
A separate report is submitted in the private part of the agenda in respect of this item, as it contains details of financial information required to be kept private in accordance with Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. The grounds for privacy are that it contains information relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining the exemption under Schedule 12A outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change

12 November 2025

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change – Councillor J O’Boyle

Director approving submission of the report:

Director of Property Services and Development

Ward(s) affected:

St. Michael’s

Title:

Former Coventry Swimming Baths, Fairfax Street

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive summary:

The former Coventry Swimming Baths on Fairfax Street have been closed since 2020. During that time, the Council has been working with its regeneration partner Coventry Regeneration Limited (“CRL”), who are a Special Purpose Vehicle of Redford Developments Limited (previously called “Rainier”), to undertake extensive and comprehensive work to seek viable and sustainable uses for the buildings. Despite extensive efforts, no realistic reuse option has been able to be brought forward.

The cost of mothballing the former Swimming Baths is currently costing the taxpayer approx. £400k per year. Given that there is no realistic chance of reuse of the buildings, as well as the cost to the public purse, the Council wishes to take forward the necessary steps set out below in order to realise the demolition of the buildings:

- Prepare and submit an application to secure a Listed Building Consent (the Swimming Baths are Grade II listed) for the demolition of the buildings. The Council will jointly fund the cost of this work with CRL. As part of the work to date, there has been extensive engagement with Historic England and they confirmed that they will not object to an application for the demolition of the Swimming Baths.
- Once a consent is secured, this will put the Council in the best place to seek to secure the funding required for the actual demolition of the buildings. This will also pave the way working alongside CRL to undertake further work to ultimately realise a high quality regeneration scheme on the site of the former Swimming Baths for the benefit of Coventry and its communities.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change is recommended to:

- 1) Approve proposals to take forward the necessary work to bring forward a Listed Building Application for the demolition of the former Coventry Swimming Baths in Fairfax Street
- 2) Approve the acceptance of £50,000 grant funding from Homes England to be utilised towards the Council's contribution to the costs of the Listed Building Application
- 3) Approve the use of £252,000 from existing capital receipts to fund the remainder of the Council's contribution towards the £514,000 cost of the preparation and submission of the Listed Building Application, with the remaining cost being provided by CRL.
- 4) Authorise that the existing Exclusivity Agreement between the Council and CRL be varied to align with the principles set out in the heads of terms contained at appendix 1 of the private element of this report.
- 5) Delegate authority to the Director of Property Services and Development, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources and the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to:
 - undertake all necessary due diligence; and
 - thereafter, enter into the legal agreements and any associated matters resulting from the Decisions which are required in order to bring into effect the recommendations set out in this report.

List of Appendices included:

The following appendices are attached in the private element of this report:

Appendix 1 – Draft Heads of Terms for variation to Exclusivity Agreement with CRL

Background papers:

Report to Cabinet 12 February 2019 "Acceptance of Sport England Grant Funding towards 50m Swimming Pool at Alan Higgs Centre and future of Coventry Sports and Leisure Centre"

Report to Cabinet 30 August 2016 "City-Wide Public Leisure Provision"

Report to Cabinet 5 August 2014 "Coventry Sports Strategy 2014-2024"

Report to Cabinet 5 August 2014 "City Centre Sports and Public Leisure Facility Development"

Other useful documents

N/A

Has it or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel, or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report Title: Former Coventry Swimming Baths, Fairfax Street

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1. Coventry Swimming Baths (also known as Coventry Leisure Centre) was closed to the public in 2020. This followed earlier Cabinet and Council Decisions in 2014, 2016 and 2019 confirming that the Swimming Baths were increasingly unfit for purpose and that there were more effective and sustainable uses for the public funding that goes into running resident focused leisure facilities. This resulted in new leisure facilities being built in the city centre (The Wave) and in Stoke Aldermoor (the Alan Higgs Centre).
- 1.2. Cabinet took the decision in February 2019 to declare the Swimming Baths surplus to requirements and also consented to their future disposal. This resulted in the Council running an expression of interest process to seek a partner to look at all options for the Swimming Baths and the adjacent Sports Centre (also known as “The Elephant”). This resulted in the appointment of CRL as the partner.
- 1.3. The Council has been working with its partner since February 2020 to seek users, occupiers and investors for both the Swimming Baths and The Elephant. This work has included comprehensive and targeted marketing campaigns, surveys and, where relevant, negotiations with interested parties. However, no realistic proposal has ever been able to be brought forward for formal decision-making. By way of example, following discussions with an investor regarding the potential for exhibition, leisure and food hall space in the Swimming Baths, the financial appraisal showed a funding gap of c.£13m.
- 1.4. During this time, the holding, security and maintenance costs associated with the mothballing of the Swimming Baths continue to be a burden on the taxpayer. The annual costs associated with the Swimming Baths and The Elephant (they are physically connected via a walkaway and with servicing media) are c.£400k per year. If, in due course, the Swimming Baths are demolished then this will lead to a significant saving to the public purse through a reduction in these holding costs.
- 1.5. The proposed Listed Building Application for the demolition of the Swimming Baths does not include any proposals for the demolition of The Elephant. We are continuing to seek users and occupiers for that building at this point in time.
- 1.6. The Council, through its regular engagement with Homes England, has been successful in securing £50,000 of grant funding to be used as a contribution towards the Council’s costs of producing the Listed Building Application (subject to the recommendations which are the subject of this report being approved.)

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1. Option 1. Continue to market the site to occupiers and investors (not recommended)
 - 2.1.1 Both the Swimming Baths and The Elephant have been being actively marketed since 2021. As well as marketing exercises ran by Avison Young which targeted potential occupiers and included print and online media, this has also included promotion in

Council and WMCA produced investment prospectuses. These exercises resulted in a number of viewings and expressions of interest but no financially realistic proposals were ever able to be brought forward. Given this extensive work to date, and the ongoing deterioration of the building, it is considered highly improbable that a deliverable proposal for the reuse of the Swimming Baths could ever be forthcoming and for these reasons this option is not recommended.

2.2 Option 2. Take forward an application for the demolition of the Swimming Baths without a partner (not recommended)

2.2.1 Pursuant to the Cabinet Decisions in February 2019 approving the Swimming Baths as property surplus to requirements and consenting to the commencement of a disposal process, the Council ran an expressions of interest process which resulted in an Exclusivity Agreement being entered into with CRL. This exclusivity period has resulted in significant work being undertaken to seek investment and occupation of the Swimming Baths and significant engagement with Historic England to arrive at a point where there can be confidence regarding the Planning approach to secure a consent for demolition.

2.2.2 Whilst the Exclusivity Agreement runs until June 2026, the Council could decide that it alone will fund the cost of preparing the planning application and oversee and manage the application itself. There is no compelling reason at this stage for the Council to incur all these costs itself and, furthermore, a Listed Building Application such as this is a specialist piece of work where specialist management of the process is required and a partner with specialist development and planning expertise adds significant value to the process. For these reasons this option is not recommended.

2.3 Option 3. Take forward an application for the demolition of the Swimming Baths in partnership with CRL (recommended)

2.3.1 This approach includes varying the current Exclusivity Agreement to include the key terms set out in Appendix 1 within the private element of this report. If Planning Consent is secured, the Council will look to secure the funding for demolition during this three year period and, if successful, the parties will revisit the Exclusivity Arrangement to establish delivery arrangements for the next phases of the project. A further report will be brought back for Governance consideration in due course to agree the future delivery arrangements, the funding necessary for the demolition and the implementation of the Planning Consent and any further budgetary requirements associated with the variations to the Exclusivity Agreement.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

3.1. The Council has consulted with Historic England to inform its approach to the building and the Planning process and they have confirmed that they will not object to an application for the demolition of the Swimming Baths, citing the significant cost to the public purse of managing and maintaining the building being very hard to justify and they have also stated that the proposed planning strategy where the Council is separating out approvals for the demolition with that for a future replacement scheme is a pragmatic approach.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1. If the proposals that are the subject of this report are accepted then it is anticipated that the Listed Building Application will be submitted to the Local Planning Authority before Christmas 2025. Assuming that a Consent is granted, there will then be a three year period for the funding to be secured for the demolition works to commence.

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Resources and Director of Law and Governance

5.1. Financial Implications

The financial implications associated with the recommendations that are the subject of this report are set out in the private element of the report.

5.2. Legal Implications

Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides a general power of competence for local authorities. It gives local authorities the same power to act that an individual generally has, provided it is not prohibited by other legislation. The Council has the capacity to develop and submit a planning application to secure the Listed Building Consent, under this power.

The Council will be required to enter into an agreement with Homes England in order to draw-down the grant funding. Legal and Procurement Services will work with officers to review the agreement in order to ensure the Council is not entering into an agreement that may involve any risk to the Council.

Under the proposals set out in this report, an amendment to the current legal exclusivity agreement would need to be completed and entered into by the Council and CRL.

6. Other implications

6.1. How will this contribute to the One Coventry Plan?

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/strategies-plans-policies/one-coventry-plan>

This proposal is a necessary step in securing the demolition of the building (which will support the One Coventry Plan objective “Ensuring the continued financial sustainability of the Council” and then for a high quality regeneration scheme to be worked up and delivered (which will support the One Coventry Plan objective “Improving the economic prosperity of the city and region”).

6.2. How is risk being managed?

The Council's key requirements for this project are to ensure that a Listed Building Consent is granted. We have engaged with Historic England to set out the case for demolition, including the financial drain on the taxpayer of keeping the Swimming Baths mothballed, and based on their engagement with, and statements to, us there is confidence that Historic England will not object to the Listed Building Application.

Council officers will also be working closely with CRL to ensure that the Listed Building Application submitted is of a high quality and sufficient for the Local Planning Authority to be able to come to a set of decisions regarding this proposal.

6.3. What is the impact on the organisation?

The main impact will be on staff resources in the Property and Development service area.

6.4. Equalities / EIA?

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been considered. A full EIA is not required as the proposal relates to a planning application to secure the demolition of a vacant, derelict building.

6.5. Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment?

N/A at this stage. If there were to be demolition in future it will be managed in accordance with the Council's environmental management policies.

6.6. Implications for partner organisations?

N/A.

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