



Report to Leader (Finance, Resources, Property and Assets portfolio)

Decision Date: 26 May 2022

Reference number: FR03.22

Title: **Leasehold surrender and disposal of 32-33 Oxford Street, High Wycombe**

Cabinet Member(s): Councillor John Chilver; Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property & Assets.

Contact officer: John Reed and Jaswinder Boom

Ward(s) affected: Abbey; Councillor Arman Alam, Councillor Lesley Clarke OBE, Councillor Mahboob Hussain JP.

Recommendations:

- 1. Authorise the Service Director for Property & Assets in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources, Property and Assets and the S151 Officer and Service Director of Legal Services to conclude negotiations, agree contracts, appoint consultants and undertake due diligence, exchange and complete on the leasehold surrender of Oxford Street, High Wycombe, in accordance with the provisions set out in the confidential appendix.**
- 2. Authorise the Service Director for Property & Assets in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources, Property and Assets and the S151 Officer and Service Director of Legal Services to conclude negotiations, agree contracts, appoint consultants and exchange and complete on the disposal of Oxford Street, High Wycombe in accordance with the disposal strategy and in accordance with the provisions set out in the confidential appendix.**

Reason for decision:

The proposed surrender and disposal strategy ensures occupation and use thereby re-animating a prominent site on a main route through the town centre.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The surrender is agreed as the tenant no longer occupies the site for their business and the council can attempt to reanimate the unit through the surrender and control of this site. The proposed transaction will potentially provide a capital receipt upon disposal.

2. Content of report

- 2.1 The site is currently held under lease by Beadle and Crome producing a ground rent of £5,000pa. The lease expires in 41 years in November 2063 with reviews due every 33 years with the next due November 2030.
- 2.2 The site is a small furniture retail store located on the edge of the town centre. The tenant vacated the site pre-pandemic and has been marketing their interest for a conventional lease for a couple of years.
- 2.3 Terms have been agreed for the potential surrender of their interest as discussed in detail in the confidential section attached to this report.
- 2.4 A disposal strategy is also being pursued which is discussed in the confidential section attached to this report.



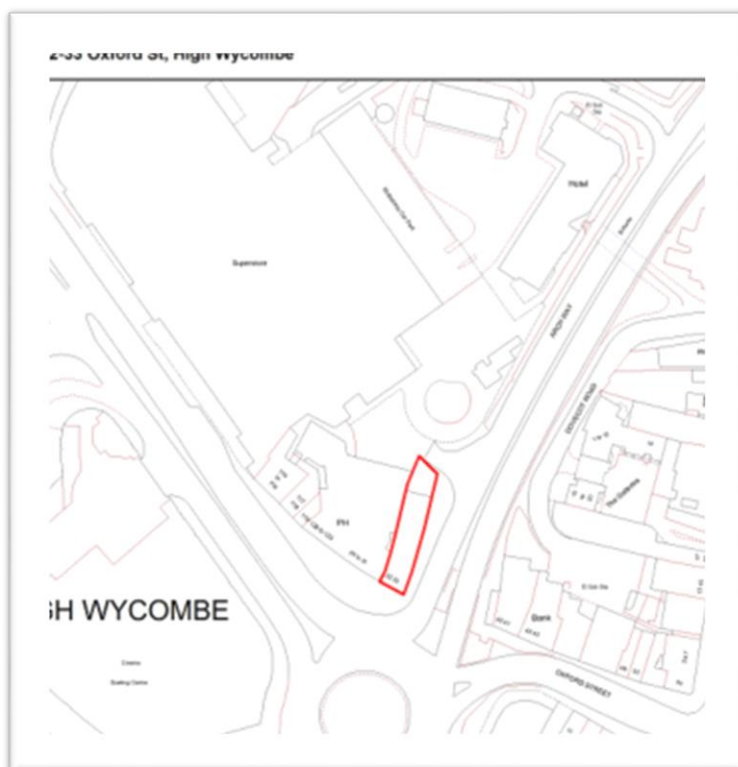


Fig 1: Plan showing location of Beadle and Crome, 32-33 Oxford Street, High Wycombe.

3. Other options considered

- 3.1 Do nothing, this is not a good Value for Money option as the site is vacant and small but in a prominent location on the routes through and around the town centre.

4. Legal and financial implications

4.1 Legal

The Property is currently unregistered and for the purpose of the sale is to be registered at the Land Registry under the Council's voluntary first registration project. It is anticipated that the LR's registration formalities may take approximately 4-8 weeks to be completed.

4.2 Best Value requirements

The Council has a legal obligation under Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 not to dispose of land for a consideration less than the best that can be reasonably obtained unless the land is disposed of for a short tenancy of less than seven years or in some cases Secretary of State consent is required. This has been satisfied as discussed in the confidential annex.

4.3 Financial

The financial implications of the transaction are discussed in detail in the confidential section of this report.

The Council is not picking up any revenue void costs for the currently vacant site, as Beadle and Crome continue to pay rent and running costs.

5. Corporate implications

5.1 This section will need to include the relevant corporate plan priority relating to this report and make reference to any other implication that need to be taken into account such as:-

1. Property – see confidential report
2. HR - none
3. Climate change - none
4. Sustainability - none
5. Equality - none
6. Data - none
7. Value for money –Delivers the potential for a positive High Street Regeneration for High Wycombe outcome

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

6.1 Local Councillors have been consulted and are supportive.

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

7.1 No further consultation or engagement has been carried out for this transaction.

8. Next steps and review

8.1 Following a positive decision, the legal due diligence will complete with a view to complete contracts by end May 2022.

9. Background papers

9.1 None applicable



10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

- 10.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone 01296 382343 or email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

