

Haverhill Area Working Party



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Haverhill Area Working Party** held on **Thursday 11 December 2014** at **4.15 pm** in the **Seminar Room** at the **Castle Manor Business and Enterprise Facility, Castle Manor Academy,** Eastern Avenue, Haverhill

Present: **Councillors**

Joint Chairmen Tim Marks and Karen Richardson (in the Chair)
Vice Chairman Adam Whittaker

Tony Brown
Maureen Byrne
Anne Gower

Derek Redhead
Marion Rushbrook

Robert Clifton-Brown

By Invitation:
Colin Poole and
Patrick Hanlon

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Paul McManus and Councillor Alaric Pugh, representative of ONE Haverhill.

2. **Substitutes**

The following substitution was declared:

Councillor Robert Clifton-Brown substituting for Councillor Paul McManus.

3. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. **Chantry Mills Regeneration Design Principles Consultation**

The Working Party received and noted a presentation from Michael Carpenter of Code Development Planners, and Chris Surfleet of Alliance Planning, both acting on behalf of Gurteen's. The presentation set out the Design Principles for the regeneration of the Chantry Mills site.

Members noted that in June 2010, the Council adopted a development brief for the development of Gurteen's former factory site, Chantry Mills. The majority of the buildings on the site were listed, however it was proposed that some of the properties of less or moderate historical importance on the site would need to be demolished to enable a marketable and viable joined-up scheme to be achieved.

In mid 2013, a planning application for the demolition of the majority of the buildings was submitted. Those categorised by English Heritage as being of high significant importance, namely the Gothic-style building and the Weaving Shed, would be retained, with the other buildings being demolished in sections whilst improvements were made to those retained.

The purpose of the Design Principles document was to set out potential future uses for the space where buildings on the site would potentially be demolished and to provide an overarching vision for the site as a whole. Potential uses for the site would be mixed, which was in accordance with its allocation in Haverhill Vision 2031.

Following consultation and subject to English Heritage being satisfied with its content, the Design Principles would be submitted in support of the planning application (and would also inform future planning applications for the site), which was hoped to be considered by the Development Control Committee in early 2015.

The presentation included reference to the following, as contained in the Design Principles document:

- (a) the current timeline for activity on the site which spanned from January 2009 to December 2014;
- (b) Layout Plans of the existing site;
- (c) Site Assessment – putting the site in context;
- (d) photographs of the existing site;
- (e) the relationships between building heights, taking into account the landmark role of the principal property (the Gothic-style building);
- (f) potential land uses (mixed use);
- (g) Morphology – how the site had evolved over time;
- (h) Access and Movement – how to potentially achieve better pedestrian movement and vehicular access;
- (i) Townscape Appraisal – the physical characteristics of the site;
- (j) Opportunities Plan – how the site could be redeveloped and potential access routes;
- (k) Development Area – a plan of the area available for redevelopment and proposed movement and access;
- (l) Building Heights – proposals 2/3/4 storey;
- (m) considerations to be taken into account to make the re-use of the retained buildings as flexible as possible;
- (n) Development Scenarios – options for new buildings and how they might integrate with the two retained buildings;
- (o) Design Vision – the creation of traditional forms and use of appropriate materials; and

- (p) Heritage and Public Benefits – a list of benefits of how the options would support the demolition of the buildings categorised as no, low or of moderate importance.

A detailed discussion was held which indicated that the Working Party was largely in support of the proposals. Mr Carpenter responded to questions raised, which included the following topics:

- (a) vehicular access to and from the site during the demolition period, which would be over a phased period of time;
- (b) whether access could be achieved through the existing wall directly next to the car park;
- (c) loss of buildings categorised as low or moderate importance;
- (d) the preparation of a method statement, which would address how the demolition would be carried out;
- (e) the timeframe for the redevelopment, which would largely be dependent on the market;
- (f) consideration of potential overlooking and provision of car parking if residential use was to be implemented;
- (g) how the site would remain in use to a degree during the demolition period, as Gurteen's would still make use of property for office space and warehousing. The site would not therefore be boarded up;
- (h) whether a major retailer would be attracted to the site;
- (i) the commerciality and viability of potential proposals coming forward; and
- (j) potential rents for the buildings.

(Councillor Clifton-Brown and Colin Poole, Haverhill Town Council Clerk arrived during the consideration of this item.)

5. **Haverhill Town Centre Masterplan: Update**

(Councillor Brown declared in the interests of transparency that he was one of Suffolk County Council's nominated representatives on ONE Haverhill and ONE Haverhill's Town Masterplanning Core Group and remained in the meeting for the consideration of this item.)

The Working Party received and noted a verbal update on the current position regarding the development of the Haverhill Town Centre Masterplan.

Members were informed that an invitation to submit a tender for the Haverhill Masterplan consultancy work was released in November 2014, with the deadline for tenders needing to be received by 12 December 2014. The consultants would be appointed during week commencing 22 December 2014

and it was expected that an inception meeting with the consultants would be convened early in the New Year.

Meanwhile, the ONE Haverhill Masterplanning Core Group continued to plan its selection of projects to improve the town centre and engage the community, namely the Spring Clean project; production of 'Our Historic Haverhill' leaflet; and empty shop window decoration.

A detailed discussion was held and officers responded to questions raised, including that:

- (a) approximately £25,000 to £35,000 had been allocated from the Planning Services budget towards resourcing the development of the Masterplan. The project was being run by ONE Haverhill and other partners were contributing towards the budget;
- (b) opportunities for the development/re-development of Haverhill town centre needed to be addressed in the Masterplan. Access routes, traffic and pedestrian movement and the public realm would need to be taken into account. The consultants would be expected to undertake community engagement in respect of their aspirations for the town centre in the context of planning policy set out in Haverhill Vision 2031; and
- (c) extensive consultation would be undertaken to formulate and shape a final version of the Masterplan. While ONE Haverhill was co-ordinating its development, the document would require adoption by the Borough Council to enable it to have weight and be used as a material planning consideration. Adoption was anticipated to take place in summer/early autumn 2015.

6. **ONE Haverhill: Update**

(Councillor Brown declared in the interests of transparency that he was one of Suffolk County Council's nominated representatives on ONE Haverhill and ONE Haverhill's Town Masterplanning Core Group and remained in the meeting for the consideration of this item.)

The Working Party received and noted a verbal update on the current work of ONE Haverhill.

Members noted that the last Board meeting had been held on 16 September 2014, where discussion had been held on topics, including:

- (a) ONE Haverhill Grants Scheme;
- (b) ONE Haverhill's contribution to expanding the number of apprenticeship places in Haverhill;
- (c) plans for the Haverhill Corn Exchange;
- (d) the public forum on 22 October 2014;
- (e) agreement given for town twinning information to be displayed beneath the Welcome Signs, which was to be funded by Haverhill Town Council; and

- (f) the Police Community Support Officer for the High Street, who was currently funded by Suffolk County Council.

7. **Strasbourg Square**

The Working Party considered Report No: HAV/SE/14/001 (previously circulated) which sought feedback on proposed improvement works to Strasbourg Square in Haverhill prior to formal consultation being undertaken.

Strasbourg Square was a 1960's designed shopping precinct on the Chalkstone Estate. The Borough Council was responsible for the management and maintenance of the square, which contained five mature Acacia trees and a Sycamore tree. The roots of the Acacia trees had caused considerable damage to the surrounding surface and the Sycamore tree had extensive decay in its main trunk. Whilst work had been undertaken on previous occasions on an ad-hoc basis, this had left a mosaic of surface repairs which detracted from the appearance of the square.

The Borough Council had already earmarked funding of £35,000 within its buildings repair and maintenance revenue budget to replace the surface of the square and views were sought from the Working Party on proposals before any works were carried out.

The following Appendices were attached to the report:

Appendix A: Proposed plan for the replacement surface for the square, which had been informed following initial consultation with Ward Members;

Appendix B: Feedback received from Ward Members on the previous draft scheme (Appendix C); and

Appendix C: earlier draft plan.

A detailed discussion was held and officers responded to question raised. While the Working Party broadly supported the proposals shown in Appendix A, it asked that officers be mindful of ensuring:

- (a) sufficient consultation was undertaken with interested parties;
- (b) the trees identified for removal were cut down prior to the bird nesting season;
- (c) the new trees were not planted so that they obscured the view of CCTV cameras;
- (d) the lighting within the square was also maintained and upgraded where possible. The existing lights were a mix of Suffolk County and Borough Council-owned. One light was currently not working and officers would follow this up with SCC to repair as it was within SCC's ownership.

A question was then asked about whether officers could do anything about the future of the former Vixen Public House as Members were concerned

about it's state of disrepair. This would be followed up and a written response would be circulated by email to the Working Party.

RESOLVED:

That:

- (1) the feedback outlined above on the proposal detailed in Section 1 of Report No: HAV/SE/14/001 be taken into account before commencing formal consultation; and
- (2) subject to the majority of respondents to the consultation being satisfied with what is proposed, the project to transform Strasbourg Square be progressed early in 2015, at a cost of up to £35,000 provided from the buildings repair and maintenance revenue budget.

8. Maintenance Schedule for Existing 'Haverhill Range' of Street Furniture

The Working Party received and noted a verbal update on the proposed maintenance schedule for the existing 'Haverhill Range' of street furniture located in parts of Haverhill.

Members were informed that there were 39 bench seats in Haverhill, of which 20 were the bespoke 'Haverhill Range'. Whilst the structure of the benches was satisfactory, some of the paint work on the galvanised metal was beginning to wear off. Decorative attention was also required to some woodwork.

A rolling programme of bench seat restoration had been devised, and the aim was to recondition approximately one fifth of the town's benches on an annual basis.

Members also noted the following maintenance issues under this item:

- (a) a broken tree guard opposite the opticians in Queen Street would be repaired or replaced;
- (b) maintenance of play areas were on a 15 year rolling programme. Play areas in Quentin Place and Haverhill Recreation Ground were due to be rejuvenated by the end of this financial year, with Arlington Walk's play area scheduled for 2015/2016; and
- (c) the damaged welcome sign by the Sainsbury's roundabout had been removed and a new sign had been installed by the boundary.

Members were pleased to note that the railings had been replaced on the Brookfield service road but whether a high block kerb could be installed to prevent potential damage to the railings in future. This matter would be taken up with Suffolk County Council.

9. **Jubilee Plaza**

The Working Party received and noted verbal updates on the following issues relating to Jubilee Plaza:

- (a) the installation of benches/litter bins in the 'Haverhill Range'; and
- (b) the Potential Use of Jubilee Plaza.

In respect of (a) above, the Working Party was shown a plan of the plaza which indicated the proposed siting of the new backless 'Haverhill Range' benches. This plan was agreeable to Members.

In respect of (b) above, Members were informed that one of the West Suffolk Events Officers would be leading on organising events for summer 2015. It was anticipated that a mixed programme of activity would be arranged on a regular basis, for example, on Friday evenings between 5pm and 8pm in June and July 2015, to attract a range of participants. Abbeycroft Leisure had already been approached and local groups and schools would be contacted in the new year on whether they would like to use the space. Commercial outlets may also be interested in sponsoring events which would help to sustain a regular programme.

Health and safety issues would need to be addressed, particularly in terms of the Plaza's proximity to the main road; and the events would need to be marketed appropriately to attract sufficient visitors. The Town Council had indicated that it may be able to support this.

The Working Party noted a number of potential events and these were welcomed. Support was also given to ensuring the programme was provided during a regular weekly time slot. Emphasis was placed upon sustainability of the programme, as this largely depended upon commercial funding/sponsorship.

10. **Consideration of Memorial Plaque for the late Councillor Gordon Cox**

The Working Party received and noted a verbal report on the possibility of providing a memorial plaque for the late Councillor Gordon Cox.

Members were informed that Haverhill Town Council was in the process of installing a new town clock in Jubilee Plaza in spring 2015. As the initial idea had been put forward by Councillor Cox and this was one of the last initiatives he had been involved with, the Town Council had considered it appropriate to provide a commemorative plaque immediately adjacent to the clock in memory of Councillor Cox.

The Working Party agreed this was an excellent proposal and would not wish to duplicate the efforts of the Town Council by providing a separate memorial plaque elsewhere in the town.

No further action was therefore to be taken regarding this matter.

11. **Chalkstone Community Centre**

The Working Party received and noted a verbal update on the current situation regarding the proposed community transfer of Chalkstone Community Centre.

Members were informed that the River of Life Church had been in negotiations with the Borough Council regarding the transfer since the beginning of 2014. The Church had been following the provisions made in the Borough Council's 'Expectations Document' and had been considering their options. A draft business plan had been developed and this would be subject to consultation with neighbouring residents via means of a questionnaire. An open consultation event would also be held and contact would be made with users of the centre and local Ward Members for their views. It was anticipated that the consultation would commence from week commencing 15 December 2014 and upon consideration of the feedback, a final draft of the business plan would be completed by the end of January 2015. The transfer was expected to be completed by the end of March 2015.

(Colin Poole left the meeting during the consideration of this item.)

12. **Work Programme**

The Working Party identified the following items for discussion at future meetings:

- (a) Whether the Borough Council could allocate or buy a home for the homeless in Haverhill. The difficulties currently experienced by homeless people trying to access temporary accommodation in Haverhill were highlighted. Councillor Mrs Gower, Portfolio Holder for Housing explained the complexities of this issue and whether this was a matter for the Working Party to consider; however, other Members considered this should be monitored by the Working Party and whether a task and finish group should be established to try and identify a suitable property in the town.

An update would be provided at the next meeting.

- (b) Dog Fouling. Matters raised included:
 - (i) a requirement for better enforcement of fines;
 - (ii) insufficient signage regarding penalties;
 - (iii) infrequent dog waste collections;
 - (iv) inadequate condition of dog bins; and
 - (v) whether there were sufficient numbers of dog bins in the right locations.

Members would be provided with an update on the above issues at a future meeting.

(Councillor Clifton-Brown left the meeting during the consideration of this item.)

13. **Dates of Future Meetings**

The Working Party had already determined that future meetings would be held in 2015 on:

12 March;
9 July; and
15 October.

However, as the meeting on 12 March 2015 now clashed with a newly arranged joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Members considered the Working Party meeting should be rearranged to 26 March 2015.

All meetings were Thursdays starting at 4.15pm at Castle Manor Academy, with the exception of 26 March 2015. This venue was to be confirmed and would be communicated to Members in due course.

The meeting concluded at 6.59 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
