

**URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK
PATHFINDER HOUSE, HUNTINGDON
(Report by HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The recent structural report on the condition of Pathfinder House found significant defects in the existing structure. The demolition and replacement of the building is therefore one of the options that the Council is considering. If Pathfinder House is to be demolished, this document provides a framework for the re-development of the Castle Hill House/Pathfinder House site.
- 1.2 The Urban Design Framework presents the planning policy context but also important design parameters that should lead any re-development proposals, whether for replacement office accommodation or alternative solutions.
- 1.3 Cabinet is asked to consider the Framework and approve it for consultation purposes. Once representations have been received and considered, the document will be adopted as supplementary planning guidance and used when considering development proposals.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site to which the Framework applies includes the offices currently occupied by the District Council and all associated land/car parking.
- 2.2 Pathfinder House was built as a speculative office building in the grounds of Castle Hill House in the late 1970s. By modern standards, it is a poorly-designed building and recent structural reports have raised concern over its condition. If the existing building is to be removed and replaced, it is important that re-development acknowledges the merits of the site and creates buildings of more appropriate form and scale.
- 2.3 There are important features on the existing site, including Castle Hill House (a Grade II* listed building) and its associated walls and outbuildings. A number of mature trees also exist, some of which survive from Castle Hill House's original garden area. The whole site is included within the Huntingdon East Conservation Area.
- 2.4 In terms of land use, site conditions will influence proposed uses, including the impact of the ring-road on the south side and existing residential properties on the north side of St Mary's Street. It is

envisaged that the main use will be residential, or offices if the Council remains on the site.

- 2.5 In the interests of addressing the town's overall transport strategy, it may be necessary to locate a bus stop/station facility on part of the Pathfinder House site for a limited period of time. Any such facility would be of limited size and its impact on neighbouring properties minimised. The Framework allows for the phasing of re-development to take account of this eventuality.

3. THE PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The Framework recognises the opportunities that the site provides to improve the quality of built form by:-

- demolishing Pathfinder House
- enhancing the setting of Castle Hill House
- preserving the majority of existing trees
- creating visual links between Castle Hill House and the Castle Hill
- improving the streetscene along St Mary's Street and the ring-road
- creating attractive new buildings and spaces
- ensuring discrete parking
- enhancing pedestrian links with the town

- 3.2 Indicative layout plans are illustrated in the Framework.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Production of an Urban Design Framework is best practice and will help to secure the most appropriate form of development if the Pathfinder House site is to be re-developed. If Cabinet approves the document, there will be a period of consultation with the local and statutory bodies. Any comments or changes will be brought back to the Cabinet before it is adopted.

- 4.2 A masterplan showing three possible options for the re-development of this site is the subject of a fuller report to Cabinet. One option will show the re-development of the site for mainly residential purposes. Another will identify offices as the main use (including a replacement District Council headquarters). A phased development that includes part of the site used temporarily for a bus station whilst the other part is re-developed for offices and residential use is the third option.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 That the Cabinet approves the Framework as a basis for further discussion and consultation

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

'A Vision for Redevelopment - Development Guidelines' Civic Trust February 2002.

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