

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & CULTURE COMMITTEE

## Agenda Item 12

Brighton & Hove City  
Council

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>St Aubyns Planning Brief</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>2014 – Economic Development and Culture Committee</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Executive Director Environment, Development &amp; Housing</b>		
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>Rottingdean Coastal</b>		

## FOR GENERAL RELEASE

### 1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to consult on a draft planning brief (attached as Appendix 1 to this report) that has been prepared in respect of the former St Aubyns school site in Rottingdean. The main school building, including its chapel, is a Grade II listed building and lies within the Rottingdean Conservation Area. The main objective of the planning brief is to provide a planning framework for the future redevelopment of the site within a heritage sensitive context.
- 1.2 The draft planning brief establishes development principles that meet the needs of the local community and the landowner, whilst respecting the character of the existing heritage assets (conservation area and listed buildings) both within the site and in the surrounding area. These principles have been balanced against the need to provide for a financially viable development to attract the necessary development finance streams to secure the site's deliverability.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Economic Development and Culture Committee approve the St Aubyns draft planning brief attached as Appendix 1 to this report for consultation with members of the public and other stakeholders.

### 3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The former school site and playing fields are currently owned by the Cothill Educational Trust (CET), an educational charity which runs a number of independent preparatory schools across the UK as well as a field study centre

and two schools in France. The school was merged with the CET in April 2012 after a period of lengthy negotiation with the school's Governing Body. Following this merger, the CET carried out various immediate improvements to the main school building to address some of the structural problems with the building. Unfortunately, these improvements were not sufficient to boost the schools attractiveness to parents seeking a private education for their children. Declining school rolls together with the projected losses for the forthcoming years were deemed to be substantial by the Trust, resulting in the school's eventual closure in April 2013.

- 3.2 In the Summer of 2013, the Planning team were approached by Rottingdean Parish Council, who were keen for a Planning Brief to be produced which would guide the future redevelopment of this important site within the heart of Rottingdean village. Since then, officers have been working closely with Rottingdean Parish Council, the landowner (CET) and local ward councillors to establish their aspirations for the future redevelopment of the site. The feedback from these early stakeholder meetings has been used to inform the development principles contained within the draft planning brief.
- 3.3 Given that the site is within a conservation area and contains Grade II and curtilage listed buildings, it was felt important that the draft brief provided for a financially viable development whilst respecting the character of the existing heritage assets both within the site and in the surrounding area. In particular, the cost of restoring the listed and curtilage listed buildings and bringing them back into economic use, is likely to be significant and will strongly influence the redevelopment options for this site. In the light of this, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) has commissioned a viability appraisal, the findings of which will be shared with members of the public and other key stakeholders during the six week formal consultation on the draft brief and will also be used to inform the final version of the planning brief.

#### **4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 The draft planning brief has been prepared by Brighton & Hove City Council (the local planning authority) with the involvement of Rottingdean Parish Council (RPC) and the current owners of the site (Cothill Educational Trust – CET). Several joint meetings have been held with both parties present to keep them informed about the planning process and to provide feedback at key stages of the development of the draft brief. Both the RPC and CET are supportive of the approach and emerging content of the planning brief.
- 4.2 There have been a number of site visits undertaken with various officers of the council, most notably the Conservation Officer, Parks and Green Spaces Officer and Arboriculturalist. This has enabled a thorough exploration of the particular challenges associated with bringing forward a sensitive redevelopment of the site.
- 4.3 Meetings to discuss the content of the draft brief have also been held with local ward councillors as well as the Chair of the council's Economic Development & Culture Committee. They emphasised the need for the brief to address local

concerns regarding the future redevelopment of the site and to provide net benefits to the local community, including:

- development which integrates well with the listed building, conservation area and the wider local context;
- the retention and re-use of the listed main building (including the chapel) and other listed elements within the site's curtilage;
- public access to the playing fields and/ or open space;
- providing for deficiencies in the existing community infrastructure through new development and/ or through developer contributions.

4.4 The draft brief was also circulated to internal officers of the council for comment in May 2014, including officers within the Heritage, Transport, Parks, Education, Housing, Planning Policy, Development Control and Sustainability teams. Comments and feedback received from officers has been used to inform the development and content of the draft brief.

4.5 Discussions held with the council's Head of Education Planning and Contracts have confirmed that the site is unlikely to be called upon to make up for any shortfall in local authority school place provision. The Brighton & Hove School Organisation Plan 2013-17 acknowledges that an increase in primary school places in the wider local area is needed to meet the growth in population in this age group but that the council's preferred approach is to expand capacity at Saltdean Primary School. Initial public consultation on a proposal to increase the size of Saltdean Primary School by one class per year group is currently underway and will close on 30 June 2014. Nevertheless, the draft planning brief does not preclude the future use of the site for educational purposes.

4.6 Other key stakeholders including English Heritage, Sport England, local amenity groups (i.e. Rottingdean Preservation Society), businesses, residents, community organisations etc. will be consulted as part of the wider six week consultation period on the draft brief and informed about how to make representations.

4.7 Public consultation will be undertaken over a six week period timetabled for September 2014. This will include a public exhibition in the former school building to maximise participation by key stakeholders and encourage their feedback on the draft planning brief. There will also be an online consultation for the draft brief using the council's consultation portal.

## **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### **5.1 Financial Implications:**

Staff costs relating to the Planning Brief will be met from within existing Brighton & Hove City Council budgets. However, the costs of producing the exhibition material and publicising the public consultation will be funded by Rottingdean Parish Council. The viability appraisal will be independently commissioned by Brighton & Hove City Council but will be financed by the landowner (CET).

## 5.2 Legal Implications:

Although the planning brief does not have the status of a statutory planning document, once adopted it will nonetheless be accorded weight as a material planning consideration in the determination of relevant planning applications.

It is not considered that any adverse human rights implications arise from the report.

*Lawyer Consulted: Hilary Woodward*

*Date: 30/04/14*

## 5.3 Equalities Implications:

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) of the Planning Projects service was undertaken in 2010. This included good practice in relation to the preparation and consultation on planning briefs. An EQIA has also been conducted in support of the Proposed Submission City Plan Part 1 Feb 2013, which has involved an extensive consultation programme. Officers have followed this best practice to ensure that the consultation on the draft brief does not exclude people from the process and encompasses hard-to-reach groups.

## 5.4 Sustainability Implications:

The draft planning brief refers directly to the need for future proposals and planning applications to comply with the requirements of Supplementary Planning Document 08 – Sustainable Building Design and appropriate City Plan/Local Plan policies. The retention and reuse of a locally listed but vacant heritage asset will make a sustainable and positive contribution to the character of the Rottingdean Conservation Area.

## 5.5 Crime & Disorder Implications:

The draft planning brief advocates the retention and reuse of the former St Aubyns school site to bring it back into active use. The redevelopment of this important heritage site should therefore help to prevent the building from being squatted and/ or vandalised in the future. The current landowner (CET) also employs a caretaker on the site to ensure that the security of the site and the school is not breached.

## 5.6 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

There is a risk that planning briefs may advocate development options which are unviable to develop and thereby fail to meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework. In order to mitigate this risk, a viability appraisal will inform the content of the final version of the planning brief.

## 5.7 Public Health Implications:

The draft planning brief advocates development of the site to be of the highest possible standard. If the site is to bring forward residential development, the brief requires all residential units to be built to lifetime homes standards and, in line with the Local Plan/ City Plan, 40% affordable housing units. Where appropriate, financial contributions will be sought from developers, to mitigate the impact of development on the local area e.g. through health, education, transport contributions etc.

5.8 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

The preferred development options contained in the draft brief advocate the reuse and retention of both the Grade II listed and curtilage listed heritage assets and emphasises the site's positive contribution to the character of Rottingdean Conservation Area.

**6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

- 6.1 An alternative option is to "do nothing" i.e. not to produce a planning brief. This option has been discounted because of the need to address the future redevelopment of the site in a comprehensive manner which befits its heritage sensitive location. This has highlighted the need for planning guidance to provide clarity to developers regarding the appropriate scale of development, potential land uses and other material planning issues with regard to any future proposals and planning applications for this site.

**7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 Public consultation in respect of planning documents is an integral element in ensuring that wide ranging views are taken into account and inform the council's decision-making process.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**Appendices:**

1. St Aubyns School Site – Draft Planning Brief

**Documents in Members' Rooms**

None

**Background Documents**

1. Rottingdean Conservation Area Character Statement
2. Brighton & Hove Local Plan 2005
3. Submission City Plan Part 1 Feb 2013
4. National Planning Policy Framework 2012
5. Planning Practice Guidance 2014

