

# Agenda Item

**Development Control Committee**

**2 August 2005**



## **Revised Development Brief: Hillcrest School, St John's Road, Exmouth – Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance**

### **Summary**

Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance in the form of a development brief has been produced for Hillcrest School, St John's Road, Exmouth. Following public consultation the guidance has been revised and agreement is now sought for the guidance to proceed to adoption for use in Development Control.

### **Recommendation**

- 1. That the Committee supports the changes to the draft Development Brief for Hillcrest School.**
- 2. That the revised Development Brief be adopted as interim Supplementary Planning Guidance to the emerging Local Plan for Development Control purposes.**

#### **a) Reasons for Recommendation**

To ensure that the relevant/appropriate consultation responses are incorporated into the revised guidance which will then supplement Local Plan policy and be used for Development Control purposes. Once the Local Plan has been adopted the document can then be approved as Supplementary Planning Guidance

#### **b) Alternative Options**

That the revisions to the development brief are not approved and it does not proceed to adoption. Planning decisions for the Hillcrest School site would then be based on Local Plan Policies applicable to the whole of East Devon and applicants would lack the advice and detailed background information which are intended to produce the acceptable development of the site and improve the quality of development.

#### **c) Risk Considerations**

If the guidance is not adopted it will not be used in the submission and determination of planning applications, the result being that the planning process is less efficient and the outcome may be less satisfactory development.

#### **d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations**

This guidance will form supplementary planning guidance to policies in the East Devon Local Plan. There are no budgetary implications.

#### **e) Date for Review of Decision**

There is no date for review of this decision although the guidance may be revised in the future in line with future policy changes.

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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 A report was considered by the Environment Portfolio holder in March 2005 relating to a Draft Development Brief for Hillcrest School, St John's Road, Exmouth and it was agreed that the public should be consulted on the guidance. Following the consultation the guidance has been revised and Members now have the opportunity to adopt it for Development Control purposes.

## **2 Purpose of Guidance**

- 2.1 To provide clear guidance to potential developers of the site as to what the Local Planning Authority will expect in its redevelopment and how local plan policies will apply to the site thereby providing an element of certainty.
- 2.2 To aid the Development Control process by providing a point of reference for the consideration of future planning applications and by improving the quality and level of detail of future planning applications.

## **3 Public Consultation and Subsequent Revisions**

- 3.1 The consultation period lasted 6 weeks and was carried out between 22<sup>nd</sup> April and 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2005. Letters were sent to adjoining occupiers, all relevant statutory bodies, Ward Members and the Parish Council. The draft brief was also made available on the Councils website.
- 3.2 24 responses were received, 12 being from local residents. These were carefully considered and a number of revisions made to the guidance which is attached as Appendix 1. Revisions are indicated by underlining new text in red and by crossing through ~~deleted~~ text. A summary of the responses forms Appendix 2.
- 3.3 The majority of statutory body responses to the brief were positive, particularly in relation to the retention and redevelopment of the Listed Building, the provision of cycleways/footpaths to extend the Valley Parks network and the provision of the southern section of the site as open space. The majority of residents were in objection to the residential development of the site and the continued over development of Exmouth.

## **4 Main Issues Raised**

- 4.1 Nature Conservation - English Nature and the Environment Agency identified that the brief did not cover nature conservation and protected species and this has been addressed with reference to the relevant Local Plan Policies and the requirement to undertake a full ecological survey.
- 4.2 Environmental Matters – the Environment Agency referred to flooding, foul water, pollution and sustainable construction and the brief has been expanded to incorporate these recommendations. A number of residents also raised concerns over potential flooding and the brief now recommends that a Flood Risk Assessment be undertaken which will help to address residents' concerns.
- 4.3 Listed Building – the concerns of English Heritage regarding the unauthorised UVPC windows in Hillcrest School has been addressed through a stronger rewording of this part of the brief.
- 4.4 St John's Road – A number of resident's objections concerned the impact of the development on St John's Road in terms of traffic and parking for the school. County highways were consulted prior to the production of the draft brief and their requirements were incorporated into the original draft version. Highways did not object to the proposals contained in the brief and it is not appropriate for the District Council to specify any further measures or alter the proposal on highway grounds.

- 4.5 Humphries Park Estate – Several residents of this estate commented that though the development would have the greatest impact on Humphries Park, it had not been mentioned in the brief. The revised brief now refers to all the modern residential development around the site and emphasises the need to consider the impact of any new development on these existing residential properties. This will also address concerns that the proposed 2 and 3 storey elements will result in a loss of privacy.
- 4.6 Bassetts Farm Primary School – Representations were made by the Chair of the Governors of the Primary School about the fact that the area of land proposed to be retained for the School's Sports use is not adjacent to the school; supervision of children would be an issue and the site would require considerable work to bring into use. There are also concerns about the capacity of the School to cope with additional pupils. The Governors view is that an area of land adjacent to the primary school to the north of the Hillcrest School would be of significantly greater benefit. These comments were copied to Devon County Council who have responded that the retained land is in fact adjacent to the school and an access way would be retained to it from the existing school site. The land is not necessarily intended exclusively for sports use – it could serve a variety of “outdoor classroom” uses and would not take a great deal of work to make it suitable. The school is actually in no great need of building work to extend school space – its forecast number on roll by 2008, assuming 100% of in-area children were admitted would be 303 and the schools pupil capacity is currently 313. The school is currently over capacity because it has admitted pupils from other school's designated areas leading to surplus school spaces in nearby schools. Extra school spaces at Bassetts Farm would exacerbate the situation at other schools. Devon's policy is local schools for local children and while the right of parents to express a preference is respected the County cannot provide additional spaces at schools that are currently popular if sufficient spaces exist overall.
- 4.7 These are matters for the County Council which can reserve whatever land at Hillcrest School they feel is required for future use of Bassetts Farm School. The Chair of the Governors also suggested that if the northern area of Hillcrest School were retained as an amenity area and laid to football pitches the school would be interested in having joint use of this community facility. The possibility of a land swap is suggested involving part of the EDDC owned playing fields at St Johns Road which are in urgent need of drainage and levelling. However, the St John's Road site is capable of accommodating a senior pitch, training pitch, changing rooms and parking. The Hillcrest School land is not large enough to accommodate a senior pitch or (without felling protected trees which would not be acceptable) an equivalent size training pitch) and a land swap would therefore reduce the options for future sports provision and is not recommended.
- 4.8 Density and Affordable Housing – A number of residents and the Town Council raised concerns/objections to the provision of high-density affordable housing on the site. It is considered that this approach complies with National Policy and represents the most suitable and realistic use for this site and it is not considered appropriate to alter the guidance. In relation to the impact of this type of development on the Listed Building the brief is clear in what needs to be considered and allows Development Control officers sufficient scope to resist future proposals which would harm the setting and character of the Listed Building.
- 4.9 Footpath Link to Duke of Cornwall Close – This has had to be reassessed as documentary evidence has been supplied which shows that a narrow strip of land adjoining and to the south of the Withycombe Brook which the proposed footpath must cross is in private ownership. The position has been confirmed by the Council's Legal Department. The brief has been amended to show a footpath connection across the stream to Dinan Way on land in District Council ownership. Negotiations will be held with the landowners to see if a link to Duke of Cornwall Close can also be achieved.
- 4.10 Other more minor changes have been made to factual information about the site.
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**Legal Implications**

Any legal implications are covered in the report.

**Financial Implications**

There are no budgetary implications in this report.

**Background Papers**

- Appendix 1: Revised Guidance 'Development Brief: Hillcrest School, St John's Road, Exmouth'
- Appendix 2: Summary of Representations
- The file containing all letters and consultations referred to in the report

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Development Control Committee  
2 August 2005