

Subject:	City College Brighton and Hove – Falmer Site Planning Strategy Framework		
Date of Meeting:	12 June 2008		
REPORT OF:	Director of Environment and Acting Director of Cultural Services		
Contact Officer:	Name: Alan Buck	Tel: 292287	
	E-mail: alan.buck@brighton-hove.gov.uk		
Key Decision:	Yes	Forward Plan Reference: CAB 0009	
Wards Affected:	All		

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

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval for a Planning Strategy Framework (PSF) for the proposals from City College Brighton and Hove [‘the college’] for a new facility next to and within the Community Stadium at Falmer. The PSF is a technical planning document that relates only to the Falmer site and how City College need to address key issues to take it forward towards a planning application. This is to assist the college’s bid to the Learning & Skills Council (LSC) for new capital funding.
- 1.2 The report outlines the educational context within which the proposed development sits, with the college being the main provider of vocational further education in the city, and also makes reference to the legal and landowner issues. However, the report does not consider these issues in detail or require any resolution on the property matters or the future of the East and West Study Skills centres or the adult learning provision in Hove, which will all be presented to future Cabinet meetings.

2. RECOMMENDATION:

- (1) To offer “in principle” support to the draft Planning Strategy Framework (Appendix 1 to this report) as a document that will:
- a) Assist the college in its submission for funding to the Learning & Skills Council in respect of realising its objectives to provide new and improved Further Education facilities for Brighton & Hove;
 - b) Provide a framework that will assist future discussions between the council and the college in respect of the proposed additional development at the Community Stadium,
 - c) Feed into a long-term property strategy that will deliver study skills centres in the East and West of the city, including accessible adult education facilities in Hove.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 City College is bidding for c. £70million from the LSC for a four-site Capital Strategy that looks to base themselves in two main and two smaller campuses. The main campuses include a redeveloped campus around Pelham Street and a new facility in and adjacent to the Community Stadium. A later phase of the strategy envisages an eastern study skills centre at Wilson Avenue, (potentially along with other community facilities subject to the findings of a feasibility study), and a western study skills centre at a site in Hove. City College propose that the study skills centres would be developed in partnership with schools and the city council. The bidding process to the LSC takes a two stage form, with the college initially submitting an Application in Principle (AIP) followed by an Application in Detail (AID) if the national committee of the LSC approves the AIP.
- 3.2 In March 2007 the Wilson Avenue Project Board and Policy & Resources Committee received an update informing them about the college’s emerging Capital Strategy. A letter from the Chief Executive, offering the city council’s ‘in principle’ corporate support to the college, was agreed by Policy & Resources at its meeting on 1 March 2007. At the same time a letter of comfort was also issued by the City Planner, also offering ‘in principle’ support from a planning perspective for the proposals.

City College's Four-Site Strategy

- 3.3 The city council worked closely with City College, and the college held further discussions with the LSC about their initial three-site strategy. The LSC were of the view that in their early plans the college was potentially not making optimum use of the Pelham Street site and advised them that they needed to consider releasing part of the site to generate capital receipts to help fund their preferred strategy. The college therefore proposed releasing part of the site to for other uses and thus create a mixed use urban quarter which was the subject of a development brief approved by the council on 24th January 2008. In addition, the LSC were of the view that City College needed to re-evaluate the curriculum mix offered at a Wilson Avenue campus to ensure a better gender balance at the site and prevent what could effectively become a single-sex campus.
- 3.4 The outcome of the college's review and discussions with the LSC was that they amended their property strategy so that it looks to implement a four-site strategy in a phased process. City College presented its preferred four-site strategy to the Major Projects Sub-Committee on 4 February 2008. The strategy proposes a college presence in the north, east, south and west of the city. It involves a redeveloped Pelham Street remaining the main campus and the administrative headquarters for the college. This would be the southern campus (City College 'Central'). The northern campus would be at the Community Stadium at Falmer, which would house nearly 40% of the College. This would be an expansion on existing plans the college has to occupy 2,000m² in the East Stand, with a new building of approx 8000m² adjacent to the East Stand in place of what is presently proposed to be a landscaped chalk bund. The Pelham Street and Community Stadium elements are the first phase of the property strategy. As these elements form the first phase work is more advanced with them and a development brief has been adopted for the Pelham Street site and the Planning Strategy Framework is being considered by this report.
- 3.5 In East Brighton (Wilson Avenue) and Hove would be the eastern and western study skills centres, focusing on vocational skills the 14-16 age group in partnership with secondary schools as well as offering adult education facilities in Hove. These form a subsequent phase in the property strategy. The college will be able to apply for capital funding for the Eastern study skills centre as there will be post 16 courses situated there, such as motor vehicle engineering. Rubicon Regeneration has been appointed to carry out a feasibility study for the eastern skills centre. The western skills centre is proposed to be built in conjunction with Blatchington Mill school. The college is not in a position to access capital funding for solely 14-16 aimed courses, but its role would be to support the development with its expertise and to teach from the centre if this is agreed with the Children's and Young People's Trust. It is possible that the college could operate its Hove based adult education from this building, but it is likely that it would not have the same high levels of accessibility as the existing Connaught Centre. If this is the case then the college would look to potentially rent space in a more 'central' Hove location, perhaps using

existing school buildings. The East and West study centres are at this time less well developed as they are part of a later phase in the property strategy. However, they will be subject of further work by the college and they will be subject of further reports to Cabinet and Cabinet Member Meetings. The details of the east and west provision are not a subject of this report.

3.6 The total planned College space across all phases of its Property Strategy is:

Pelham Street Phase 1	14,250m ²
Pelham Street Phase 2	2,298m ²
Falmer Community Stadium	10,000m ² (including 1,777m ² future expansion space)
East Skills	1,684m ²
West Adult Education	340m ²
Total	28,572m ²

3.7 It is noted that the existing teaching space provision at the Connaught Centre in Hove is 1115m². The city council would be concerned by any loss of provision and floor space in the west of the city. The City Council will continue to work with the college to ensure that we safeguard provision and learner numbers.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 City College undertook a new round of consultation on its entire proposed capital strategy at the end of April this year, holding an exhibition across two days in central Brighton and for 2 days at Falmer High School. One hundred and thirty people attended in total and seventy seven questionnaires were returned. The college is processing the responses to help inform its eventual planning applications. The college's figures show that 67% of respondents who commented on the Falmer proposal were supportive.

4.2 The college has also met with the North Laine Community Association to keep them aware of the proposals and will continue to meet with them regularly. They will also shortly be meeting community groups in Moulsecoomb and Whitehawk. The college's Principal has and will continue to meet with adult education users in Hove.

4.3 City Planning has shared the Planning Strategy Framework with colleagues at Lewes District Council for comments.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report. The financial implications resulting from any discussions on the terms of disposal and lease agreement of the site will be included within in a subsequent report.

Finance Officer consulted - Peter Sargent 15/05/08

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 These are included in the report at paragraphs 7.11 to 7.12. A particularly complex part of the overall stadium transactions concerns compliance with the s123 Local Government Act best consideration regime, which will need to be covered in subsequent reports.

Legal Officer consulted – Bob Bruce 12/05/08

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 City College offer a range of vocational courses, including work based learning for people who are less suited to an academic environment. All new buildings will have to meet modern DDA standards – as opposed to the present buildings which cannot easily be upgraded to provide such standards.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 The college has got agreement from the LSC to provide funding to achieve 20% on-site renewable energy. In addition a package of proposals to make the buildings sustainable will be considered both by City Planning and by the LSC, who have their own high standards they expect from buildings at AiP stage.

Crime and Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 All new college development would need to offer security through design to meet planning requirements.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 Risk assessment is part of the process for project management. The process has followed a clearly set down assessment process that has formed the basis of the recommendations.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 Addressed in the body of the report

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 One alternative to giving support to this document would be to adopt a do nothing approach and wait for city college to submit a planning application. This however would mean that the LSC would not receive the comfort they require that a solution should be possible. They would therefore be unwilling to commit funds to any further work towards a planning permission and therefore by extension would also not fund any capital costs. That capital expenditure would then be likely to be allocated elsewhere in the region, meaning that Brighton & Hove loses out on inward investment of well over £70m and there not being the potential advances there could be in vocational Further Education for the city. The college would still possibly need to consolidate its land holdings to undertake any further development at all.
- 6.2 Within the Planning Strategy Framework itself the need for a detailed site sequential analysis is outlined, along with the criteria for considering alternative sites. Within this there needs to be considerable weight given to the educational benefits of each site, and in the case of this particular campus the college is looking to utilise the power of sport to attract hard to reach learners and provide socio-economic benefits. The links to Community Stadium would enable the college to utilise this attraction. Further details about the site sequential analysis to evaluate the alternative options to Falmer are outlined below at section 7.4.
- 6.3 The decision of the college to seek a campus at Falmer was informed by their draft Property Strategy, which has been shared with officers and approved by the LSC. The Property Strategy itself included an options appraisal based on a number of sites across the city which showed that many other sites were unavailable or unsuitable for education and that the provision of additional space at Falmer was most beneficial for the college in both educational and financial terms. The Falmer Stadium and Pelham Street are both parts of the first phase of the property strategy. The College's property strategy also includes later phases covering the East and West study skills centres.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

City College at the Stadium Planning Strategy Framework

- 7.1 The college's plans for the Community Stadium involve building on the existing success of Study Support Centres associated with 'Albion in the Community' in attracting hard-to-reach learners. The college originally planned to take 2,000m² of space in one of the stands at the stadium, but in addition is now proposing a new building of 8,000m² next to the Stadium. It would occupy part of the City Council-owned site allocated for the stadium development.
- 7.2 The college is of the view that the opportunity to build a significant facility at the Community Stadium at Falmer not only offers the physical space for the building of efficient, sustainable and adaptable learning spaces for Construction, Care, Public Services and Sport in particular, but is in itself a landmark development with great potential to attract and inspire learners. In particular they point to the ability of the "power of sport" to engage harder to reach young people, including very successfully by Brighton and Hove Albion Football Club with whom the college has a working partnership.
- 7.3 The LSC has requested additional "in principle" planning support from the council in order to provide increased certainty prior to committing significant financial resources in funding the college through to a planning application. They are looking to control planning, cost and programme risk and require this comfort as part of the AiP to minimise the chances of unexpected problems at the planning stage. Given the timescale involved with the College seeking to apply for funding in June 2008, it was agreed that the preparation of a Planning Strategy Framework was the most realistic and achievable way forward. Whilst not a statutory planning document, the brief has been prepared with regard to the Development Plan and produced as a partnership collaboration between the College's consultants Broadway Malyan, officers from City Planning and Economic Development & Regeneration, with planning officers being responsible for the final draft edit. The college's Falmer proposal would still need to be subject of a planning application in the future – this document in no way avoids that requirement.

Planning Issues

- 7.4 The Planning Strategy Framework sets out the College's plans in the context of local, strategic and national planning policy. The site of the 'bund' proposal lies partly within the administrative boundary of Brighton & Hove and partly within Lewes (with the College advising that the greater proportion will fall within Brighton & Hove). It is therefore subject to development plan policies of both Local Planning Authorities, as well as the overarching Structure Plan. The site is wholly within the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and is therefore subject to government guidance in PPS7, as well as the relevant policies in the above documents. All of these factors would resist major developments within an AONB except in exceptional circumstances.

The Planning Strategy Framework sets out a proposed approach to address planning policy in this particular instance. This approach includes the following factors that address PPS7 and local plan requirements:

- (i) *the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy*

Such considerations will need to clearly establish the link between the College's plans for radically improved Further Education facilities, the national need for the improved provision of vocational training and its fundamental linkages with the local economy, including the need to fill skills gaps and meet future predicated demands in the local labour market.

- (ii) *the cost of, and scope for, developing elsewhere outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way*

A 'site sequential analysis' will need to be carried out, using a similar approach to that previously undertaken by Brighton & Hove Albion for the Falmer Community Stadium and examined in detail at the associated public inquiries and subsequent rounds of further representations to the Secretary of State. The Planning Strategy Framework sets out an approach to the site sequential analysis that takes account of the College's aspirations to establish key training opportunities linked with a major sporting facility as a valid criterion to be addressed in the consideration of all potential sites. It should be emphasised that this criterion would not override other fundamental planning policy considerations and that the College will also need to make a full and valid case to establish the 'Power of Sport' as an integral element of their educational strategy and thereby a 'material consideration' for planning purposes.

- (iii) *any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated*

The proposed form (and to many extents the appearance) of the building within the envelope of an already permitted landscaping bund and the need to minimise any further impact on the wider downland landscape will be key considerations in establishing the above environmental case.

- 7.5 The Planning Strategy Framework notes that, notwithstanding the need to adequately address the above AONB planning policy issues, the present state of play in respect of the proposed South Downs National Park is that the site of the community stadium (including the 'bund' site) is not recommended to the Secretary of State for inclusion in the National Park by the planning inspector. Following a final decision by the Secretary of State in respect of the final boundary and the formation of the new National Park, the Sussex AONB will cease to exist.

- 7.6 In addition to the above, the Planning Strategy Framework will set out other planning policy considerations that will need to be addressed in the proposal, including:
- transportation issues and the need for a sustainable transport plan, particularly in view of the fact that Pelham Street is in a far more accessible location;
 - issues relating to the proximity of FE facilities in such close proximity to two university campuses – e.g. whether there would be any adverse effect on their operations and future development aspirations, in particular the immediately adjacent campus of Brighton University;
 - the overall environment for the students, particularly in relation to outside congregation/informal recreational areas (an important aspect of the proposed Pelham Street experience);
 - overall issues relating to environmental capacity of the wider area arising from the cumulative impact of the proposal;
 - the role and financial contribution played by other sites within the ownership of the College in delivering the strategy, together with more detailed information relating to the LSC's funding criteria.

The Education Case for the City College at the Stadium Proposals

- 7.7 The education case for City College at the Stadium is persuasive. The College identifies local and national priorities and describes how new buildings will address these. The current buildings cannot meet current demand for vocational provision and this will increase both at pre and post 16. Having first class facilities will encourage more young people to remain in education and training to gain higher level of skill. This will also have the effect of reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) which is a priority for Brighton & Hove.
- 7.8 The current facilities do not meet the needs of many young people with learning difficulties and disabilities and new buildings will be fit for purpose and provide accommodation which is accessible and will help vulnerable young people to feel secure in order that can achieve the best that they can.
- 7.9 The College already works in partnership with other Colleges and with schools across the city. The education case identifies gaps in provision in the City as a whole and seeks to fill these. The education case links closely with the 14-19 Strategic Plan and it is clear that all young people will benefit from the proposals.
- 7.10 The stadium site will be attractive to young people and will also attract adults with low skill levels. Increasing the number of adults with a full Level 2 qualification is a priority area and will help close the gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged households. The range of activities proposed for the site are in line with local skills needs.

Landowner and Legal Implications of the City College at the Stadium Proposals for the City Council

- 7.11 The site for the Stadium and the adjacent bus and coach interchange is principally owned by Brighton and Hove City Council, the remainder being owned by Brighton University. Following member approval at Policy and Resources Committee in September 2007, agreement was reached with the tenant to enable the land required for the stadium to revert to the Council. Following completion of negotiations between the Council, the Football Club and the University of Brighton, Cabinet approval will be sought to the terms of the various legal documents required to enable the stadium to be constructed.
- 7.12 If all parties, including the University of Brighton, agree to the principle of the new City College building on the stadium site, further discussions and reports to Cabinet will be required on the terms of the disposal and lease agreement.

Timetable

- 7.13 There is a finite pot of LSC funding available, with other colleges in the region bidding all the time for the money that is left. The college therefore needs to submit its AIP very soon, and has agreed a date in the middle of June with the LSC. This means there is a great deal of urgency for the college to secure some degree of endorsement from the city council to support the bid and to try and ensure the significant education capital funding investment is secured for Brighton & Hove. If the submission of the AIP is any later than June this year then the entire programme will have to move back a year as the college programme must be based on moving within the summer holidays. If the college were to have to rethink its property strategy and therefore its AiP it would delay the AiP by a year and could mean that most significant sums of capital funding are already allocated elsewhere by the time the college makes its application. The programme presently envisages occupation of both Pelham Street and the college element of the Community Stadium in early September 2011.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Draft City College at the Stadium Planning Strategy Framework

Documents In Members' Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

1. Pelham Street Knowledge Quarter Development Brief