

Runnymede Borough CouncilAPPENDIX 'G'CIVIC OFFICES REPROVISION SUB-COMMITTEE6 September 2005 at 7.30 p.m.

Members of the Committee present: Councillors J.R. Furey, P.A. Greenwood, J.E. Haas, C.J. Norman, B.J. Relph and G.B. Woodger

Members of the Committee absent: None

Councillor J.R. Whiteley also attended.

NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Conservative Group had notified the Chief Executive Officer of its wish that Councillor R.K. Habgood be removed from membership of the Sub-Committee and that Councillor G.B. Woodger be appointed in his place for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting, and that thereafter Councillor Habgood should be reappointed.

The Runnymede Independents Group had notified the Chief Executive Officer of its wish that Councillor A. Alderson be removed from membership of the Corporate Management Committee and from this Sub-Committee, and that Councillor B.J. Relph be appointed in his place for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting, and that thereafter Councillor Alderson should be reappointed to the said Committee and this Sub-Committee.

The Chief Executive Officer had given effect to these wishes in accordance with Section 16(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that -

Councillor J.R. Furey be elected Chairman of the Sub-Committee for the Municipal Year 2005/2006.

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that -

Councillor J.E. Haas be elected Vice-Chairman of the Sub-Committee for the Municipal Year 2005/2006.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members received and noted the terms of reference of the Sub-Committee.

PRESENTATION BY FEILDEN CLEGG BRADLEY, ARCHITECTS

By resolution of the Sub-Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the discussion would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 8 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

Introduction

The Sub-Committee received a presentation on the Stage D detailed design proposals for the new Civic Offices from representatives of the project team responsible for the development of the scheme, including Keith Bradley and Jo Wright from Architects Feilden Clegg Bradley, Ian Roberts of

Project Managers Buro 4, Mick Jones of Quantity Surveyors Davis Langdon and Guy Neville from Max Fordham Mechanical Electrical Engineers.

Members recalled that the project brief for the new facility, due to be constructed on the site of the former Addlestone Community Centre, had set out the requirement for a high quality, flexible working environment with 252 workspaces and space for Surrey Police Officers, civilian employees and the Safer Runnymede Control Centre. The building was also to incorporate a Council Chamber and civic space for 42 Councillors, a potential public library and 180 parking spaces. The new facility was expected to serve as a catalyst for the regeneration of the town centre, the improvement of internal working practices and connectivity between departments and other forms of cultural change. Particular emphasis was placed on the need for an accessible, welcoming and sustainable building which would foster community identity and civic pride.

The detailed proposals now before the Sub-Committee largely adhered to the fundamental design concept previously reported to the former Member Working Group at Stage C of the project. Drawings indicated that the two-storey building with mezzanine upper ground floor would provide some 4,989 m² of floor space for the Council's use together with 1,105 m² for the co-location of Safer Runnymede and the Police with 266 m² set aside for the possible public library. It was envisaged that there would be half level undercroft and surface level parking for 181 vehicles with 50 of the spaces currently earmarked for the use of the Police. Members did, however, emphasise that the Police Authority would be obliged to prepare a travel plan to encourage its staff to utilise alternative modes of transport to work and satisfy all other associated sustainability requirements applicable to developments of this nature. The scope for additional parking provision was heavily constrained by planning policy guidance.

External Design

The Sub-Committee was informed that a number of changes had, nevertheless, been made to the design since Stage C, principally in respect of the external elevational treatment. Proposals for a predominantly glass fronted structure had been replaced with a more sustainable and cost effective brickwork cladding design following evaluation of the environmental performance of the new building. The design team proposed the use of light grey bricks with light coloured lime based mortar in preference to the local red brick so as to differentiate from the domestic housing and 1980's civic construction style with which the latter was more commonly associated. Glazing was, however, to be retained for the Station Road façade, the most visible part of the new building, with pockets of opaque green and mauve panels to provide colour. The proposed colour scheme was intended to reflect Runnymede Meadow and could potentially be echoed in the internal fittings. It was recognised that the choice of colours would inevitably be influenced by current fashion and the building as a whole would inescapably be a work of its time. The key was to ensure that it represented a good example of the period.

Members emphasised the importance of the elevational treatment, not least because it represented one of the principal measures by which the public would judge the success of the project. If light brickwork was to be used, care would need to be taken to add texture and avoid a dull impact on large expanses unrelieved by glazing and recesses. There was also some concern expressed at the prospect of unsightly staining and a wetting effect in rain that might occur on the material proposed.

Ventilation Strategy

The Sub-Committee noted that although there had also been changes to the ventilation strategy, the emphasis continued to be on a sustainable controlled natural environment. The absence of artificial cooling except in areas where it was required for plant (such as the Safer Runnymede Control Centre) or because of the density of occupation (the Council Chamber) meant that there was a need for north facing glazing over the voids and shading to exclude solar gain. Some southern light would, however, be permitted, controlled by blinds, to prevent a flat tone. At the lower level a series of cut backs to the undercroft parking, planted with bamboo, would also avoid the need for mechanical ventilation of the car park. Additional shading would be provided by the retention of several of the mature trees on the site. Unlike air conditioned buildings, the new facility was designed to accommodate fluctuations in temperature with strong airflow. The movement of air throughout the building would enable occupants to tolerate higher temperatures than would otherwise be the case. Thermal modelling suggested that at normal occupancy internal temperatures would be expected to rise beyond the recognised tolerance threshold of 28° centigrade for no more than 1% of the working

year (20 hours). Where difficulties did occur they were likely to be at the end of the day as the building would be designed to cool overnight and heat up only gradually in office hours.

The design team emphasised that both the natural ventilation techniques utilised in the design and the thermal modelling represented proven technology. The newly opened National Trust Headquarters in Swindon, also designed by Feilden Clegg Bradley, were cited as an example of good practice in this respect. Nevertheless, if, in the longer term, the building was sold or leased to an occupier with more intensive occupation, or climate change accelerated, there would be scope to install mechanical ventilation, although the Carbon Dioxide emissions would, in turn, contribute to further global warming.

Environmental Assessment

The Sub-Committee was pleased to learn that the new offices were likely to achieve a "Very Good" BREEAM rating. BREEAM assessments measured the environmental impact of buildings across a range of indicators including management, health and well being, energy, transport, water, materials, pollution and land use and ecology. It was considered that the policy aim should be set at a score of 'Very Good' as substantial efforts and additional funding would be required to achieve the top ranking of "Excellent". Nevertheless, this did not preclude the examination of specific opportunities for further enhancement of the rating as they arose, if they added value. There were a number of measures that could be taken for little or no cost or which would attract grant funding.

Interior Design

The Sub-Committee also received further details of the interior design including the front of house and the Council Chamber. Reception arrangements were flexible at this stage so as to allow for the detail to be settled but it was confirmed that there would be sufficient space to accommodate a Police reception facility if required. Informal breakout facilities were envisaged together with large scale images, coloured panels and/or artworks to add to the visual appeal. The vertical circulation would be visible from the entrance so that the public could readily understand how to access the civic spaces. Additional breakout facilities and staff café overspill could be accommodated at the mezzanine level.

The form of the Council Chamber had been altered since Stage C to minimise the physical separation between Members and the public. It was now proposed that the public seating be placed essentially on the same level as the debating floor, rather than in a separately accessed elevated gallery. The principal issues in respect of the public facilities were considered to be capacity, access and egress and segregation arrangements. The seating plan presently envisaged could accommodate only 50 members of the public, some 20 less than the existing Council Chamber. Although there were normally only modest numbers of the public in attendance at meetings, it was important to be able to accommodate larger gatherings. To this end, it was noted that there was some scope for additional seating without compromising the design concept as well as the possibility of temporary solutions such as the placing of chairs around the perimeter of the Chamber or using the adjacent foyer and civic rooms for overspill. Provision could be made for a dedicated facility for members of the public to address meetings. There was also the opportunity for separate entrances for Members and the public.

The Sub-Committee was of the opinion that further consideration should be given to the flexibility of all the civic suite of rooms. The use of movable furniture in segments and concertina doors and walls was likely to enhance the versatility of the facilities, although this option had not yet been costed and it was acknowledged that flexible wall solutions were not always satisfactory. Meanwhile, an indicative floor space plan of the offices illustrated that there was the opportunity to promote inter-departmental relationships both horizontally and vertically, while the building was sufficiently flexible to be easily sub-divided in the event that all or part of it was let out in the future.

Costings

The Sub-Committee was informed that the cost projections had been revised to reflect the expansion of the project to accommodate Surrey Police and the Library Service as well as the undercroft parking. Members received details of the on-going negotiations with both parties concerning the form of the transactions and the financing arrangements. A further report on the matter would be submitted to the Sub-Committee in due course.

The Sub-Committee noted that the design team had, as requested, identified a number of potential savings which would mitigate the inflation allowance of £442,000 added at Stage C of the project. However, many of the larger items, in particular the replacement of natural ventilation with air conditioning, would, if adopted, compromise the design brief and adversely affect the sustainability of the building. Nevertheless, some of the proposals could not be entirely discounted at this stage as they would provide a degree of flexibility in the event of cost pressures.

Overall, costs had increased by £46,300 from Stage C but remained within budget. Some £562,000 of savings had been achieved to maintain the cost plan, none of which represented significant departures from the design concept. Minor reductions in the width of the building and the proposed avenue between the new offices and the potential residential development accounted for a significant proportion of the savings as a result both of reduced construction costs and increased land receipt from the correspondingly enlarged development site. The 1 metre reduction in the planned width of the offices had arisen from a halving of storage requirements from 300 m² to 150 m² to take account of storage, backscanning and the Document Management System currently being rolled out. A storage audit was currently being undertaken but backscanning was already reducing requirements and the revised provision was considered to be robust.

The heat recovery (MVHR) capability had also been removed from the scheme because the economic case for it was poor and the new building would, in any event, be extremely efficient in this regard. Nevertheless, it was agreed that an option should be retained for the unit and the market tested for prices because it would enhance the BREEAM rating and allow for easier retro fit for mechanical cooling should this subsequently prove to be necessary. Other savings included the simplification of the main staircase and a reduction in the number of doors to balconies. It was emphasised that cost certainty was a crucial factor for the Council and on-going efforts were being made to extract the best possible value from the procurement process.

Next Steps

In connection with the procurement exercise, Members noted that returns from the Notice in the Official Journal of the European Community were now being evaluated and it was hoped that a contractor would be appointed by November. Demolition of the old Community Centre, which was being tendered separately from the main construction package, was expected to commence at the beginning of January 2006 with work on site starting approximately 5 months later. The project was to be phased as follows;

- i) relocation of the Marnham Place playground.
- ii) hoarding around the old Community Centre site and demolition of the existing building.
- iii) construction around new offices, retaining the existing car park at the rear
- iv) hoarding around the existing offices and decanting into the new facility
- v) landscaping works and residential (or mixed residential/office) development on the site of existing offices
- vi) completion of private sector development.

Members noted that an initial consultation exercise had already taken place with representatives of the Surrey Towers/Middlesex Court estate concerning the reprovision of the play area and detailed options in this regard were to be canvassed more widely by the Housing Department and then brought forward. It was also noted that access and egress to and from the construction site would be via Garfield Road. Careful management would therefore be required to avoid conflict with staff accessing the rear car park. Although the preference was still for a residential development on the site of the existing Civic Offices, outline planning consent might also be sought for a residential or office scheme in order to be able to accommodate the potential requirements of the Primary Care Trust and/or Surrey County Council.

Although the basic concept was now essentially settled, in view of the proposed changes to the external finish the Sub-Committee was of the opinion that the revised design needed some more work and in any event should be the subject of a further presentation to all Members of the Council before a decision could be taken to proceed to the submission of a planning application. In order to

avoid undue delay to the project it was envisaged that this would take place within the next fortnight. In the meantime, the design team would be able to undertake preparatory work on the planning application and the material for public exhibition on the basis of the guidance to date.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 10.06 pm)