

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Stanmer Park - Traditional Agricultural Buildings Update</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>19<sup>th</sup> April 2012</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Strategic Director Resources</b>		
<b>Lead Cabinet Member:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member for Finance &amp; Central Services</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Angela Dymott</b>	<b>Tel: 291450</b>
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<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Forward Plan No:</b>	
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>Hollingdean &amp; Stanmer</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 In 2005 following the surrender of the Home Farm agricultural tenancy the council obtained vacant possession of the traditional agricultural buildings located within Stanmer Village. It is an aspiration of the council to restore and refurbish the buildings to create a mixed use scheme to provide a range of services and accommodation to attract visitors to Stanmer, improve their enjoyment of the park and provide a high quality gateway to the South Downs.
- 1.2 This report is to inform Members and stakeholders of the progress made to date and provide further recommendations for the council to work in partnership with the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) to develop a vision and master plan for Stanmer Park and prepare a brief for the proposed restoration of these buildings.
- 1.3 The council's Downland Estate can enable a more Sustainable City by working with partners and using the One Planet Living framework to reduce carbon emissions, promote sustainable economic growth, improve and protect the built and natural environment. The council aspires to develop the next phase of our economy to become a UK leader in eco-tourism to promote growth and create new jobs. Achieving the UN Biosphere Reserve Status means working towards a high quality natural environment where a balanced relationship exists between people and nature. We will continue to protect and make the most of all open space in the city creating a stronger link between the sea and the South Downs. Stanmer Park is critical to achieving this as the main gateway to the Downs.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That Cabinet agrees to consult with the SDNPA, tenants and other interested parties on the refreshed Downland Initiative called the Downland Estate policy that fits into the One Planet Living principles and UN Biosphere Reserve status.
- 2.2 That Cabinet notes the progress made to date and supports the appointment of a project team to establish the feasibility of the Home Farm buildings being

refurbished as a gateway to the South Downs National Park. Working in partnership with the SDNPA the project team will establish a planned and costed development strategy that fits into the developing master plan for the Park capable of being used, for applications for grant funding, such as, the Heritage Lottery Grant Fund. Funding for the project team's initial set up costs of £75,000 is to be met from existing capital budgets.

### **3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:**

- 3.1 In 2005 the council took a surrender of the agricultural tenancy for Home Farm Stanmer. The farmland was subsequently designated permissive open access allowing public access across the Stanmer estate up to Ditchling Beacon. This has proved to be hugely successful and is now considered to be an important and key component to the public's access and wider enjoyment of Stanmer Park.

The farmland is let to a local grazier, the residential properties are let to a charitable trust set up for the purpose and the modern farm buildings are let for agricultural purposes and storage.

- 3.2 The traditional agricultural buildings, located at the southern entrance to the village on both sides of the access road (see plan attached as Appendix 1), were on the whole unlettable and have remained vacant with the exception of temporary uses in some. They had not been used for their original agricultural purpose for many years and their configuration and construction makes them obsolete for modern farming requirements. The main building, the longbarn is Grade II listed. The buildings have been identified as a 'perfect fit' to meet many of the objectives of the Downland Estate policy. Their refurbishment provides an ideal opportunity not only to deliver the policy but to further support and reinforce the investment the Council has already made in Stanmer Park and its wider surrounds.

#### **3.3 The Downland Estate Policy**

The Downland Initiative, originally commissioned in 2005 by the Council, Property & Design in conjunction with the Countryside Agency (now Natural England) and the South Downs Joint Committee (now SDNPA) examined the feasibility of securing more sustainable management of the Downland surrounding the city so that it delivers greater social and environmental benefits. The Downland Initiative has recently been revised and renamed the Downland Estate Policy to ensure its fit with the Biosphere project and its overarching aim is to: -

*Sustain natural resources provided by the council's downland estate by working in partnership with relevant stakeholders and potential beneficiaries and pursuing an economically sustainable approach for the council and its tenant farmers.*

Detailed aims and the recommendations of the study cover the following areas: -

- Agriculture, land use and groundwater protection.
- Public access, recreation and understanding.
- Wildlife and landscape conservation.
- Farmer and stakeholder conservation.

#### **3.4 The Aim**

The aim is to work in partnership with the SDNPA to develop a master plan for Stanmer Park and a costed development strategy for the refurbishment of the council's traditional agricultural buildings. The project development strategy which will be part of the overall master plan for Stanmer Park will enable the Park and Village to host a diverse range of services and enhanced facilities to attract visitors to Stanmer, improve their enjoyment and experience and provide a vital link between the City of Brighton & Hove and the SDNP. In effect Stanmer will provide a high quality gateway into the South Downs and the National Park.

### **3.5 The Vision**

In 2007 a multi-directorate steering group led by Property & Design, which also included partners from the South Downs Joint Committee and Natural England, was set up to consider what could be achieved and to develop the vision:-

*“To provide innovative, inspiring and sustainable facilities for all, which enable people to reconnect with Stanmer, the South Downs and farming”.*

In summary the vision is to refurbish the buildings to fulfil objectives of the Downland Estate policy and rejuvenate Stanmer Park as the 'jewel in the crown' by providing a range of services and facilities to attract visitors to Stanmer, improve their enjoyment of the park and provide a high quality gateway to the South Downs. The proposed refurbishment would also include commercial or possibly residential accommodation to support financially the non-income generating uses and ensure the financial sustainability of the project. The vision has recently been updated in partnership with the SDNPA.

### **3.6 The benefits we hope to achieve support the objectives of the Biosphere Reserve, which include conservation of landscapes, ecosystems and diversity; economic and social development which is culturally and ecologically sustainable; and environmental education, research and training to test and demonstrate innovative approaches to conservation and sustainability**

In particular the project aims to : -

- To position Stanmer and the city of Brighton & Hove as a lead contender site for a SDNPA Area Office.
- To enhance the character and contribution the redundant farm buildings make to the setting and users of Stanmer Village and Stanmer Park.
- To make best use of the Councils property assets.
- To mitigate the costs and liabilities associated with maintaining vacant and historic buildings located in a sensitive conservation area.
- To support and promote the objectives of the council's refreshed Downland Estate Policy.
- To ensure redevelopment is consistent with the council's / SDNPA's planning policies.
- To ensure the proposal is income generating and financially sustainable for the council in the long term.
- To consider and develop proposals within the context of Stanmer Park, the village and the surrounding downland.
- To support existing conservation and restoration proposals.
- To encourage and enhance peoples enjoyment of Stanmer Park and the SDNP to the benefit to the wider community.

- To focus on local food production, natural history, conservation education and recreation.

### **3.7 Possible Future Uses.**

The steering group concluded that the farm buildings would lend themselves to a range of mixed uses and an appropriate balance could be struck between a range of uses and services, such as:-

- A Visitor Centre with museum / interpretation facilities/ a centre from which we can communicate our message with the SDNPA to visitors of the Park and Downs and provide a public interface for local community and not for profit organisations who provide services in the fields of natural history, conservation and recreation e.g. Sussex Wildlife.
- A function room to be used by visiting schools, community groups, exhibitions etc.
- Retail facilities (associated with the use and enjoyment of the park and wider countryside).
- A farm shop, including links with local food production, producers and The Food Partnership.
- Flexible workshops for creative makers.
- Office space (potentially an Area Office for the SDNPA).
- Food outlet / café, including links with local food producers.
- Public WCs.
- Farm animal enclosures – urban public / rural farm link and education.
- Family friendly outdoor space / activities.
- Outdoor and/or partially covered space for farmers markets, exhibitions, visitor information.

The project group would determine which of these uses and in what size and proportion they could be accommodated within the farm buildings. Having determined this, the project group will seek to establish the financial implications of the proposal. As part of the refurbishment, proposals for visitor access to the park would also be formulated with the intention of providing sustainable transport and access solutions to the current problems experienced. This would link up with the work already being progressed as part of the Lewes Road Sustainable Transport Fund project to enhance access opportunities to Stanmer and the Downs.

### **3.8 Planning**

These sites fall within the SDNP, the Stanmer Park Registered Park/Garden and the Stanmer Conservation Area. The long barn abutting the street is a listed building (Grade II) and many, if not all, of the remaining farm buildings are likely to fall within its curtilage.

Regards will also need to be given to the National Park purposes which are to:-

- (1) Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Park.
- (2) Promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Park by the public.

### **3.9 Consultation / Market Research**

In 2011 the opportunity to redevelop the farm buildings at Stanmer Village was consulted on publically and expressions of interest were sought from both community/social groups and businesses/developers. Smiths Gore, the council's agents, were instructed to market and promote this opportunity. Interested parties were invited to express their views and ideas for the future use of the farm buildings. The results enabled the Council to ascertain levels of local interest and what both the market place and social/charitable sector might support and were encouraging. The results indicated there is keen interest from a diverse range of organisations that would like to set up an operation in the redeveloped buildings. At the conclusion of the exercise Smiths Gore made the following recommendations:-

- The council must retain control to ensure the aims and the vision are met and in doing so will need to take the commercial risk by funding the development themselves.
- The council should develop the buildings for a mixed use to a shell finish and let the units on commercial lease terms.
- A range of sizes and finishes should be provided as there is a broad spectrum of interest from those wanting low impact workshop space to others wanting a modern professional working environment.
- A tenant code/criteria should be developed to assist applicants to understand the vision and also timeframes for the development, particularly in the case of a phased development.
- The council will work in partnership with the SDNPA to get both the vision and planning/development brief understood and to ensure this fits with the evolving SDNPA planning policy.

**3.10** In addition, to collect the views of local Park users and stakeholders a manned exhibition was held at Stanmer on the 9, 10 and 11 of September 2011 following which the exhibition boards were relocated to Hove Town Hall to further promote the proposal. The results are on the council's website and in summary : -

- Mainly positive responses were received to proposed potential uses as: community use, museum/interpretation centre, craft workshops, farm animal enclosures, area office for SDNPA and family friendly space/activities.
- Mainly negative responses were received to proposed potential uses as: office space, holiday accommodation and housing.
- Both positive and negative responses were received to proposed potential uses such as: local food retail/market, retail associated with the countryside and café/restaurant/food outlet.
- Respondents were asked what potential benefits they would seek with any new development. All of the benefits proposed were considered desirable or essential with the exception of two; better lighting and more residents were considered unimportant.
- Respondents were asked to provide details of what other benefits they would seek and three strong themes emerged: a city or a children's farm, a resolution to the problems of car parking within the park/village and the provision of community space.
- When asked for any other comments the responses were varied and wide ranging but the overriding view was for a sympathetic restoration of the building; provision of services relating to farming, food production, crafts and

for users of the park; provision of community focussed services; and lack of commercial development.

### **3.11 Stanmer Park Master plan**

In order to ensure a holistic approach to any redevelopment proposals and that the use of the buildings are considered in context, work on a master plan for the Parkland has commenced using Land Use Consultants (LUC) who have an expertise in submitting successful Heritage Lottery Grant applications. LUC have been asked to review the 2003 Stanmer Estate Historic Landscape Survey and Restoration Management Plan (the Colson Stone Report) ensure linkages with the Lewes Road Sustainable Transport Fund, SDNPA and following consultations with professionals across the council and with the Stanmer Stakeholders group, prepare an updated master plan for the whole of Stanmer Park. This work is the first stage of establishing a detailed plan for the Park which will inform future management of the area and will be used for possible grant applications. The SDNPA and the Stanmer Stakeholder Group (including residents, businesses and other organisations operating within the park) are being involved in the early stages which will be completed by the Summer. Should a grant application be made further extensive consultations will take place using this master plan as the basis to ensure the many users of the Park feed into the process.

### **3.12 Next Steps and timeframes**

Working in partnership with SDNPA, the next steps are to assemble a project team. The project team will be tasked with determining the viability of the project and with specific reference to:-

- The scope and extent of development possible.
- Planning issues and the likelihood of planning opportunities, success, restrictions and constraints.
- To undertake initial survey work, including but not limited to ecological surveys/assessments, transport impact /viability assessments, archaeological survey/assessment, historic building and condition surveys and structural surveys.
- Architects proposals/schematics
- Review of existing services infrastructure.
- Landscape/visual impact assessment.
- Development cost assessment.
- Sustainability assessment.
- Financial viability assessment post development.
- Funding proposals including where possible the provision of grant funding opportunities.

### **3.13** The potential for a Heritage Lottery bid is being explored with LUC and teams from Property and Design and City Park. Initial design feasibilities are currently being prepared.

The project team will incur costs in taking this project forward and whilst it is hoped that some of the tasks identified above can be delivered within the Council's existing resources, professional fees in some of the more specialist areas such as conservation architects, quantity surveyors, specialist valuers and bid advisors will be incurred. Project start up costs estimated at £75,000

associated with the above costs are expected within the next 18-24 months after which permanent funding options for project support will need to be identified from the funding options identified below.

### **3.14 Capital Costs**

Capital costs are currently being explored as part of the high level business case and a feasibility option interpreting the reviewed brief and vision for the traditional agricultural buildings has been designed to assist in estimating the possible refurbishment and redevelopment costs. If the whole site is taken into consideration (as identified on the plan) it is estimated that the capital build costs before professional fees and VAT could be in the range of £3-5m. If the long barn was developed to initiate the redevelopment of the site this would probably require about £2m investment. Until the further work is undertaken with regards design and build specification it will not be possible to determine more accurately what these costs might be.

### **3.15 Funding sources**

These need to be investigated further but in general funding might be available from a combination of the following sources: -

- Heritage Lottery Fund Grant (HLFG).
- Capital receipts from disposals of non-core properties in the agricultural estate.
- Council borrowing funded from the generation of rental income.
- Other partner, public and private sector sources – these may have onerous conditions attached.
- Potential commitment within the Medium Term Financial Strategy subject to the overall financial position.

### **3.16 Revenue Costs**

The aim is to develop a financial model, post initial investment, that is self sustaining and thus providing a sustainable and secure long term financial solution. Detailed financial modelling needs to be done to determine levels of annual income and expenditure but initial estimates would indicate that once development is completed the farm buildings complex might be capable of generating a gross rental income in the region of £90,000pa to £200,000pa. Ongoing running costs and maintenance costs associated with the farm buildings will need to be met from new rental income. Surplus rental income could be used to off set development finance costs or to fund aspects of the developments running costs that are not self financing/sustaining.

The level of rental income will vary considerably depending on what design decisions are made and the proportion (area) of the development given over to revenue surplus generating activities.

## **4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 Details of the community engagement and consultation are detailed in paragraphs 3.9, 3.10 and 3.11 of the report. As can be seen consultations undertaken so far have shown that there is keen interest from a diverse range of organisations that would like to set up an operation in the redeveloped buildings. Future consultations will include consultations on the Stanmer Master Plan and

further consultations on the proposals for the redevelopment of the buildings and site.

## **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The £75,000 start up costs will be met from existing capital budgets associated with the Downland Estate, the agricultural buildings and farmland maintenance budgets. These costs are expected to be incurred during 2012/13 and 2013/14 and will form part of the council's capital programme. Any Council officer time to support the project will be met from existing revenue budgets.

Since the buildings came back under the control of the council there has been minimal expenditure incurred on repair and maintenance. However in the short term the council intends to commission a condition survey of the buildings which may identify repair works requiring more immediate attention.

The production of a high level business case will be required and will need to detail future funding options associated with this project including any Heritage Lottery Fund Grant bids and will need to be reported back to Cabinet in due course.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Rob Allen*

*Date: 29/03/12*

### Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The report does not contain any adverse legal implications. As stated within the report the relevant sites fall within the South Downs National Park. That being so, all planning consents for development proposed will be determined by the SDNPA as local planning authority.

*Lawyer Consulted:*

*Anna MacKenzie*

*Date: 23/03/13*

### Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The development proposals include opportunities to make links with local community and voluntary sector groups and have the potential to provide a public interface for local community and not for profit organisations that provide services in the fields of natural history, conservation and recreation

### Sustainability Implications:

- 5.3 The Biosphere Project objectives are to protect the environment and encourage sustainable development. It will provide an overarching framework and a robust management plan to help deliver the council's sustainability objectives. The proposed development of the farm buildings at Stanmer and the development of the Stanmer Park Master Plan fit with the Downland Estate policy, Biosphere objectives to encourage conservation, sustainable social and economic development, tourism and education and research to enhance the natural environment.



#### Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 Should the buildings continue to remain vacant in the longer term there is greater potential for acts of vandalism, squatting and trespass to arise.

#### Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The risk attached to the recommendation to set up a project team to establish the feasibility of the Home Farm buildings being refurbished as a gateway to the South Downs National Park is low at this initial stage. If the proposed development is not feasible the project team will seek alternative uses. In contrast the potential opportunities that the development presents are substantial in meeting several aspects of the Corporate Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy.

#### Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 The proposals support healthy lifestyles by promoting access to Stanmer Park and the Downs and encouraging outdoor activity associated with their use and enjoyment.

#### Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 The proposals support the Corporate Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy by creating a more sustainable city and enhancing the environment. The proposals will contribute to local Eco tourism, a stronger visitor experience between the city and the South Downs, local food production, sustainable transport solutions, protection and enhancement of the city's natural environment including support for the Downland Estate policy and Biosphere Reserve bid. In addition the proposed services will promote learning, healthy lifestyles and support community cohesion.

### **6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

- 6.1 Demolition of the buildings is not possible given the protected status granted due to their heritage value.
- 6.2 The retention of the buildings for farming use is no longer viable as the buildings are obsolete for this purpose.
- 6.3 It is not financially sustainable to retain the buildings as vacant in the medium or long term as the council will be required to fund repair and maintenance of the properties.
- 6.4 There may be opportunities to obtain planning permissions and let the buildings in their current state in a piecemeal fashion but this would not realise the full redevelopment potential of the buildings and the benefits that redevelopment would bring to the park and city of Brighton & Hove
- 6.5 There may be opportunities for refurbish of the buildings for an alternative use but would not contribute to the aims and vision set out in this report.

## **7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 It is the council's aspiration to refurbish the vacant and redundant traditional agricultural buildings in the heart of Stanmer village and Park to meet the objectives of the refreshed Downland Estate policy developed in partnership with the SDNPA to provide a range of services and accommodation to attract visitors to Stanmer, improve their enjoyment of the park and provide a gateway to the Downs that fits within the developing Master Plan for the Park.
- 7.2 Progress has been made in preparing a vision and completing consultation work. In order to progress this further, investment is needed to fund a project team with the aim of working in partnership with the SDNPA to prepare a costed development strategy and assess the financial viability of the development proposals.

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

#### **Appendices:**

1. Plan identifying the Traditional Agricultural Buildings.

#### **Documents in Members' Rooms**

None

#### **Background Documents**

1. The results of the public consultation referred to in paragraph 3.10 are available at: <http://consult.brighton-hove.gov.uk/portal/bhcc/planning/homefarm>