

Finance and Resources Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 5 March 2020

North Cairntow Gypsy/Traveller Site – Proposed Transfer to Housing Revenue Account

Executive/routine	Routine
Wards	17 – Portobello/Craigmillar
Council Commitments	1 , 11

1. Recommendations

1.1 That Committee:

- 1.1.1 The Housing service has been working with the residents on the North Cairntow Gypsy/Traveller site since 2017 to improve the site. A final design has been agreed with residents for a redevelopment of the site. This report seeks approval to transfer the site from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to allow the improvement project to form part of the 2020/21 HRA capital programme.

Stephen S. Moir

Executive Director of Resources

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North Cairntow Gypsy/Traveller Site – Proposed Transfer to Housing Revenue Account

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Housing service has been working with the residents of the North Cairntow Gypsy/Traveller site to improve the site since 2017 and a final design has been agreed for a redevelopment of the site. This report seeks approval for the site to transfer from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to allow the project to form part of the 2020/21 HRA capital programme.

3. Background

- 3.1 The North Cairntow site currently provides 20 pitches and extends to approximately 1.94 hectares (4.79 acres) as shown outlined in red on the attached plan.
- 3.2 The Scottish Government published [‘Improving Gypsy Traveller Sites – Guidance on minimum standards, and site tenants’ core rights and responsibilities’](#) in 2015, which sets out minimum site standards for Gypsy/Traveller sites provided by Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords.
- 3.3 A [follow-up report](#) was published in May 2018, reviewing the progress of social landlords made to meeting the standards set out in the 2015 publication. The North Cairntow site has reported meeting 21 of the 26 indicators at the time, with three indicators non-applicable, one not explicitly stated and one not met (relating to access roads). The progress report also noted that the minimum site standards became part of the Scottish Social Housing Charter.
- 3.4 There has been an increased effort from the local and central governments to improve the lives of the Gypsy/Travellers communities. A [Ministerial Working Group](#) was set up in 2018 to address the inequalities experienced by the Gypsy/Traveller communities in housing, education, health, employment and any cross-cutting issues, such as community cohesion.
- 3.5 A joint action plan [‘Improving the lives of Gypsy/Travellers: 2019-2021’](#) by the Scottish Government and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) was published in October 2019, with commitments to:

- Provide more and better accommodation;
- Improve access to public services;
- Improve incomes in and out of work;
- Tackle racism and discrimination; and,
- Improve Gypsy/traveller representation at national and local level

4. Main report

- 4.1 Although the property is held on the General Fund, the Housing Service is responsible for the management of the site. This includes letting of the pitches, tenancy management, service charge (rent) collection and managing rent arrears, and repairs and maintenance of the properties on site. A housing officer is responsible for the day-to-day management of the site and has an office on site.
- 4.2 The Housing Service has been working with the residents since 2017 to improve the site conditions. Through regular meetings with the local community on the minimum site standards, feedback from the local survey and joint development of a community hub on site, it became clear that the community was interested in moving to a purpose-built chalet style type of property. Residents and officers have worked together with an architect for a site redesign through a series of consultation sessions.
- 4.3 Final design has now been agreed with the community, with a plan to commence construction on site in 2020/21. The total cost of the improvement project is estimated to be circa £2.3m.
- 4.4 Residents are currently given an occupancy agreement for the use of the pitches and amenity block on site, by paying for a service charge. Upon the completion of the improvement project, residents will be given a Scottish Secure Tenancy and become a Council tenant, by paying rent into the HRA.
- 4.5 In order to align the ownership and management and for the improvement project to become part of the 2020/21 HRA capital programme, it is necessary to transfer the site from the General Fund.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Following approval of the terms by Finance and Resources Committee, the site will transfer from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account, subject to any Ministerial consent that may be required.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The Housing service currently manages a range of tenancy management related activities with no cost impact on the General Fund. Any income generated from service charges is currently collected through the Housing Service.
- 6.2 Upon the completion of the improvement projects, the HRA will receive rental income from the residents/ tenants on site.
- 6.3 The site will transfer at nil value.
- 6.4 The [‘Improving the lives of Gypsy/Travellers: 2019-2021’](#) joint action plan committed a £2 million investment on public sector Gypsy/Traveller sites. The Council can expect a share of this grant funding being made available to local authorities to support the required investment needed to Gypsy/Traveller sites. The grant will be given as General Fund capital grant and the mechanism for making sure this is paid to the HRA will follow the same principle as the Transfer Management of Development Funding (TMDF) grant. The current practice exists where TMDF grant contributes to the HRA in support of new build affordable housing.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

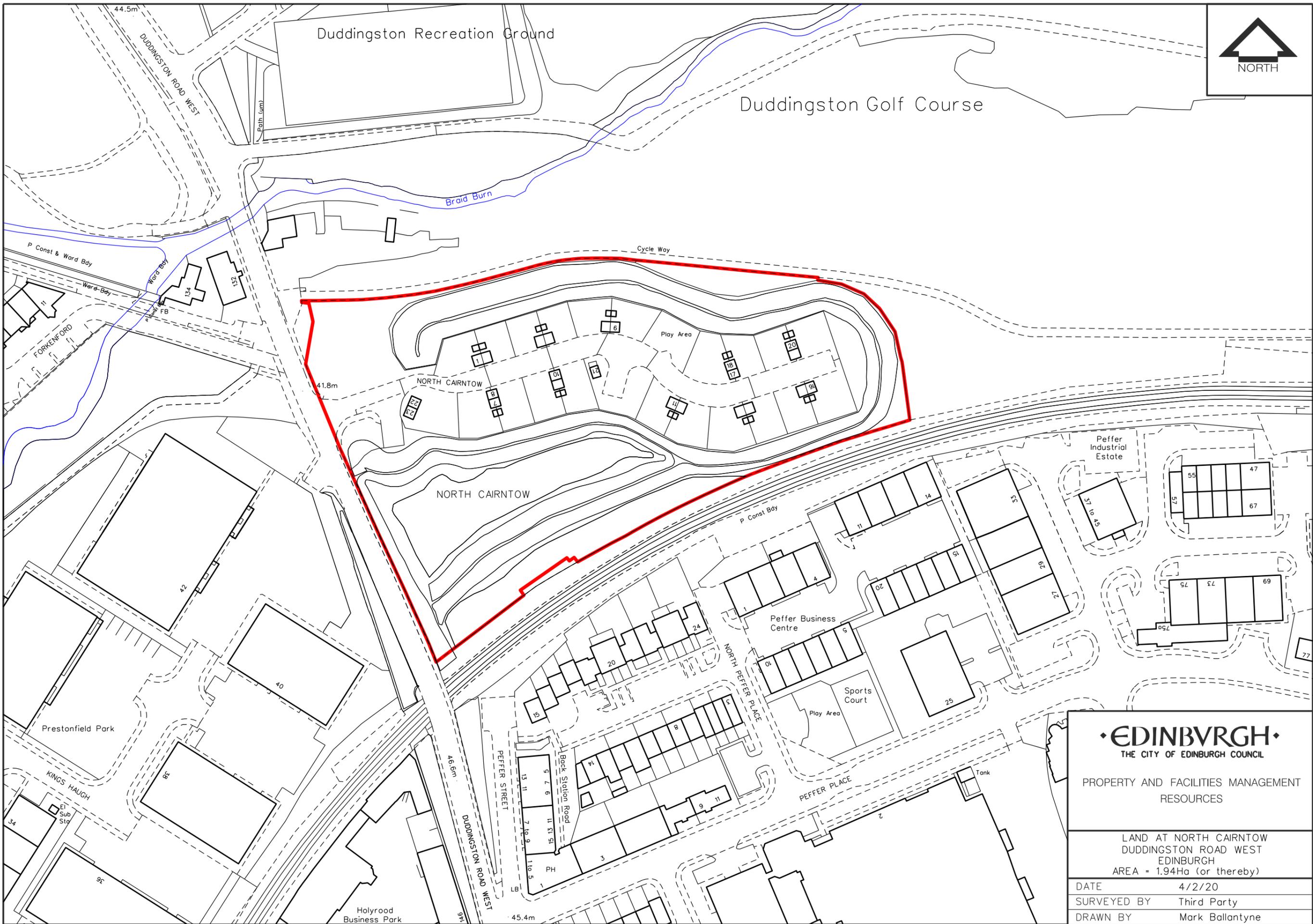
- 7.1 Ward elected members have been made aware of the recommendations of the report.

8. Background reading/external references

N/A

9. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Location Plan



SITE PLAN

SCALE 1:1250

• EDINBURGH • THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL	
PROPERTY AND FACILITIES MANAGEMENT RESOURCES	
LAND AT NORTH CAIRNTOW DUDDINGSTON ROAD WEST EDINBURGH AREA = 1.94Ha (or thereby)	
DATE	4/2/20
SURVEYED BY	Third Party
DRAWN BY	Mark Ballantyne
SCALE	1:1250 @ A3 SIZE
NEG. NO.	A3/2233