

REPORT OF THE LEAD CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMY, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

The Lead Cabinet Member for Economy, Transport and Environment, Councillor C Maynard, met on 6 September 2010.

Attendance: Councillor Maynard (Lead Cabinet Member for Economy, Transport and Environment)

Also present: Councillors Daniel, Freeman, Glazier, Rodohan, Scott, Stogdon and Taylor

1. Notice of Motion:

1.1 The Lead Cabinet Member has considered a report by the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment concerning a Notice of Motion which was submitted by Councillor Scott to the Chairman prior to the Council agenda for the meeting on 19 July 2011 being published. The Notice of Motion states: *This Council acknowledges that the condition of several of the long-term empty properties it has acquired in The Green/Gillsmans Hill area of St Leonards is unacceptable. It accepts responsibility for their poor appearance and condition and instructs officers to ensure all of them are brought up to an acceptable and habitable condition and that steps are taken to bring them back into occupation.* The Chairman agreed that the Notice of Motion should be considered by the Lead Cabinet Member for Economy, Transport and Environment prior to it being reported to the Council Meeting on 18 October 2011.

1.2 The properties referred to in the Notice of Motion are shown on the plan attached as Appendix 1 and are detailed below following the notation on the plan

Property	Address	Status
1	The Ooty, 46 The Green	Vacant site, boarded with scaffolding
2	Olive Lodge, Gillsmans Hill	Occupied
3	Rose Cottage, Gillsmans Hill	Vacant & boarded
4	Springfield Mews, Gillsmans Hill	Tenanted
5	70 Sedlescombe Road South	Part used for advertising. Vacant
6	68 Sedlescombe Road South	Tenanted
7	66 Sedlescombe Road South	Vacant & boarded

1.3 The properties were acquired for the construction of the Hastings Spur Road Phase 2, which was adopted in September 1977, and was required consequential to the development of the Bexhill/Hastings Link Road or its predecessor scheme. The Scheme was re-confirmed in 1992 and amended in 1995. As such, with the exception of The Ooty, 46 The Green, the properties have not been declared surplus to requirements. They have been regarded as short-life properties and the maintenance regimes have been kept to a minimum to avoid abortive expenditure. Properties 2, 4, and 6 above are still in a habitable condition.

1.4 In June 2008, The Ooty, 46 The Green was declared surplus to the Council's requirements since when the Adult Social Care Department has been in discussions with Ability Housing Association regarding the construction of an extra-care housing scheme and those discussions are continuing. In the meantime the Department has assumed management responsibility for the property and, following complaints, vegetation within the garden was recently cut back, leading to further complaints that the action taken was too drastic. Proposals have now been made for some limited planting to the periphery of the site to provide a screen. This property is within a

ECONOMY, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

conservation area and Hastings Borough Council (HBC) has been keen to seek retention of elements of the original building in any redevelopment. Due to the condition of the property this is felt to be impractical.

1.5 The need to retain the other properties in the ownership of the County Council for the purpose of the Spur Road has been reviewed and will be the subject of consultation. In the meantime, due to the plans for the Spur Road, the maintenance regime has been minimal with periodic cosmetic and security works. The Ooty, 46 The Green is in an unstable condition with scaffolding erected to the frontage of The Green to provide support and as a precaution against its collapse. Rose Cottage was boarded up some years ago when the condition of the interior became unsafe. 66 Sedlescombe Road South has been boarded up ever since it suffered fire damage.

1.6 No works, apart from clearance of the garden to The Ooty, 46 The Green, have been carried out to the properties for some time. External decorations are poor and vegetation has grown up to the front of the properties adding to their unkempt condition. HBC has an ongoing campaign to improve the amenity of the Borough through persuasion of landowners to bring properties in disrepair into a better condition. HBC has lobbied the Council for improvement and use of these buildings for some time.

1.7 Work will be immediately put in hand to improve the external appearance of the properties, and local Members will be involved in agreeing the nature of these works. It would also be useful to engage with local residents and Hastings Voluntary Action as part of this process.

1.8 Bringing the unused properties up to a habitable condition would involve very extensive works the total cost of which is estimated to be in the order of £200k. This cannot be justified because the County Council has no duty to provide housing and, if the highways proposals proceed, this will be abortive expenditure. Should the highways proposals be rescinded the most cost-effective method to achieve refurbishment would be disposal. In respect of The Ooty, 46 The Green it has now been established that the site is not regarded as appropriate for redevelopment as housing for learning disability residents and, therefore, it can now be disposed of.

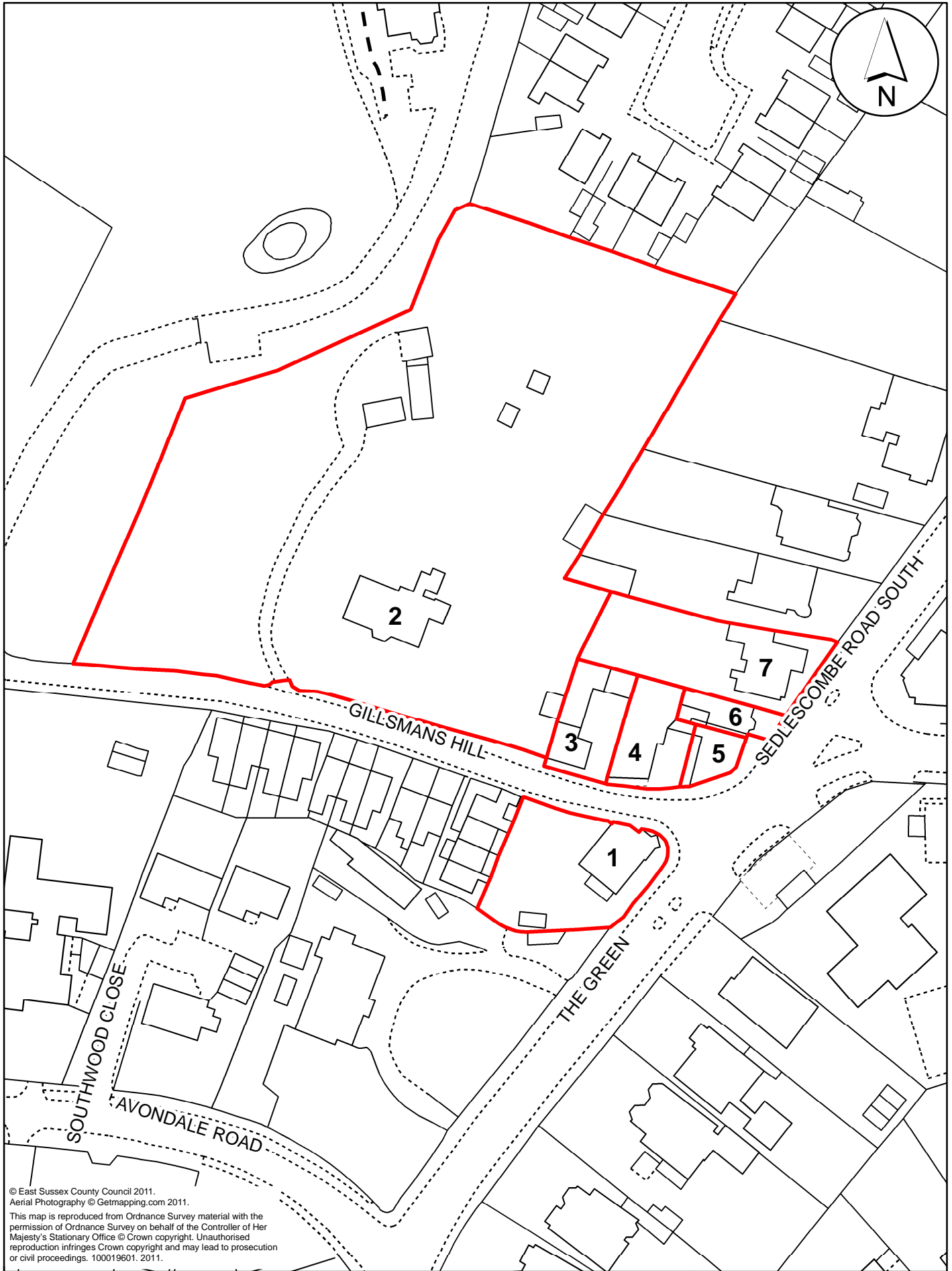
1.9 The Lead Cabinet Member **recommends** the County Council to advise Councillor Scott that –

☆ immediate steps will be taken to improve the appearance of these properties and keep them in an acceptable condition until such time as they are either needed for development or declared surplus to requirements and sold; and


☆ the cost of bringing all properties into a habitable condition is prohibitive, particularly in the current financial climate.

6 September 2010

CARL MAYNARD
Lead Cabinet Member for
Economy, Transport and
Environment



© East Sussex County Council 2011.
 Aerial Photography © Getmapping.com 2011.
 This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. 100019601. 2011.

Map Title: Properties around Gillsmans Hill, St Leonards		East Sussex County Council County Hall St Annes Crescent Lewes 
Date: 17 Aug 2011	Map No: 1	
Scale: 1:1,000	Author: Asset Management	