

Report

Subject : Concept Statement: Highbury and Fisherton Manor School Sites

Report to : The Cabinet

Date : Wednesday 28 March 2007

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Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development: Cllr Mrs Brown

1. Purpose of the Report:

- 1.1 A draft Concept Statement has been prepared for the Highbury and Fisherton Manor School sites by consultants Terence O'Rourke on behalf of Wiltshire County Council, in partnership with Salisbury District Council. The Statement is at Appendix 1 to this report.
- 1.2 The draft Concept Statement was released for consultation during August and September 2006, which included public exhibition. This report now considers the issues raised in the consultation period, and highlights the principal changes made to the Statement as a result. During and since the consultation period, the draft Concept Statement has been available to view at the Planning Office reception at Wyndham Road and online at <http://www.salisbury.gov.uk/planning/forward-planning/highbury-fisherton.htm>.
- 1.3 The City Area planning committee considered this item at its meetings on 8 February and 8 March. Its comments are given below in this report, and at Appendix 4 where officer comment and the proposed amendments to the Statement are also set out.
- 1.4 Subject to acceptance that all the issues raised have been satisfactorily addressed and that the changes made are appropriate, the report recommends that the revised Concept Statement be adopted in full as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

2. Background:

- 2.1 Wiltshire County Council is putting in place a new two-tier system of school provision in Salisbury, to replace the three-tier system. As part of this programme, it is seeking to replace Highbury and Fisherton Manor schools with a single new school. As noted in the draft Concept Statement, redevelopment of this site is an opportunity to deliver a high-quality new primary school, which would be a significant improvement on the existing premises.



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- 2.2 Following initial discussions at the end of 2004 regarding the need to provide a new school, officers from Salisbury District Council and Wiltshire County Council agreed that a comprehensive overview of the project needed to be put in place in order that local people and decision-makers were fully informed about the issues and options available. A public consultation exercise took place in June 2005 on two different concepts for the site.
- 2.3 The area dealt with by the present Concept Statement is a relatively large site encompassing the Highbury and Fisherton Manor Schools, the existing school playing field, and other uses immediately to the east, including the Foyer and proposed court building.
- 2.4 The Concept Statement sets out key land use proposals for the site and broad principles for development, in order to act as a bridge towards future planning applications. The proposals deal with the re-use of the brownfield part of the site in a way which releases capital value to enable the new school to come forward earlier than would otherwise be the case.
- 2.5 A key part of the Concept Statement preparation process has been public consultation in order both to inform and to gain views, which can be taken into account in shaping the development. The ultimate goal is to identify a development solution that optimises the benefits of the development and minimises any negative impacts.

3 Results of public consultation:

- 3.1 A formal period of public consultation was undertaken in respect of the draft Concept Statement between 14 August and 22 September 2006. At the close of the consultation period, 31 formal responses had been received. Of these, 17 were in support, 12 were in objection, and 2 were neutral or not clearly in favour or against. In addition, a number of individuals submitted comments informally via post-it notes at the exhibition.
- 3.2 As this document was drafted as a Concept Statement and not a more detailed Development Brief, respondents to the consultation naturally had questions and concerns about areas of uncertainty. Many of these concerns are dealt with either through clarifications to the text of the Concept Statement, or through reference to adopted policies which would be applied to any future planning application.
- 3.3 The input of all consultees to this exercise is welcome and has enabled improvements and clarifications to the brief in a number of areas. A full summary of the issues raised by respondents is set out in the table at Appendix 2 to this report, along with officer comment. Proposed alterations to the brief are set out in the right-hand column in response to these points.
- 3.4 The following section examines the issues that solicited the most interest and concern during the public consultation, and/or which resulted in significant alterations to the Brief.

4. Main issues from public consultation:

Need for new school

- 4.1 It is evident that the existing school facilities are outdated and fail to meet the standards expected today. Inadequacies of the buildings themselves include: the size of classrooms; level changes within the building; damp; outdated mechanical, electrical and heating systems; and presence of asbestos. More generally there are problems associated with layout, access, security, topography, and lack of shade. Given these issues, the refurbishment or adaptation of the existing buildings is considered inappropriate, as is the option of sale for other uses.
- 4.2 The majority of respondents agreed with the principle of developing a new school facility, due to the poor and sub-standard environment for education that the current buildings provide. This included some individuals who for various reasons objected to the Concept Statement as presented, but who nevertheless recognised the desirability of redevelopment in some form.

Details of new development

- 4.3 Some concerns were raised over the quality of any new development on the site, including issues such as materials, retention of trees, and the impact upon existing views. Whilst at this stage the precise details are not known, the adopted design guide 'Creating Places' ensures that good design is

placed at the heart of all new development, and will be applied on this site as any other. Officers will use this as a tool to ensure that all replacement buildings on the site will be to the highest standards. A clearer reference to this document has been made in the revised Concept Statement.

- 4.4 Some respondents raised questions over the affordable housing component within the proposed residential area on the site. The adopted SPG on Affordable Housing, which allows the Council to negotiate up to 40% affordable housing, will be adhered to in any future application, taking into account that the area around the city is known to have the greatest need. In terms of distribution of affordable housing within the site, the SPG seeks to ensure that it is distributed in a measured fashion to avoid creating 'enclaves'. Again, a clearer reference to this policy has been given in the revised Concept Statement.
- 4.5 Several respondents raised concerns over the arrangements for parking within the site. Adequate parking provision throughout will naturally be provided throughout in accordance with Local Plan requirements, and this point has been reiterated in the revised Concept Statement.

"Busy Bees" pre-school facility

- 4.6 The draft Concept Statement did not expressly state what future arrangements with the "Busy Bees" pre-school would be, and several respondents raised concerns on this point (indeed 2 of the 12 objections received appeared to be largely or wholly based on this concern).
- 4.7 A new location for the pre-school within the overall scheme has now been identified and it is expected that the facility will be relocated there subject to funding. The revised Concept Statement indicates this location.

Open space and woodland area

- 4.8 Several questions emerged over the proposed bat house, conservation, and access to the woodland area. The overriding aim will be to conserve the woodland environment and secure fencing would ensure children are unable to gain unsupervised access to the Bat House, although supervised access may be permitted, providing this has no adverse impact on the bats. The bat house is within the bats' territory and hence would be found and used by them once the current buildings have been demolished (demolition would occur in their absence). Management of these will need to accord with the conditions imposed by a Natural England Licence.
- 4.9 One respondent was concerned over dog fouling in the school fields: the revised Concept Statement confirms that there would be no access for dog walkers on the school playing fields.

Other amendments

- 4.10 Several respondents were concerned over the detrimental impact and risks associated with demolition and construction on the site, such as vandalism and hazardous materials. It can be confirmed that the site would be secured during and after demolition to stop trespassing. Hours of operations for demolition would be designed to minimise impacts on neighbours. Construction working would be controlled by conditions on the planning permission that must be obtained before development can commence. Suitable measures would also be put in place to ensure safe removal of hazardous substances and that no contamination occurs on adjoining sites.
- 4.11 Access and safety were recurrent areas of concern and it should be reiterated that the new residential development would introduce provisions to ensure child and parent safety whilst accessing the school. This includes a separate pedestrian/cycle route from Highbury Avenue into the site and ensuring that clear routes through the residential area are provided.

5. Consideration by City Area Committee:

- 5.1 The City Area Committee considered the matter on 8 February 2007. It endorsed the Statement and a range of amendments stemming from issues raised in the consultation period. It resolved that the Statement be taken forward for consultation with statutory consultees. The committee also made comments to be considered in the revision of the Statement.

5.2 Comments from City Area Committee at its February meeting were as follows:

1. *There was a need for pedestrian access between areas B and F of the Concept Plan.*
2. *The possibility of a drop-off/collection point on Highbury Avenue should be revisited.*
3. *The Concept Statement should not encourage housing of an excessively high scale and density.*
4. *The council should be encouraged to negotiate for planning gain for the nursery site.*
5. *Consideration should be given to the existence of a pair of semi-detached Victorian houses in area E of the Concept Plan.*
6. *Consideration should also be given to the provision of playground facilities in such a way as not to cause problems to local residents.*

5.3 These comments are considered in detail at Appendix 4. Several amendments of wording to the Statement are proposed as a result, and broadly the concerns previously raised by the committee can be accommodated.

5.4 City Area Committee again considered the Statement on 8 March 2007.

6. Statutory consultees' input:

6.1 Following initial endorsement by City Area Committee, comments were received from a number of public bodies, utilities and other interested organisations in respect of the draft Statement, and these are considered in detail at Appendix 3.

6.2 In general this input was neutral or positive, and amendments, improvements and clarifications to the Statement are suggested in many areas, as detailed in the table in the right-hand column.

6.3 Many of the issues raised relate to the planning application stage, and do not necessitate action at this stage or amendments to the Statement.

6. Next Steps:

6.1 Subject to the agreement of the changes set out in this report and the attached tables in the Appendices, it is recommended that the Cabinet formally adopt the Concept Statement.

6.2 If members are minded to do so, the statement will enable a greater degree of control by this Authority over future development on the site.

6.3 In the absence of an adopted Concept Statement, applications on the site could in any event be submitted and there would be greater difficulty in ensuring the outcomes sought within the Statement.

7. Recommendation:

7.1 That members accept the proposed changes as set out in this report and in the revised Concept Statement attached to the report and adopt the Concept Statement as a material consideration in the determination of future planning applications on the site.

8. Background Papers:

Salisbury District Local Plan (June 2003)

Available at www.salisbury.gov.uk/planning via the Forward Planning web page.

9. Implications:

- **Financial** : None
- **Legal** : As set out in the report
- **Human Rights** : Article 6 (the right to a fair hearing) may apply. The consultation process contributes to compliance with this.
- **Personnel** : None at this stage
- **ICT** : None
- **Community Safety** : None at this stage
- **Council's Core Values**: Excellent service, thriving economy, fairness & equality, open council & willing partner, communicating with the public, supporting the disadvantaged, protecting the environment.
- **Parish Affected** : Fisherton and Bemerton Village