

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**14 June 2011**

**Report of the Director of Planning Transport and Leisure**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)**

**1 CONSULTATION – MASTER PLAN AND PLANNING BRIEF FOR THE HOP FARM, EAST PECKHAM**

**1.1 The background**

1.1.1 The Council's planning policy background specific to the Hop Farm is set out in Saved Policy P6/25 and reads:

*“Proposals for further tourist related development at Beltring Hop Farm, as defined on the Proposals Map, will be considered in the light of Policies P6/12 and P6/14. Any proposals for development within or adjacent to the defined area, will need to be considered on a comprehensive basis in the context of an approved Planning Brief and Master Plan for the whole site, including all of the open areas. Proposals should preserve and enhance the Grade II\* Listed Buildings and their settings and accord with Policy P4/1. Piecemeal development and any proposals which conflict significantly with the terms of the approved Planning Brief and Master Plan will not be permitted.”*

1.1.2 It was in this policy context that the Council found it necessary to take action, by the service of a number of Enforcement Notices, against unauthorised uses and works that had emerged in more recent times at the Hop Farm.

1.1.3 Almost coincident with the service of the Enforcement Notices the Hop Farm appointed a new Chief Executive who introduced new planning consultants experienced in the operation of national level tourist facilities. The response to the Enforcement Notices was two fold:

- to appeal (the appeals are currently scheduled to be heard in late September 2011 – more detail is set out below) and also
- to start a review of the overall planning position at the site, especially to look at the unauthorised uses/works in the context of a possible revision of the Planning Brief/Master Plan (last approved at the time of the Local

Inquiry that eventually approved the 64 holiday accommodation units that this Council supported).

- 1.1.4 Following some officer level discussions the owners publicised a draft of the Brief/Plan to Members of the Council, the Parish Council, the public and technical consultees through a public exhibition in May this year.
- 1.1.5 What is now submitted for the Council's consideration is the revised draft of these documents. The draft is broadly described below. I propose that consultation is now carried-out and that the Council consider the draft, in the light of responses to that consultation, at the next meeting of this Board.
- 1.1.6 The consideration of the draft, with consultee responses, at the next meeting of the Board will allow the Board's decision on the draft to therefore form a key context for the current Enforcement Notice appeals.
- 1.1.7 To proceed it is appropriate for the Council to carry-out consultations separate from that which the Hop Farm did in their public exhibition to ensure that the Council has independent views from the "wider public" before considering whether or not to adopt the draft document.
- 1.1.8 The draft document sets out the broad planning policy framework with which the draft proposed opportunities are proposed. The overarching consideration is the fact that the site lies wholly within the Green Belt and that therefore many of the proposed uses or works may be accepted (in any planning application) only if "very special circumstances" are established – the draft document has to address this overarching issue (as well as the more direct technical considerations required by other policies). To this must be added the need to protect and enhance the setting of the key Listed Buildings on the site – the oast house groups known as the Bells.

## **1.2 Potential opportunities**

- 1.2.1 A copy of the draft document is provided as a separate Annex for Member's convenience and detailed reference.
- 1.2.2 The key proposals are set out as an arrangement of zones around the site intend to balance the considerations of Green Belt status and the fact that much of the area creates, in one way or another, a setting for the group of Listed Oast House Bells that are so characteristic of the site.
- 1.2.3 The key zones/concepts are:
- Accommodation Zone – west of the main complex based on the area where the holiday units are permitted. Possible alternative use of some of the area to hotel

- Local produce and food zone – around the current entrance area and the approved garden/nursery buildings
- Corporate zone – utilising Bells 1 and 2 and based upon existing facilities used for this purpose
- Hop Farm experience – in Bell 4 focussing on the hop farm history
- The Oast Houses – it is proposed to reduce the number of buildings around the Bells and rethink the nature and location of children’s rides to improve the setting of the oasts – the red “big top” to be removed.
- Children’s rides – most of the travelling fairground rides to be removed and replaced by “designed-in” rides some of which would relocate to west of Bell 5.
- Outdoor activities and attractions – land north of the Bells for use for open uses with better planting to integrate with the Bells and the wider landscape
- Wild wood – enhanced woodland trails
- Farming and countryside attractions – intended to be used for uses that are appropriate to the Green Belt
- Enhancement of landscape framework – new perimeter planting, avenue planting within the site and rationalisation of fencing
- Materials and detailing – the footpaths and fencing will be improved

1.2.4 The document will be placed on the website and available for inspection by consultees

### **1.3 Legal Implications**

1.3.1 The brief/Plan will become a material consideration for Development Control if adopted.

### **1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

1.4.1 Minimal cost of consultation.

### **1.5 Risk Assessment**

1.5.1 None at this stage.

### **1.6 Equality Impact Assessment**

1.6.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report.

### **1.7 Recommendations**

1.7.1 I **RECOMMEND** that the document be approved for the purposes of public consultation.

The Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Lindsay Pearson

Nil

Steve Humphrey

Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure

<b>Screening for equality impacts:</b>		
<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Explanation of impacts</b>
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	This is a consultation at present and the document will be assessed through the consultation process.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	Yes	This is a consultation at present and the document will be assessed through the consultation process and it is intended that all groups and needs are accommodated in the proposals in this document.
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

*In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.*