

**NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL
REPORT**

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| To: POLICY & RESOURCES (PROPERTY SUB-COMMITTEE) | Subject: PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS FORMER COATBRIDGE BATHS |
| From: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING & PROPERTY SERVICES | |
| Date: 9 March 2005 | Ref: IN |

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report outlines potential opportunities which are provided by the option to develop the former Municipal Baths, Main Street, Coatbridge.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Council owns a significant site in the centre of Coatbridge within the recognised commercial area, see enclosed plan. The property is the former Municipal Baths and has been unused for some years and comprises a major purpose built brick building with sandstone frontage. The property is currently surplus and in very poor condition while the design renders the property unsuitable for alternative uses. It now provides a redevelopment opportunity for the town.

2.2 In the context of the Council's long term office strategy, there is a need for additional space and a wish to provide modern purpose built office accommodation for use by the Council.

2.3 These two factor indicated that there was a possibility of providing the office accommodation at this location and consequently, at the Policy & Resources (Property) Sub Committee, at its meeting on 6 March 2003, considered the matter and agreed:

- i) The principle of the Council, in partnership with the Health Board, developing offices at the former Municipal Baths, Coatbridge.
- ii) The development of strategies for the implementation of "cross cutting" service provision in Coatbridge in partnership with the public sector partners and other agencies.
- iii) The necessary funding required for scheme development within 2003/2006.
- iv) That negotiations are undertaken with the Health Board to finalise proposals which will be reported to a forthcoming meeting of the Policy and Resources (Property Sub-Committee).

2.4 Following the decision of the Sub Committee discussions were entered into with the Health Board who indicated the possibility of including a Doctor's Centre and associated linked retailers (opticians, pharmacist etc). However, at that stage, they also indicated the project had no capital identified but they might be interested in leasing units within the development. While their requirements formed a part of the consultant's brief for the Feasibility Study, the more immediate concern was that there was no obvious substantial public funding sector partner necessary for a project of this scale. The consequences of the latter point raised the possibility that funding would fall entirely on North Lanarkshire Council.

- 2.5 The Feasibility Study was also required to provide an initial appraisal of the site's development potential to allow further, more detailed consideration of project. Initially 5 design options were identified and each was explored with one identified as the preferred option. It was always recognised that this was a large site and that it was likely to lead to a building in excess of the initial requirements of the Council. With this in mind the with probable uses were identified as:
- Office accommodation (6,800 sq m),
 - District Court (850 sq m),
 - One stop shop (730 sq m),
 - Registrar (210 sq m),
 - Health centre (2,300 sq m)
- 2.6 The cost of construction was calculated at £15.8 million. In addition, the report identified a number of surveys required before considering proceeding i.e. site survey, soil investigation, traffic impact and office demand.

3. **CONSIDERATIONS**

Having developed the project to a preliminary stage it was apparent that, given the scale, costs and implicit risks associated with such a proposal a number of issues required further consideration:

- 3.1 The scale of the office accommodation element within the proposed development was such (6,800 sq m) that NLC would require a significant office reorganisation to utilise it and potential users for the whole development were not immediately apparent. The initial concept was that this would be a "public service" building and from initial discussions with various bodies (Health Board, Police etc) it was going to require complex, detailed process to bring together the parties at the same time as finance was available.
- 3.2 It was recognised that the development potential of the site should be maximised which may require a level of occupancy beyond just the public sector. If it was to be leased to external parties the viability of such a market would require detailed research.
- 3.3 It was further recognised that a major consideration was the potential for this site to be included in a more extensive redevelopment of the town centre. Recent indications are that this in once again under consideration and may require the Bath's site.
- 3.4 At that time the Council were unable to confirm availability of finance, of the scale required, within the foreseeable future. The scale of the commitment, given the size of the Capital Expenditure Programme, was such that very careful further consideration was necessary.
- 3.5 The nature of the site is that it is on several levels which leads to higher development costs.
- 3.6 However, the potential advantages of the proposals identified in the report of 6 March 2003 remain and are included again for reference in appendix 1. Consideration of these can now to be taken in context of the indicative costs.

4. **CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 If the principle of the overall sum is acceptable this development may have considerable merit, as a Public Sector Centre beacon project.
- 4.2 Given the scale of the project, the indicative cost and the requirement to identify "additional" users the risks associated with this project would indicate a considerable amount of further research is required.

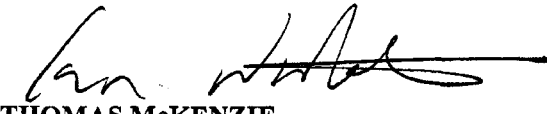
- 4.3 Allocation of substantive funding for construction is not considered appropriate at this time. Indications are that such funding would not be required (or indeed be available given pressures of existing demands on the proposed 06/07 and 07/08) before earliest 07/08.
- 4.4 Consideration should be given to alternative developments that may deliver the Council requirements, in the same vicinity albeit perhaps not on this site e.g. improved value for money (for NLC) may be gained with an extension to Kildonan Street.
- 4.5 The Capital Planning Group has considered funding the required research with a view to the Council reconsidering the viability of the whole issue from a basis of greater knowledge. The Capital Planning Working Group have allocated £75,000 from the Project Development budget for the research and a feasibility report will be available for consideration in due course.

5. ***ACTION PLAN***

- 5.1 The following require to be addressed:
- Alternative requirements from existing town centre owners identified.
 - Identify public sector requirements for the accommodation. This would include NLC and external organisations.
 - Outline designs, construction costs, project costs require to be identified in greater detail.
 - A number of surveys require to be commissioned before considering proceeding i.e. site survey, soil investigation, traffic impact and office demand.
 - Overall financial viability requires to be identified relating to capital and revenue costs and income.
- 5.2 Some of these issues will require external expertise and the intention is that consultants be employed.

6. ***RECOMMENDATION***

- 6.1 It is recommended that Committee:
- (i) approve the principle of progressing this project,
 - (ii) approve the action plan,
 - (iii) note the allocation of funding to deliver the Action Plan,
 - (iv) note that a further update reports be submitted for consideration of the Committee in due course.
 - (v) refer this report to Area Committee for information.


THOMAS MCKENZIE
Director of Housing & Property Services

Contact Officer: Ian Nisbet,
Head of Property Services,
01236 616305

MUNICIPAL BATHS SITE, COATBRIDGE
(Extract from report of 6 March 2003)

This key issues and advantages associated with the proposals for the above development are as follows

1. Poor Condition of Existing Property

Coatbridge baths have been vacant since 17 February 1998 and since then no departmental or private interest has been identified for the property. It is considered unlikely that the site would attract a commercial development without the support of a public authority. The only alternative would be to demolish the existing building and retain the site for future development. The current building continues to attract expenditure in the form of rates and maintenance.

2. Options For Replacement

The Health Board who occupy the adjacent property have expressed an interest in replacing their existing office accommodation and favour a joint development on the existing site. This provides a unique opportunity to the Council to retain the Health Board's presence within Coatbridge Town Centre and to develop a multi-agency public authority facility within Coatbridge.

3. Supporting Council Strategies

The Council has adopted a Corporate Policy to support Town Centre Development and the re-development of Coatbridge baths site affords an opportunity to regenerate a major town centre within North Lanarkshire.

4. Multi-Agency Opportunities

A new development at the former baths site would provide modern office accommodation and an ideal location for a purpose built First Stop Shop. This would provide not only an access to Council services but also Health Board facilities and could be developed to include other Agencies such as DSS and Police.

5. Development Potential

The redevelopment of the former baths and the Health Board property will provide up to 6,000 sq m of offices and while the final requirements of the parties will have to be established the Council could have the opportunity of securing 3,000 sq m at this location. This gives the Council the opportunity to review its existing property holding as an intermediate step to achieving the objectives set out in the Long-term Office Accommodation Strategy.

6./

6. Property Requirements

Housing and Property Services is currently addressing departmental requests for offices which extend to 2,850 sq m. In addition, the proposed development would allow an opportunity to relocate services currently in inadequate accommodation such as the Coatbridge Registrar and consider the replacement of older offices such as 453 Main Street, Coatbridge and Broomknoll Street, Airdrie. It is considered that justifiable proposals for the accommodation can be developed.

7. Service Opportunities

The proposed development provides a number of opportunities for improvements in services. The multi-agency First Stop Shop may require Departments to consider what services should be provided within the offices to support this initiative. Also, the proposed development will provide an opportunity to accommodate disabled access to Council offices at 124 Main Street Coatbridge, which are situated at first and second floor level in the adjacent building. The offices are currently occupied by Housing and the availability of accommodation may allow an opportunity to consolidate Housing staff in Coatbridge and release accommodation at Kildonan Street and elsewhere.

8. Coatbridge Registrars

The Registrar is currently in first floor accommodation with no lift, which causes problems for disabled users and the large number of parents registering new-born babies and who in many cases require access with prams.

9. Timetable

The timetable will be determined following agreement with Health Board, but it is likely that the development would take 2-3 years, however the Council should make funds available in the forthcoming financial year to support professional fees etc. in working up the proposal.

LOCATION PLAN – For Information Only



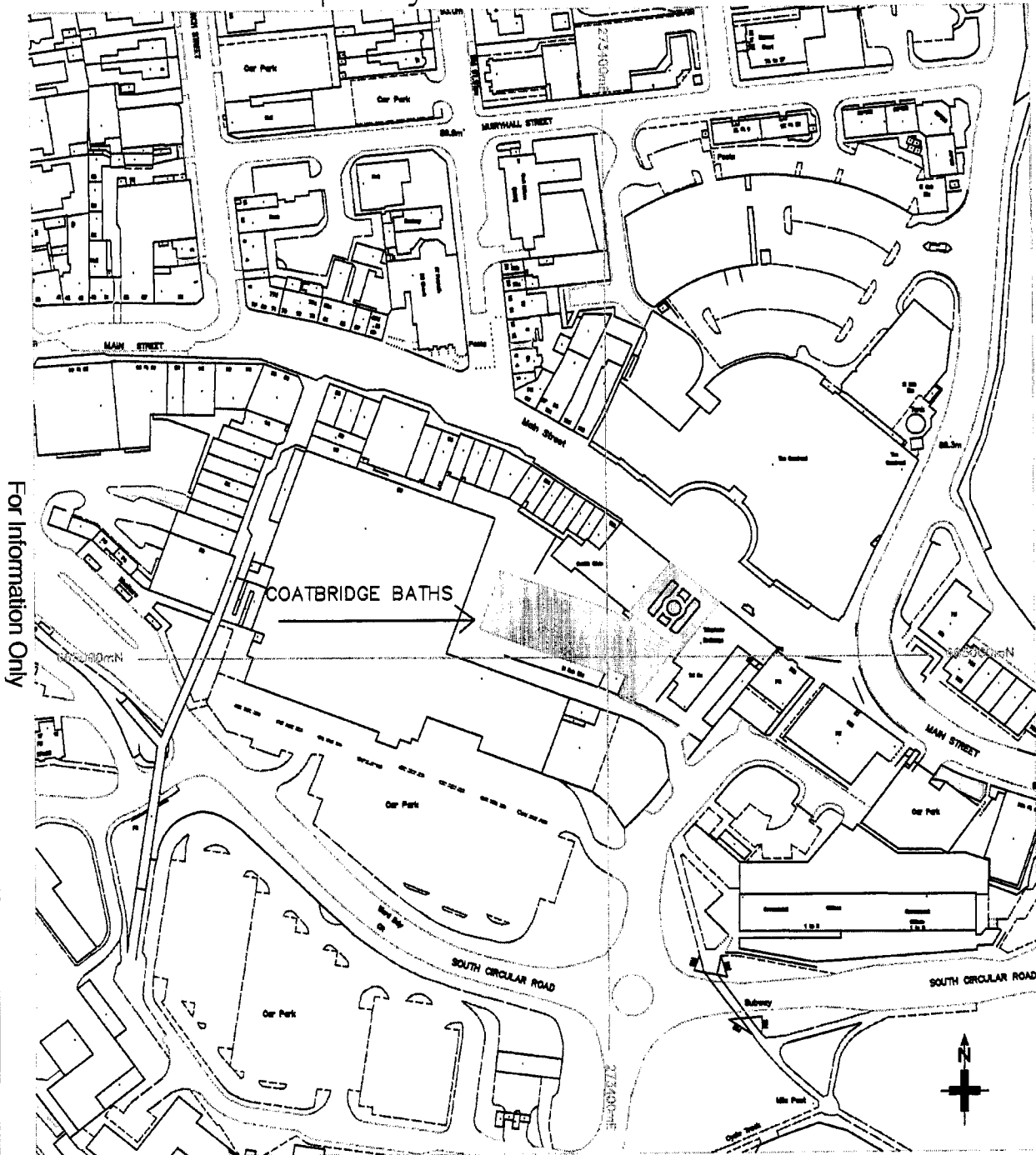
Title: COATBRIDGE BATHS
(INDICATIVE BOUNDARYS ONLY)

Scale 1:N.T.S.

Town: COATBRIDGE

Date: 02/03/05

Property Services Division



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DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND PROPERTY SERVICES

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 Director of Housing & Property Services
 North Lanarkshire Council
 Fleming House
 2 Tryst Road, Cumbernauld, G67 1JW