

West Wiltshire District Council

Cabinet

20th April 2005

Brook Hall, Brokerswood, Heywood.

1. Purpose

To agree the Statement of Significance and Brief for The Early Wing and associated buildings at Brook Hall, Brokerswood. A further update on the funding is also provided.

2. Background

A recent report was brought to Cabinet on 30th March 2005 that provided further information on this matter. It is therefore considered unnecessary to go over this information again. There are however two issues that require agreement from Cabinet;

- The acceptance of the grant offer from English Heritage for a specialist consultant.
- To report the findings of the consultation on the Statement of Significance and Brief so that this document can be used as the basis for development control purposes for any future proposals for the Lodging Range.

3. Key Issues

3.1 Role of English Heritage

3.1.1 The monitoring of the Lodging Range is still ongoing and English Heritage's findings will be reported as soon as they are known. However, what is clear is that the degradation of the internal rubble core to the main walls of the structure is continuing at an alarming rate and could spread to other areas of this building if it is not treated soon. The latest monitoring by English Heritage was undertaken in March 2005, as previously reported, but the results that are not available as yet are unlikely to alter the fact that the problems with this structure cannot be remedied unless extensive structural repairs are undertaken promptly.

3.1.2 As part of the work to investigate alternative sources of funding, an application for grant assistance from English Heritage was made last year. This was successfully achieved and a grant of £16,000 has been awarded by English Heritage towards the appointment of an external consultant to undertake a number of areas of research in producing a comprehensive report on the building. This would constitute 80% towards the costs of commissioning external consultants. The remaining amount will be provided from the Historic Buildings Renovation budget. The consultants will be required to undertake;

- Conservation based documentary research into the development of the early range to establish the quality and validity of this documentation and to identify the major stages of the building's development, decline and periodic repair. This is to provide an understanding of the way this structure and related buildings have evolved.
- Investigate the condition of the early range, including below-ground masonry and drainage in accordance with an approved brief, using a suitably qualified and experienced professional team and carried out in liaison with the historic research. Production of a drawn survey is also required.
- Prepare an outline schedule of repair works to form the basis of further works if required in the future.

- Although not included in English Heritage's grant conditions, it is considered that the specialist consultant should also undertake investigation into the potential of an exit strategy together with a viability study on the uses proposed in the Brief.

3.2 Consultation results on the Statement of Significance and Brief.

- 3.2.1. As reported to the March Cabinet, seven responses to the consultation were received. A summary of the comments and responses received are in the table attached to this report. All were in the main supportive of the document and indicated it was a positive approach towards assisting in the future preservation of this complex. Minor amendments to the document have been made as a result of the comments received as indicated in the summary table.
- 3.2.2. The main issue with the brief is over the uses proposed for the Early Wing. Historically, it has been shown that the structure was originally built as a lodging range to accommodate visitors and was therefore ancillary to the main Hall and quarters to the manor house on the site. The architectural features such as the blocked fireplace and domestic scale windows endorse this fact. Since the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, however, the building became more involved in agricultural uses. This is evidenced by the cheese winch on the first floor and indications that part of the first floor was used as a dovecote. Apart from storage of furniture the building is currently not used for any purpose. The physical proximity of the adjacent farmhouse and the fact that there have been internal links between the two structures in the past does emphasise the importance of this close relationship between the buildings and the need to address this.
- 3.2.3. A view on the uses therefore needs to be taken, as it is crucial to whether there may be a successful outcome to this building's preservation and future.

4. Options

- 4.1 PPG15's guidelines on uses in listed buildings advise that "The best use will very often be the use for which the building was originally designed." It then goes on to state "in some cases the original use may now be less compatible with the building than an alternative". It identifies farm buildings as an example where business or light industrial uses may be less damaging than some types of modern agricultural operation and goes on to state "policies for development and listed building controls should recognise the need for flexibility where new uses have to be considered to secure a buildings survival".
- 4.2 The draft of the Brief was worded to suggest that residential use in the Lodging Range itself would be unacceptable. However, as it is demonstrated from historic evidence the initial use for this building was providing ancillary accommodation to the main house but in an unconventional form by today's standards. It would therefore appear appropriate to consider this use as an option for the Early Wing but only if its it very carefully handled and is retained in an ancillary capacity so that any alterations are minimal and based on historic evidence. A balance needs to be made between the economic viability of possible uses against the costs of the repairs and the impact any changes could have on the architectural and historic integrity of the building. This matter can be re-evaluated more fully once the specialist's report on the range has been undertaken.
- 4.3 The uses as set out in the Brief on page 11 of the draft version are therefore set out below together with a revised list for Members to consider;

Draft Version	Proposed Revision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A low-key leisure or recreational institution. • A small-scale educational centre, perhaps for wildlife/ nature conservation activities. • A unit for a small-scale office/light-industrial B1 use, subject to the resolution of any amenity or traffic issues. • Simple holiday accommodation in the form of bunker style sleeping areas similar to the Youth Hostel approach. • Agricultural smallholding or small-scale equestrian scheme. • All these uses would have to be limited by Condition/Section 106 agreement to limit numbers of visitors/customers. • A live-work concept incorporating all the buildings within the complex would be the most holistic and sustainable approach to Brook Hall. The farmhouse could remain in residential use but upgraded and restored. The other buildings on the site could provide ancillary accommodation with the Early Wing becoming a small office or workshop. Alternatively, as a last resort, the early wing could provide ancillary residential space for the farmhouse itself. • New dwellings will not be acceptable. The conversion of buildings into new dwellings will also not be acceptable unless every reasonable attempt has been made to secure acceptable uses as listed above. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A live-work concept incorporating all the buildings within the complex would be the most sustainable approach to Brook Hall. The farmhouse remains in residential use. The other buildings on the site could provide ancillary accommodation but would be carefully restricted in the form of uses and alterations required providing these are ancillary uses. • The Early Wing to provide ancillary accommodation to the Farmhouse. • A low-key leisure or recreational institution. • A small-scale educational centre, perhaps for wildlife/ nature conservation activities. • A unit for a small-scale office/light-industrial B1 use, subject to the resolution of any amenity or traffic issues. • Simple holiday accommodation in the form of bunker style sleeping areas, similar to the Youth Hostel approach. • Agricultural smallholding or small-scale equestrian scheme. <p><i>Most of these uses would have to be limited by Condition/Section 106 agreement to limit numbers of visitors/customers.</i></p>

Financial Implications

The financial implication of the offer from English Heritage indicates that the actual level of assistance will be up to a maximum of £16,000 towards the costs of the specialist report. Further money will be available from the Historic Buildings Renovation budget to top this up as it is based on an 80% offer. Money from last year's budget (04-05) has already been allocated towards this project, so it is envisaged that some further money may be required.

There are no financial implications for the Brief.

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 12th August 2004.

Report to Cabinet on the 29th September 2004.

Report to Cabinet on Buildings at Risk on the 9th February 2005.

Letter from English Heritage offering grant assistance dated 16th March 2005.

Report to Cabinet on Brook Hall on 30th March 2005.

PPG15- Planning and the Historic Environment.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- i) Welcomes and endorses the grant offer from English Heritage to commission a specialist investigation into the Early Wing's history and condition including the preparation a schedule of repairs and investigating an exit strategy.**
- ii) Approve the alterations to the Statement of Significance and Brief for Brook Hall for Development Control purposes.**

Plain English Guidance Given

Authors

Portfolio Holder
Michael Mounde

Caroline Power
Conservation Officer

March 2005

