

# **West Wiltshire District Council**

## **Cabinet**

**29th September 2004**

### **Brook Hall, Brokerswood, Heywood.**

#### **1. Purpose**

To approve work towards a long-term strategy for The Early Wing and associated buildings at Brook Hall, Brokerswood.

#### **1. Background**

Brook Hall is made up of a series of buildings the most important of them being a medieval lodging range and is a Grade I listed building. The Early Wing (as it is known) is a unique building of major significance in the South West of England, regarded by English Heritage as one of the highest priority Buildings at Risk. The condition of the structure has rapidly deteriorated over recent years and resulted in issuing an Urgent Works Notice in August 2001 and its subsequent implementation in March 2002.

Other buildings that make up this complex include a Grade II listed Farmhouse with medieval origins, several vernacular outbuildings of agricultural function and design and walled courtyards.

This report has been prepared following a series of special internal project meetings that have been held on this matter since the Urgent Works Notice was implemented. These meetings have involved representatives from English Heritage and the Wiltshire Historic Buildings Trust, together with officers from the Council.

#### **3. Key Issues**

In order to provide long-term conservation for this site, it is appropriate to work towards a strategy that deals with the following issues;

- Repair
- Restoration
- Finding a viable use.

A report outlining the issues on this site was taken to a special Planning Committee on the 12<sup>th</sup> July. Members voted unanimously to recommend to Cabinet: -

- deferring enforcement action on the partly converted agricultural buildings,
- investigating a strategy for further action to conserve the buildings,
- pursuing arrangements for a partnership agreement with The Wiltshire Historic Buildings Trust.

The position has now been reached where the Council needs to consider if there is further action it wishes to take as part of its statutory duty to ensure the preservation of this listed building. Officers have received confirmation of the Trust's willingness to be involved in arranging a back to back partnership that would entail them taking over ownership of the site immediately after the Council. However, the details of this arrangement need to be thoroughly considered so that a robust package can be brought before Members on this matter. As this is not yet available, it is considered premature to be assessing a strategy that includes a Repairs Notice at this time. As an interim measure the Cabinet are asked to consider a package as detailed in Section 4.

#### 4. Options

In order to ensure that the buildings on this site, especially the Early Wing, are prevented from further deterioration, the following is recommended;

- **Urgent Works Notice** - Subject to results of further structural monitoring by English Heritage, another Urgent Works Notice on the Early Wing and adjacent out-building should be investigated. This is because recent readings have indicated further structural movement in the Early Wing. Although the external walls have now been shored up, it appears that the internal walls are moving inwards. The adjacent building is suffering from a leaking roof and apparent movement on the end wall. A recent request for further repairs by the owners has been ignored. An Urgent Works Notice to prevent further movement and prevent water ingress into the buildings would therefore ensure that the buildings are protected from further deterioration.
- **Brief** A Statement of Significance and Brief has been prepared and is attached as **Appendix 1** to this report. This document highlights the importance of each building and the relationship between the various buildings and structures that are formed around the courtyard and the Early Wing at Brook Hall. The purpose of the Brief is to investigate potential viable uses that will generate sufficient income in order to carry out the restoration and find a long-term future for the whole site. A period of public consultation is required so that the brief can be adopted by the Council and used for future Development Control purposes.
- **Further Discussions with The Wiltshire Historic Buildings Trust**. In order to bring a robust package back to Cabinet outlining a future partnership strategy with the Trust, it is considered necessary to continue discussions with the Trust. This will provide details on how the back to back arrangement will work, the repair and restoration details, including costs and identifying the preferred uses for the site. The package will also include a risk assessment of such an approach together with details of the exit strategy proposed.
- **Grant Assistance**. There are potential sources of financial assistance available including grant aid from English Heritage and this council. Further assistance may also be available through the DEFRA grants that are due to come in from April 2005. This all needs further investigation before it can be included but it is anticipated that there will be assistance towards both repairs and the more involved restoration works. It is important in view of the longer-term strategy that a robust level of finance can be achieved.

#### ***Financial Implications***

The financial implications of the Urgent Works Notice are by no means finalised, as the exact extent of the works are yet to be determined. WWDC and English Heritage provided the funding for the previous Notice. English Heritage contributed 80% of those costs. The costs of this new work are likely to exceed more than £15,000 and a grant from English Heritage towards this work will again be sought.

There are no financial implications for the Brief.

There are no financial implications for preparing a partnership strategy with The Wiltshire Historic Buildings Trust.

There are no financial implications for investigating grants.

#### ***Legal Implications.***

At this stage there are no legal implications.

#### ***Human Rights***

The human rights implications of the actions recommended in this report have been considered and are acceptable and the checklist has been addressed.

#### 5. List of Background Papers.

Letter from the Wiltshire Historic Buildings Trust 12<sup>th</sup> August 2004.

Planning Committee Agenda and Minutes from 12<sup>th</sup> July 2004.

## **6. Recommendations**

**It is recommended that Cabinet approve: -**

- **the preparation of an Urgent Works Notice**
  - **the draft Brief for consultation.**
  - **further negotiations with the Wiltshire Historic Buildings Trust.**
  - **investigating grant availability.**
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- **Cabinet notes that a further report will be brought to Cabinet by the end of the year to approve a final brief and to consider the details of an Urgent Works Notice.**

## **Plain English Guidance Given**

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**August 2004**

### **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1- Statement of Significance and Brief

