

Forward Planning
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Report

Subject : Draft Concept Statement: Highbury and Fisherton Manor School Sites
Report to : City Area Committee
Date : Thursday 08 February 2007
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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.
- 1.2 The draft Concept Statement was released for public consultation for a period of 6 weeks from 14 August to 22 September 2006. Public exhibitions were also held at Highbury Primary School on 23 August and 13 September 2006. This report now considers the issues raised in the consultation period and highlights the principal changes made to the concept statement as a result. This report invites comments on the Concept Statement, and recommends endorsement of it and the changes made following consultation. The next stage will be to consult more widely amongst statutory consultees with a view to taking the statement back to this committee and onwards to Cabinet recommending its adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance.
- 1.3 A copy of the revised Concept Statement is attached as **Appendix 1**, and at Appendix 2 there is a table of representations received, with associated officer comment and amendments made as a result. During and since the consultation period, the draft Concept Statement has also been made available to view, at the Planning Office reception at Wyndham Road and on the Council's website at <http://www.salisbury.gov.uk/planning/forward-planning/highbury-fisherton.htm>.

2. Background:

- 2.1 Wiltshire County Council is putting in place a new two-tier system of school provision in Salisbury, to replace the existing three-tier system. As part of this program, 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 previously took place in June 2005 on two different concepts for the site. 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 of there including the Foyer and courts.
- 2.3 The Concept Statement sets out key land use proposals on the site and broad principles for development, in order to act as a bridge towards future planning applications on the site. 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.
- 2.4 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 consultation

- 3.1 A formal period of public consultation was undertaken in respect of the draft Development Brief between 14 August and 22 September 2006.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 As this document was drafted as a Concept Statement and not a more detailed Development Brief, respondents in the consultation naturally had questions and concerns in 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.
- 3.4 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 Representations Table at Appendix 2 to this report, along with officer comment. Alterations to the brief are set out in the right-hand column in response to these points, and are incorporated into the revised version now presented to members.
- 3.5 The following section examines the issues that solicited the most interest and concern during the consultation, and/or which resulted in significant alterations to the Brief.

4. Main issues

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 inadequacies associated with the overall 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 possibility 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 recognise 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 recently 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 for the Council to negotiate up to 40% affordable housing on sites such as this, will be adhered to by any future application. In terms of distribution within the site, the SPG seeks to ensure that affordable housing 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 DEFRA 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 naturally 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 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. Next Steps

- 5.1 Subject to members' endorsement of the draft Statement and agreement with the changes set out in this report and the attached table in the Appendix, the Concept Statement can be taken forward for wider consultation with statutory consultees, and subsequently considered again by this committee and by Cabinet with recommendation for formal adoption.

6. Recommendation:

- 6.1 That Members endorse the Concept Statement and the proposed changes to it as set out in this report, so that it can be taken forward for wider consultation towards adoption as SPG.

7. Background Papers:

Salisbury District Local Plan (June 2003), available at www.salisbury.gov.uk/planning via the Forward Planning web page.

8. 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