from a current planning application for construction of affordable homes.
5. The council's property advisor undertook detailed development appraisal work on the site in order to understand its value in the prevailing market, and the team commenced communication with Flagship Housing Limited who had previous interest in the site. This confirmed that development in line with the current planning application was indeed viable and deliverable.
6. Flagship Housing Limited confirmed they were still open to purchasing the Florida Shoe Factory, Dibden Road, Norwich, NR3 4RR site to develop affordable housing. The council agreed to provide a grant of Right to Buy Receipts to Flagship Housing Limited for the purchase of the specific site.

7. Negotiation with the owner commenced in 2024, in March 2025 the council made an offer for the Florida Shoe Factory, Dibden Road, Norwich, NR3 4RR site. This offer was accepted.
8. The Executive Director of Communities and Housing has taken the following decision:
 - *To approve the purchase of the Florida Shoe Factory, Dibden Road, Norwich, NR3 4RR site and the sale of the site to Flagship Housing Limited.*
 - *To approve a grant of Right to Buy receipts to Flagship Housing Limited to enable the purchase of the Florida Shoe Factory, Dibden Road, Norwich, NR3 4RR site.*

Reason for decision:

9. The decision to acquire by the Revolving Fund was taken following a process of due diligence to ensure that no barriers existed to development of the site, and that a viable disposal / development route could be identified. Disposal of the site is to be appropriately conditioned to ensure that site development can indeed take place within a reasonable timeframe.

Alternative Options:

10. The council had limited confidence that the site would be developed by its previous owner within a reasonable timeframe due to the current site condition. Had the council failed to purchase, the site would therefore have continued to lie undeveloped, delivering no benefit to Norwich and potentially becoming an eyesore and a magnet for anti-social behaviour.

Declarations of Interest:

None

Reports considered by the decision maker:

Florida Shoe Factory, Dibden Road site Valuation Briefing Note (*Avison Young, 2024*)
This paper is not appended for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

Any background documents considered:

None

Publication date: 21 March 2025

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. Howes', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Davina Howes, Executive Director of Communities and Housing