

## Land to the North and South of Chapel Street, Honiton- Development Brief

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this development brief is to supplement Local and Structure Plan policy and to establish the possibilities for new development on land to the North and South of Chapel Street, Honiton. The brief provides guidance to developers on the constraints which apply and the uses and forms of new development which may be acceptable or encouraged. A public consultation exercise was carried out and, where appropriate, responses were incorporated into the Brief. In order to test the acceptability and viability of alternative proposals, two different schemes were set out in section 6 of the report. The consultation did not find that one scheme was favoured in preference to the other and therefore either scheme is likely to be acceptable.
- 1.2 The brief site is important by virtue of its proximity to the town centre; its historic land form and position in relation to the Honiton Conservation Area and the number of important Listed Buildings nearby. Access to the site is poor and this will restrict the type of development which may be carried out.
- 1.3 The brief complies with and reflects national and local government planning policy and will form Supplementary Planning Guidance, providing further detail to Policy LH4 of the East Devon Local Plan (Revised Deposit 2003) which designates the site for mixed use development and public open space. In accordance with Annexe A of PPG1, any applications submitted for the site will need to demonstrate how they meet the aims of the brief. This should take the form of a statement outlining the design approach adopted and the way in which this relates to the principles set out in the brief.
- 1.4 The brief has been prepared by the Policy and Conservation Section of East Devon District Council, in consultation with Ward Members and the Town Council, and has been adopted by the District Council as interim Supplementary Planning Guidance to the emerging Local Plan. As stated in para 3.16 of PPG 12- Development Plans, the Brief will then form a material consideration in the determination of any planning application affecting the site.

### **2.0 THE PURPOSE OF THE BRIEF**

- 2.1 The purposes of the brief are to:-
  - Provide a more detailed explanation of East Devon Local Plan Policy LH4
  - Define the extent of the site to be developed
  - Set out constraints and opportunities offered by the location and characteristics of the site
  - Outline the design approach together with the physical planning and architectural implications which must be provided to meet a sustainable, high quality, built environment
  - Set out the broad disposition of land uses within the site
  - Illustrate and describe the overall layout of the site

As a general objective the Brief will seek to ensure that plan policies are appropriately applied in order to ensure that the very highest quality of development is secured.

- 2.2 The brief will lend certainty to the development process- it will be used to guide individuals and organisations wishing to submit planning applications and it will inform the determination of those planning applications.
- 2.3 Requirements set out in the brief will, where appropriate, be secured by way of planning conditions attached to a permission. Where the requirement cannot be secured by way of condition it will be achieved through an obligation under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and any other relevant planning legislation.

### 3.0 EXISTING CHARACTER OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

- 3.1 The site covered by the Development Brief lies to the south of the High Street, Honiton and extends to approximately 0.73 hectares. High Street is the commercial centre of the town with some residential accommodation over shops and behind the main frontages.
- 3.2 In 1999, Honiton Conservation Area Appraisal was commissioned by the District Council and its findings still remain very relevant. This Appraisal identifies the features of special architectural or historic interest within the Conservation Area, and highlights the characteristics of the area which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. The Appraisal notes that the frontage on the northern side of the High Street is punctuated by attractive open spaces surrounding the Parish Church. The southern road frontage is almost continuous with covered access lanes leading to the rear of the High Street, including the site of this development brief. The street layout to the rear of the High Street on both sides of the road is complex with short streets and further backland terraces in close-knit and modestly scaled domestic groups. The Honiton Conservation Area Appraisal also records that “there remains in places a special intimacy as a result of the weaving in of short terraces and small open spaces within the remains of the medieval burgage (long, garden) plots just behind the main street frontages”. It is desirable to retain this sense of intimacy in any new development.
- 3.3 New Street is identified in the Appraisal as a secondary commercial street of modestly proportioned two storey buildings. To the south of Queen Street are several modest Georgian buildings and Summerlands, a small residential area containing sturdy early 19<sup>th</sup> century stuccoed houses.



1) Above. View from within Section A of the site looking north- none of the buildings on the site are worthy of retention

3.4 The Conservation Area Appraisal highlights the detrimental impact that some previous development, particularly the three and four storey flats immediately adjoining the site to the east and west, has had on the Conservation Area. “Apart from two well segregated small housing developments, just to the rear of the High Street, most post war development within the conservation area is unduly dominant, has developed haphazardly as an ad hoc response to development pressure or tends to lack adequate design or compatible materials. Some parts of the town within the conservation area also lack the feeling of having adequate public open space or access to traffic-free areas of quiet enjoyment, whilst some large new car parks are bleak and featureless with minimal landscaping.”



2) Right. the southern boundary wall of the site is of flint construction and should be retained. New boundaries should be similarly constructed from flint or brick and the use of wooden fencing of a suburban nature should be avoided.

## 4.0 APPRAISAL OF THE SITE

- 4.1 The site is composed of four distinct areas which follow the boundaries of the original burgage plots. An additional area, to the west of the site, relates well to the brief area and is likely to become available in the medium term and will therefore be included within the brief. The areas are illustrated in Appendix 1.
- 4.2 **Area A**
- I) The eastern end of the site is overgrown and is primarily used for car parking and light industry. The buildings are in a poor state of repair and have little historic or architectural merit. A row of domestic garages divide this area from the adjacent private garden. Vehicular access to this area is poor and takes the form of a narrow lane between 46 and 48 High Street. A commercial garage operated until recently on an area of land to the rear of the site. It may be possible to access the site over land owned by the District Council.
- II) Approximately half of this section of the site lies within the Conservation Area and any new development must preserve and enhance the character of the Conservation Area.
- III) Pedestrian access runs along the boundary to the south of the site and a pedestrian right of way exists between this path and the High Street. This pedestrian way should be retained and upgraded as part of any redevelopment scheme.
- IV) This section of the site has a mixed planning history. The conversion of buildings to the rear of 56 High Street to provide 5 cottages was refused on highway and overdevelopment grounds. A pair of semi-detached houses were refused in 1994 on highway grounds, although a previous application for one house was approved. A current application for the erection of a detached house and garage, on the site of a previous approval, is currently being considered. The majority of this section of the site is in one ownership which should simplify its redevelopment.
- 4.3 **Area B**
- I) An adjacent pair of domestic gardens belonging to numbers 60 and 62 High Street form the middle section of the site. These gardens are probably the best example of the original medieval burgage plots in the town and are consequently within the designated Conservation Area. They should certainly be retained as part of any redevelopment scheme. Currently the eastern garden (to the rear of number 60) is accessed from the alleyway between 54 and 56 High Street. This alley also serves a block of 11 garages which form the boundary between this distinct area of the site and area A (as outlined above). The pedestrian access continues to run along the boundary to the south of the site. This section of the site is believed to be owned by two parties.
- 4.4 **Area C**
- I) This section of the site is currently in commercial use and is currently covered by one large industrial building, recently used by the Post Office as a garage for vehicle repairs, and the Old Coach House, an attractive stone building. It also provides car parking for vehicles associated with the adjoining Post Office.
- II) This part of the site benefits from direct vehicular access from Chapel Street and lies outside, but immediately adjacent to, the Conservation Area. The Old Coach House, which was recently granted planning permission for conversion to a residential property, is understood to be in the ownership of a different party to the remainder of the site, which is currently leased to the Post Office.
- 4.5 **Area D**
- I) The southernmost section of the site is accessed from Queen Street to the south and Chapel Street to the north. This area is surrounded by residential properties and is currently used for car parking.
- 4.6 **Area E**
- I) Area E covers the Telephone Exchange, which is a large building of industrial appearance, and smaller surrounding buildings. British Telecom, owner of the telephone exchange, has indicated that it is required in the medium term but may become redundant, and therefore available for redevelopment, in the longer term. A footpath to the north and Chapel Street to the south provide access to this part of the site.
- 4.7 The whole brief area is relatively flat and is well serviced by all the utilities. It is intersected by attractive stone walls which follow the original burgage plot boundaries and these, and any stone buildings within the site, must be retained. New boundaries should be constructed of stone or brick.

## 5.0 PLANNING CONTEXT AND POLICIES APPLICABLE TO THE WHOLE SITE

- 5.1 The East Devon Local Plan, placed on revised deposit in September 2003, sets out the Council's policies and proposals for the use of land and buildings in the District during the period up to 2011. The Local Plan complies with the policies of the Devon Structure Plan. The Development Brief will form Supplementary Planning Guidance that will supplement the many policies contained within these documents that provide an overall guide and context for development relevant to this site. Policies specifically referred to in this Development Brief are set out in full in Appendix 2. In the event that a planning application is submitted, other policies of the Local Plan may also be considered relevant in determination of the application. The following policy considerations apply to the whole brief area, specific policies that refer to the proposals for each area of the site are referred to in the next chapter.
- 5.2 The Local Plan acknowledges that Honiton has experienced a significant amount of growth in recent years. Further residential development will be restricted to development of existing sites within the Built-up Area Boundary, in accordance with Policy S3 'Development within Built-up area Boundaries', and in respect of sites in or close to the town centre residential use may form part of a mixed use development.

### Conservation Area, Listed Building and Local Policy Considerations

- 5.3 The Local Plan identifies land north and south of Chapel Street between the rear of properties in High Street and Queen Street as having potential for redevelopment. This site is shown on the Honiton Urban Inset Map as a Special Policy Area. The plan acknowledges that access is difficult and the historic street pattern would need to be retained in accordance with Policy LH1 'Preservation of Street Pattern'. As a town centre site, the Local Plan considers a mixed use development to be appropriate and says that there is potential for the provision of some public open space to provide a quiet traffic free sitting area close to the town centre. Local Policy LH 4 'Land north and south of Chapel Street' states that "Redevelopment of land north and south of Chapel Street will be permitted for mixed development which will include an integrated public garden with the broad disposition of land uses to be permitted in a development brief."
- 5.4 The site adjoins the rear of the buildings that front onto High Street. The majority of these buildings are Grade II listed and any new development must respect the setting and character of these buildings. Proposals for development or other works within the brief area must be accompanied by detailed drawings indicating the position, scale and type of development proposed and its form and materials so that its impact can be fully assessed.
- 5.5 The town centre was designated a Conservation Area in 1973. The historic character of Honiton derives largely from its long-standing function as a market town, which is reflected in the layout of roads and buildings in the town centre. Particularly important to this layout are the long garden plots ('burgage plots') which stretch back at an angle behind the buildings either side of the High Street, in several instances followed by access ways and footpaths, some lined by further buildings to form intimate 'yards'. Part of the Brief area lies within the Conservation Area and therefore Local Plan Policies EN16 'Preservation and Enhancement of Conservation Areas' and EN17 'Demolition in Conservation Areas', apply. In accordance with these policies, proposals for new development (including that which incorporates demolition) will only be permitted if they preserve or enhance the area's character and appearance.
- 5.6 In order to protect and enhance the Conservation Area, Local Policy LH 1 'Preservation of Street Pattern' will not permit proposals for development of land immediately behind either of the High Street frontages within the Honiton Conservation Area unless the scheme preserves the historic street pattern and buildings, walls, trees, shrubs and hedges and other survivals of the medieval pattern of garden plots and access ways. The distinctive flintstone walls are a particular feature of the site and most remaining walls follow the original plot boundaries. These must be retained and incorporated into any new development.

### Existing Buildings within the Site

- 5.7 Within the brief area the emphasis should be on renovation and re-use rather than demolition and redevelopment. Justification to policy in the Local Plan states that existing buildings within Conservation Areas usually reflect the historical and architectural importance of the area and their loss should be avoided wherever possible.



5.8 However, given the poor condition of some of the buildings, particularly the block of garages and commercial garage in Section A, and the industrial buildings in Section C, the District Council will consider proposals for their replacement with new ones of a sympathetic scale and character. It would be reasonable to balance the retention of these buildings and their detrimental effect on the character and setting of the listed buildings and conservation area against the advantages gained from their removal and more sympathetic replacement.

3) Left. View from within Section D of the site looking north towards the post office. The Old Coach House should be retained

## Design

- 5.9 Policies D1 'Design and Local Distinctiveness' and D4 'Landscape Requirements' require the submission of a design statement, setting out the design principles to be adopted in the development, and a landscape scheme, covering the design and layout of external space, with each planning application. It is important that any development is sympathetic to the character of the area, enhancing existing development whilst creating an open ambience. In addition to the criteria set out in the policies (Appendix 2), PPG 3 sets out the following objectives which should also be addressed in applications for new residential development:
- "Create places and spaces with the needs of people in mind, which are attractive, have their own distinctive identity but respect and enhance local character;
  - promote designs and layouts which are safe and take account of public health, crime prevention and community safety considerations;
  - focus on the quality of the places and living environments being created and give priority to the needs of pedestrians rather than the movement and parking of vehicles;
  - avoid inflexible planning standards and reduce road widths, traffic speeds and promote safer environments for pedestrians; and
  - promote the energy efficiency of new housing where possible."
- 5.10 The Council will take positive steps to enhance the area by implementing schemes for landscaping and visual improvement and by seeking to remove features which detract from the character and appearance of the area. The Highway Authority will also be requested to pay particular attention to paving, kerbing and all types of street furniture, such as lighting standards and direction signs, in order to protect the area's character and ensure that the special mobility needs of many local residents are accommodated.

## Drainage and Water Supply

- 5.11 The Environment Agency confirm that they would not wish to raise an objection to the principle of redeveloping the site in accordance with the brief provided a suitable foul sewage treatment system of adequate capacity is available to serve new development in accordance with Policy EN24- Adequacy of Foul Sewers and Sewage Treatment Works. Measures should also be taken to ensure that any contamination is assessed and appropriate remediation/mitigation measures are taken.
- 5.12 New development is likely to increase levels of surface run-off as permeable surfaces are replaced by impermeable surfaces such as roofs and paving. Planning permission for new development will only be granted where the Council is satisfied that suitable measures, designed to mitigate the adverse impact of surface water run-off, are included as an integral part of the development, as required by Policy EN27 'Surface Run-off Implications of New Development'. No problems are anticipated with regard to water supply. Prospective developers are advised to contact South West Water and the Environment Agency to ensure that their requirements are met.

## 6.0 APPROPRIATE ALTERNATIVE USES AND/OR NEW DEVELOPMENT

6.1 Given the diversity of character and ownership of each of the distinct sections of the Development Brief area it is highly unlikely that a comprehensive development scheme will be submitted by a single party or consortium. In order to facilitate the development of the site, the proposals create a framework that will enable each of the four sections of the site to be developed separately. If sections are developed independently, important features and characteristics must be retained and all development must be designed to ensure that an overall cohesive development is achieved.

### 6.12 Area A Residential Development

#### *Affordable Housing*

I) Access and parking difficulties are likely to restrict the type of residential development which is carried out on the eastern section of the site. The Brief Area is bounded on two sides by sheltered housing and flats occupied mainly by elderly people. This type of housing usually generates very little vehicular traffic and would be most appropriate on this site.

II) Honiton suffers from a shortage in affordable housing for those people lacking their own housing or living in housing which is inadequate or unsuitable, who are unlikely to be able to meet their needs in the housing market without some assistance. Policy H3- Affordable Housing establishes that 40% affordable housing will be sought in towns where proposals are on sites of 0.5 hectares or larger or where 15 or more dwellings are proposed.

III) This part of the Brief Area does not meet the affordable housing threshold as it measures approximately 0.24 hectares but market housing on this site is likely to be smaller, and therefore, cheaper, than on many sites elsewhere in the town. A mixture of housing sizes, types and tenures will be strongly encouraged, in accordance with the Government's Guidance in PPG 3 'Housing'. Applications from Registered Social Landlords will be encouraged.

#### *Materials and Permitted Development Rights*

IV) Given the sensitive location of the site, all materials used in new development should be compatible with existing surrounding buildings. Natural slate, flint stone, reclaimed brick and painted render are all considered acceptable. Painted timber fenestration would be appropriate. Wherever possible, existing stone walls should be retained and incorporated as boundary walls.

To ensure that inappropriate alterations and additions do not detract from the overall design of the development, the District Council may seek to restrict the type of minor development, such as satellite antennae, outbuildings, extensions and boundary fences, which can be implemented as permitted development, (i.e. without the need for a planning application).

#### *Access and Car Parking*

V) Policy TA1 'Accessibility of New Development' states that new development should be located so that it is accessible to pedestrians, cyclists and by public transport and will minimise the need to travel by car. Parking provision should be minimal as the site's proximity to the Town Centre and local public transport network greatly reduces the need for car ownership. Access to this part of the site is extremely poor and the local Highway Authority would not support any additional traffic movements. However if the existing garages are demolished and the car repair business relocates elsewhere in the town the resulting reduction in traffic movements would enable limited parking to be provided as part of the development. If the local Highway Authority consider it necessary, parking will be restricted to disabled or special needs residents only, and in any case, car parking will be restricted to a maximum 1 space per 1 bedroomed dwelling or sheltered unit, 2 spaces in larger dwellings and 1 cycle space per 2 dwellings in accordance with Policy TA8 'Parking Provision'. Such car parking should be covered or screened to minimise its impact and take the form of traditional outbuildings, to ensure that they are in keeping with surrounding listed buildings and the conservation area. There are a number of District Council owned car parks, on street parking and public transport links within easy reach of the site so additional visitor parking should not be provided. Planning conditions will be imposed on the planning permission to ensure that highway safety is maintained. In accordance with Policy TA4 'Footpaths, Bridleways and Cycleways' the footpaths which bisect and bound the site must be retained.

#### *Education Contributions*

VI) The Local Education Authority advises that there is no spare capacity in local primary or secondary schools. New residential development will increase pressure in the existing schools, and therefore contributions towards the cost of education provision will be required if 5 or more dwellings are constructed. If 10 dwellings are to be constructed the Local Education Authority has calculated

that provision for approximately 4 school pupils must be made at a cost to the developer, at current rates, of £14,000. If the number of dwellings increases to 15, the developer will be expected to contribute £21,000, at current rates. These figures are approximate and precise contributions will be calculated when a detailed planning application is submitted.

*Open Space*



VII) New residential development would be required to provide an area of open space within it and a contribution towards the provision of formal playing fields elsewhere in the town. A walled garden or similar public open space would be appropriate in this location. It should form an integral part of any development scheme and should be available for surrounding residents and the wider community. Formal playing field provision must accord with Policy RE3 'Open Space Provision in New Housing Developments' and will be required in accordance with the following standards per new dwelling:

- 22.5 sq metres of land for playing field use
  - 18 sq metres of children's play space, including provision for equipped play areas.
- This policy will exclude development restricted to occupiers who will clearly not place any demand on such a facility, for instance over 55's housing would not place a demand on a children's play area.

4) Above. Existing vehicle repair workshop in Area A. The building is to be demolished

6.13

**Area B Open Space**

I) The District Council is keen to encourage the provision of public open space within built up areas and will seek to acquire additional Public Open Space wherever possible and practicable. Honiton lacks formal public gardens and the provision of open space within close proximity to the town centre would be welcomed. As far as possible open spaces should be linked both visually and by their use to soften the appearance of new (and existing) development and to create areas of great value in amenity, recreation and nature conservation terms.

II) The pair of gardens to the rear of 60- and 62 High Street are extremely attractive and already provide a visual amenity to passers-by. The gardens are protected in the Revised Deposit Local Plan as Land of Local Amenity Importance which will not only ensure that the gardens are retained for the enjoyment of the residents and passers by but will also have the advantage of retaining two of the town's finest historic burgage plots for future generations to enjoy. Designation as Land of Local Amenity Importance does not grant any public access to the gardens.



III) The St Michael's building, owned by Devon County Council, lies to the south east of the Brief Area and is surrounded by open space. This bland, grassed area currently provides little amenity value but could be landscaped to provide a visual link to the proposed public open space within the Brief area and to make it more usable, for instance by laying out a sensory garden.

6.14 There are two alternative approaches to the development of the remainder of the site and, in response to the draft, the District Council welcomed comments from developers, landowners and residents. The results of this consultation concluded that both schemes were acceptable and neither one was definitely preferred.

6.15 The District Council will positively encourage both alternative schemes but, in either case, a cohesive scheme must be submitted, both in terms of design and function, allowing all sections to be developed to a high standard. It is envisaged that the remainder of the site will be developed for mixed commercial, residential and community purposes.