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To: The Chair and Members of the
Land and Property Committee

County Hall
Topsham Road
Exeter
Devon
EX2 4QD

Date: 23 January 2025

Contact: wendy.simpson@devon.gov.uk

LAND AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE

Friday, 31st January, 2025

A meeting of the Land and Property Committee is to be held on the above date at 10.30 am in the Committee Suite, County Hall, Exeter to consider the following matters.

Donna Manson
Chief Executive

A G E N D A

PART I - OPEN COMMITTEE

- 1 Apologies for Absence
- 2 Declarations of Interest

Members of the Council will declare any interests they may have in any item to be considered at this meeting, prior to any discussion taking place on that item.

The other registrable interests of Councillors of Devon County Council, arising from membership of City, Town or Parish Councils and other Local Authorities will automatically be recorded in the minutes: [A list of county councillors who are also district, borough, city, parish or town councillors.](#)

- 3 Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2025 (previously circulated).

4 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

Items which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered at the meeting as matters of urgency.

MATTERS FOR DECISION

5 The Property Change Programme (Pages 1 - 14)

Report of the Director of Transformation and Business Services (TBS/25/1).

PART II - ITEMS WHICH MAY BE TAKEN IN THE ABSENCE OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

None

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Induction Loop available



TBS/25/1
Land & Property Committee
31st January 2025

The Property Change Programme Report of the Director of Transformation and Business Services

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

Recommendation

That the Committee be asked to agree:

The following sites are declared surplus to DCC's requirements and disposal is progressed:

- Land at Moortown Picnic Site, South of South Molton on North Devon Link Road
- Land at Sidemoor Picnic Site, South of South Molton on North Devon Link Road
- Land at Rooksbridge Former Picnic Site, A39 between Barnstaple & Bideford
- Land at Lydacott Former Picnic Site, A39 between Barnstaple & Bideford
- Canal House at Grand Western Canal, Tiverton
- Land at Honiton Park and Ride, Exeter – South West Corner
- Land at Lemonford Depot, Bickington – bridges storage yard
- Marldon Oak Valley, Paignton
- Land at Lambeth Walk, Dawlish
- Bowring building, Moretonhampstead
- Land at Ideford (former picnic site), Kingsteignton
- Silverhill Lodge Garden to west of building, Barnstaple
- Land Parcel in Alphington, Exeter
- County Hall Cottage, Exeter

Background / Introduction

The Property Strategy focuses on four key principles; Reduce, Dispose, Retain, and Repurpose aimed at transforming our corporate estate and this will form the methodology for reviewing the future use of our assets. The Property Strategy was set out in the Phase 1 Property Report presented to Cabinet in October 2023.

Update on Phase 1 and 2 Disposals

The Phase 1 property disposals agreed at Cabinet October 2023 have progressed as follows:

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- Larkbeare House, Exeter – Now being actively marketed again following determination of the listing of the garden.
- Compass House, Exeter – Sold.
- Matford Lane, Exeter – On hold, included in the Exeter Local Plan consultation published in December 2024.
- Ivybank, Exeter – buyer has recently withdrawn, site remarketing has recommenced.
- St Georges Road Youth Centre, Barnstaple – The site is now being jointly marketed with the adjoining land from North Devon District Council and Yeo Valley Primary School (Digital Academy).
- Pottington Industrial Unit, Barnstaple – Sold.

Update on Phase 2 Disposals

- The Hive, Exmouth – Marketing has commenced.
- 2-4 Meeting Street, Exmouth – Sold subject to contract.
- Rosalind House Gardens, Tiverton – Marketing has commenced
- Lea Combe, Axminster – Marketing has commenced
- Sowton Industrial Estate Residual Land Freeholds, Exeter – 1 freehold sold subject to contract.

Update on Phase 3 Disposals

- Baxters Farmyard – Marketing to commence February 2025.
- Fremington Quay Store – Marketing has commenced
- Glebe Farm, Rattery – Class Q permitted development right application being made for resubmission
- Gas Lane Torrington – Site testing completed in December 2024 and findings to be reported when water testing results are complete.
- Long Stone Cross, Ashburton – Dartmoor National Park have been contacted to provide an update and feedback requested within next 4 weeks

Other capital receipts likely to be generated from the sale of property assets in 24/25 include the following:

Barns at Lower Pilehayes Farm, Woodbury Salterton

Land at Middle Winsham, Braunton

Lower East Week Farmhouse, South Tawton

Exmouth Bus Station Freehold disposal

Various sundry other small pieces of land already declared surplus with values of less than £50,000.

1. Proposal

2a. Proposed Phase 4 Disposals

It is recommended that the following assets be declared surplus to DCC's requirements and disposals are progressed:

- Land at Silverhill Lodge Garden to west of building, Barnstaple – This land is superfluous to the operation of Silverhill Lodge (elderly person's day centre). The garden area is considered to be ideally suited to be developed for Intensive Supported Housing. A Pre App was carried out on this site for development which was supportive of this site coming forward for development.
- Part remaining land at Aldens Farm in Alphington, Exeter – This land was not brought forward as part of the original Aldens Farm outline planning. It is now considered that this land could be used for Intensive Supported Housing. The total site is 0.38 hectares and the area required for development will be 0.1 hectares.
- Land at Moortown Picnic Site, South of South Molton on North Devon Link Road – This is on the North bound carriageway opposite Sidemoor. This site has been let out for the last 9+ years to a third party to operate a cafe in the tenants own temporary building. The site is 2.23 hectares. A recent review of the site has identified the potential for an improved commercial position either via the disposal of part or all the site, or for a commercial lease of part or all the site.
- Land at Sidemoor Picnic Site, South of South Molton on North Devon Link Road – This is on the South bound carriageway opposite Moortown. This site has been let out for the last 9+ years to a third party to operate a cafe in tenants own temporary building. The site is 2.19 hectares. A recent review of the site has identified the potential for an improved commercial position either via the disposal of part or all the site, or for a commercial lease of part or all the site.
- Canal House at Grand Western Canal, Tiverton – This building has been used by the rangers for the canal as offices and a small training & education room. The building needs significant investment and given the proximity of other office accommodation in Tiverton, we can relocate the current users. The visitor centre on the canal can be utilised for educational visits.
- Land at Rooksbridge Former Picnic Site, A39 between Barnstaple & Bideford – This is on the south side of the A39 and has been vacant for a number of years and is not accessible by the public. It is intended that this site is placed on the open market for consideration.

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- Land at Lydacott Former Picnic Site, A39 between Barnstaple & Bideford - This is on the north side of the A39 and has been vacant for a number of years. It is intended that this site is placed on the open market for consideration.
- Land at Honiton Park and Ride, Exeter – South west corner of site – following the pandemic the usage levels of the P&Rs have significantly reduced and this area of the car park is rarely used. This would present a rare vacant lot in Sowton and the capital receipt would be split with Exeter City Council.
- Land at Lemonford Depot, Bickington – This site is currently used by the Bridges team for storage which can be relocated to another DCC depot. The site is strategically placed between Ashburton and Newton Abbot and would be suitable for a range of commercial applications.
- Marldon Oak Valley, Paignton – Former pupil referral unit used by an academy trust on a site owned by DCC. This site will require DFE approval to dispose and declaring surplus is necessary to progress this process.
- Land at Lambeth Walk, Dawlish – This is a 0.5-hectare vacant plot of land which has been unoccupied for numerous years and is located to the east of Westcliff Primary Academy, and south of the former daw vale residential home.
- Bowring Building Moretonhampstead – The building was transferred to DCC at nil value in 1962. It is proposed to agree the site can be disposed of to facilitate the transfer of the building to Moretonhampstead Bowring Library Charitable Trust following a business case proposal to transfer at nil value as a 'community asset'.

The site is a listed building and was originally gifted to the town for community use. A valuation assessment concluded that the cost of repairs required would outweigh any positive capital receipt

- Land at Ideford (former picnic site), Kingsteignton - on the A380 and has been vacant for a number of years and is not accessible by the public. It is intended that this site is placed on the open market for consideration.
- County Hall Cottage, Exeter – This site is located on the County Hall grounds and is currently vacant.

2b. Update on key property matters in Exmouth, Tiverton and Tavistock

- Exmouth and Tiverton programmes completed since phase 3 update (see link to the [report](#) from 10 October 2024 Land & Property Committee).
- Newton Abbot and Totnes area – DCC is in the process of relocating Adults Services staff to Forde House in January 2025 (Teignbridge District Council) and Children's staff have relocated to Follaton House

(South Hams District Council offices in Totnes). Forde House will also accommodate Trading Standards which will be relocated from Ryefields.

- Ryefields will now be used by Highways, some of the term maintenance contractor staff, Parking Enforcement and Highway planners. The use of Ryefields will mean that the Rydon Depot offices can be declared surplus to avoid significant backlog maintenance costs.

2c. Update on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Property Position

An update was requested on this at the October Land & Property Committee

There is likely to be an increase in locality-based teams working using existing DCC assets, schools offices, district council, libraries etc.

We are repurposing the following assets for SEND:

- Seaton Childrens Centre – proposal to repurpose into SEND provision for Mill Water Special School
- Yeo Valley childrens Centre – proposal to repurpose to support SEHM Cohort for three years from Sept 25 in the first instance.
- Alexandra Centre, Tavistock – subject to listed buildings consent, that is to be repurposed to support SEND places in West Devon.

In addition, Cranbrook – land is identified for a new special school, Devon will hold the freehold.

Further work exploring additional SEND Satellite sites includes:

- Exeter – potential satellite provision from Ellen Tinkham – a similar building to Bodley House that supported the last expansion would be appropriate
- South Hams – as above but for Bidwell Brook
- North Devon – early exploration of opportunities in North Devon

2. Options / Alternatives

DCC has considered three options for Phase 4 of the Property Change Programme:

- a) Dispose – this is the option recommended by this report, to support the property strategy to transform the estate and dispose of the listed properties. These assets will generate significant capital receipts, ongoing revenue savings, and avoids the requirement for revenue and capital investment in the sites for critical backlog maintenance.
- b) Retain – do nothing and retain our portfolio as status quo. This option is not recommended as it has been identified that these buildings are not cost-effective or essential to service delivery as there are other assets where

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services could relocate. This is also not recommended as it will significantly hinder the Council's financial sustainability targets.

- c) Repurpose – opportunities have also been explored to repurpose these assets to meet other corporate priorities, including key worker housing, SEND provision and Children in Care placements and these will be considered based on priority and demand moving forward.

3. Consultations / Representations / Technical Data

Consultations are not required for these disposals as they are not related to closure of service. Where staff or services are being relocated these are within the same locality.

4. Strategic Plan

The Property Change Programme contributes to four of the six priorities in the Council's Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025.

As well as delivering vital capital receipts from rationalising the corporate estate and associated savings from reduced infrastructure services, energy costs, carbon emissions and investing in modern, fit for purpose, energy efficient workplaces, the Property Change Programme will:

- Respond to the climate emergency.
- Support sustainable economic recovery.
- Improve health and wellbeing.
- Help communities be safe, connected and resilient.

5. Financial Considerations

It is estimated that the properties identified in Section 2a above will generate capital receipts in the range of £1.5m - £2.2m (depending on planning approval) and reduce operational revenue costs by circa £50k per annum.

Disposal of surplus property and generating capital receipts is a key strand of the Council's financial strategy. Maximising capital income is important in that it will support financial capacity to invest in essential capital priorities and minimise the need for additional borrowing. This supports the corporate priority of long term financial sustainability, ensuring the Council lives within its means, maintains a balanced budget and adequate reserves.

A key principle in the financial strategy is that capital receipts are not ringfenced, and form part of the pool of general capital resources to support overall priorities.

6. Legal Considerations

The lawful implications of the proposal have been considered in the preparation of this report.

When disposing or repurposing our property assets, the County Council's responsibility is to ensure that all relevant legislation is complied with; this includes Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 (Disposal of land by principal councils), which requires the Authority to obtain 'best consideration' for any property that is disposed of and requires the authority to advertise the potential disposal of public open space land where that is relevant. These obligations will be met in the disposal of any assets.

7. Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change, Sustainability and Socio-economic)

It is anticipated that most sites are likely to be redeveloped for residential or commercial development and will be subject to a Planning Application Process if this takes place.

As part of any planning process it will be necessary in the majority* of cases that Ecology & Bio Diversity Net Gain calculations will be required (* - unless there are specific reasons that planning applications do not require these). Environmental Protection of sites is therefore provided by the planning process.

In addition, the Building Regulations Process also ensures that construction is carried out in a manner which optimises the use of energy & water to be minimise Climate Change impacts.

The Social & Economic Impacts of these sites being developed are likely to be very positive in the case of the Commercial Developments in terms of Job Creation and boosting Devon's Economy. In the case of Residential Development then much needed homes will be created including a proportion of these being Affordable Accommodation which is in significant demand.

8. Equality Considerations

The proposed site disposals in 2a have minimal direct impact on equality considerations as the majority of the sites are land parcels that are not providing a service to the community.

The exception being the Canal House at Grand Western Canal, Tiverton, where the service would be relocated within a 0.8-mile radius to sites with better accessibility and sites that are already visited frequently by members of the public to access DCC and district services.

An equality impact assessment has been completed and is attached to the committee agenda and also available at <https://www.devon.gov.uk/impact/property-change-programme-phase-4/>.

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9. Risk Management Considerations

This proposal has been assessed, and all necessary safeguards or action have been taken to safeguard the Council's position.

The corporate and community risk registers will be reviewed to ensure all relevant risks in the Property Strategy are captured and managed.

10. Summary / Conclusions / Reasons for Recommendations

In summary, occupancy statistics demonstrate that we can reduce our portfolio without detriment to services and this property change programme will reduce our carbon footprint, provide value for money, generate capital receipts, and reduce revenue expenditure contributing towards the financial sustainability of the authority.

The property portfolio will be reviewed as part of an ongoing rolling programme to ensure the estate is aligned to the corporate priorities, including making best use of assets and buildings.

Matthew Jones

Director of Transformation and Business Services

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Policy, Corporate and Asset Management: Councillor James McInnes.

Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers

None

Contact for enquiries:

Name: Jon Williams

Telephone: 01392 381899

Address: County Hall, Exeter, EX2 4QD

The Property Change Programme

Appendix 1

Impact Assessment



- 1 Assessment of: Property Change Programme
- 2 Service: Transformation & Business Services
- 3 Head of Service: Matthew Jones
- 4 Version / date of sign off by Head of Service:
- 5 Assessment carried out by (job title): Assistant Director – Transformation and Lead

1. Description of project under review

The Property Change Programme proposes the disposal for fourteen sites, in locations across Devon. These include:

- Land at Moortown Picnic Site, South of South Molton on North Devon Link Road
- Land at Sidemoor Picnic Site, South of South Molton on North Devon Link Road
- Land at Rooksbridge Former Picnic Site, A39 between Barnstaple & Bideford
- Land at Lydacott Former Picnic Site, A39 between Barnstaple & Bideford
- Canal House at Grand Western Canal, Tiverton
- Land at Honiton Park and Ride, Exeter – South West Corner
- Land at Lemonford Depot, Bickington
- Marldon Oak Valley, Paignton
- Land at Lambeth Walk, Dawlish
- Bowring building, Moretonhampstead
- Land at Ideford (former picnic site) , Kingsteignton
- Silverhill Lodge Garden to west of building, Barnstaple
- Land Parcel in Alphington, Exeter
- County Hall cottage, Exeter

2. Proposal, aims and objectives, and reason for change or review

The aim of the project is to reduce Devon County Councils property portfolio without detriment to services or the local community. We are responding to our corporate priority of 'making best use of assets and buildings'.

The disposal of these sites will generate capital receipts and annual revenue savings to support Devon County Council financial sustainability.

In addition it will reduce our carbon footprint to help us achieve our net zero target of 2030.

The Vision is to ‘Reduce, Dispose, Repurpose and Transform’ the authority’s property portfolio to provide a sustainable estate which promotes and facilitates agile and integrated service delivery.

The key elements of the estate strategy are:

- Identifying properties that are no longer required or are not cost effective.
- Identifying the potential for co-location of services within DCC sites or public sector.
- Opportunities for better use of assets via repurposing to meet key strategic needs.
- Improving the energy efficiency of assets and reducing our carbon.

3. Risk assessment, limitations and options explored (summary)

The impacts of the strategy and the success of the recommendations in minimising those impacts will be included as questions in future staff surveys, to include various factors of feedback, including impact of both staff and customers in the community.

Estates will report regularly on the property rationalisation targets and continually review property to ensure it is being efficiently used.

Economic impacts

Positives	Impact (<i>how</i> they may be affected)	Mitigation/action required
Devon Ratepayers	helps protect need for rises in council tax by decreasing annual demand on revenue budget	
DCC Budgets	Reduces annual revenue costs, backlog maintenance costs and facilitates capital receipts.	

Environmental Impacts

Positive	Impact (<i>how they may be affected</i>)	Mitigation/action required
The environment	The strategy optimises the use of property, reducing the carbon footprint per employee. In this phase we are largely reducing our land holdings, resulting in less environmental impact.	
Carbon/greenhouse gas reduction	We are reducing our output by reducing our portfolio holdings	
Negatives		

Equality

This strategy has an equal impact on people of protected characteristics, including age, disability, gender, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race and ethnicity, religion and beliefs, sexual orientation, Trans-gender/gender identity. All have been taken into consideration when looking at the alternative office bases and service delivery spaces to not have any negative effect on any protected group.

4. People affected, diversity profile and analysis of needs

In phase four of the property change programme, twelve of the sites listed for disposal at land holdings and the disposal stage will not impact people directly.

One site (County Hall Cottage) is vacant and has been previously used to provide short term accommodation to overseas social workers.

One site (Canal House, Tiverton) is used by the rangers for the canal as offices and a small training & education room. The building needs significant investment and given the proximity of other office accommodation in Tiverton (0.8miles), we can relocate the current users. The alternative sites have better accessibility and are sites that are already visited frequently by members of the public to access DCC and district services. We have the opportunity to continue to provide educational visits via the visitors centre located on the canal, near the Canal House.

5. Stakeholders, their interest and potential impacts

Senior management and Elected Members:

Service directors and senior leadership team have been briefed on the strategy and local members have been consulted with on the proposed disposals in phase four.

Services:

Many elements of the strategy are already being implemented as part of the ongoing office rationalisation programme. The service stakeholders involved in these moves have been actively engaged.

6. Additional relevant research used to inform this assessment

N/a

7. Description of consultation process and outcomes

No consultation process is required. Informal consultation has taken place with staff at Canal House affected by these proposals with mitigations and solutions put in place to address any concerns.

8. Equality analysis

As per section 4 of this impact assessment, no equality analysis is applicable as we are not reducing access to services.

9. Human rights considerations:

N/a

10. Environmental analysis

Devon County Council's Environmental Review Process	
Planning Permission	
Environmental Impact Assessment	
Strategic Environmental Assessment	

	Description of any actual or potential negative consequences and consider how to mitigate against these.	Description of any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes and consider how to improve as far as possible.
Reduce, reuse, recycle and compost	N/A	N/A
Conserve and enhance wildlife	Not as part of the disposal process, but to be considered as part of future use and mitigations would be required to protect and conserve wildlife.	N/A
Safeguard the distinctive characteristics, features and special qualities of Devon's landscape	N/A	N/A
Conserve and enhance Devon's cultural and historic heritage	N/A	N/A
Minimise greenhouse gas emissions	N/A	Reduction in the land holdings, so site visits are not required and emissions reduced.
Minimise pollution (including air, land, water, light and noise)	N/A	Reduction in the land holdings, so site visits are not required and emissions reduced.

Contribute to reducing water consumption	N/A	N/A
Ensure resilience to the future effects of climate change (warmer, wetter winters; drier, hotter summers; more intense storms; and rising sea level)	N/A	N/A

11. Economic analysis

	Description of any actual or potential negative consequences and consider how to mitigate against these.	Description of any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes and consider how to improve as far as possible.
Impact on knowledge & skills	N/A	N/A
Impact on employment levels	N/A	N/A
Impact on local business	N/A	N/A