

November 2020

Report of	Assistant Director of Place & Client	Author	Alistair Day
Title	Development Brief for the ABRO Site		☎ 282479
Wards affected	New Town and Christchurch Wards		

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The DSG site (previously known as ABRO) forms part of the Defence Estate and the decision has been made to dispose of this site for development as it is no longer required for military purposes. The site is located in an historically sensitive location and, for this reason, a development brief has been prepared to provide planning guidance on the issues and opportunities associated with the site and to provide a clear and robust development framework to aid the future smooth the delivery of a suitable development scheme. This report seeks authorisation to consult with the public and other interested parties on the draft DSG Development Brief.

2.0 Recommended Decision

- 2.1 That the proposal to consult the public on the draft DSG Development Brief is agreed with the intention to adopt the brief as planning guidance, with the option to change the status of the brief to supplementary planning document following the public consultation exercise.

3.0 Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 It is intended to adopt the DGS Development Brief as a planning guidance document. The process of preparing a planning brief involves seeking the views of a number of departments, agencies and individuals, and balancing their interests in making recommendations for the development of a site within the overall policy framework set by local and national planning policies. The weight afforded to a planning guidance document as a material consideration in determining any future planning application will increase if it has been prepared in consultation with the public and has been the subject of a Council resolution. Up grading the brief to a supplementary planning document will further increase the weight afforded to the development brief.

4.0 Alternative Options

- 4.1 The alternative option is not to consult the public on the draft development brief and not to progress the document. Should this option be pursued, then there will no site-specific guidance for the redevelopment of the DSG Site and any future planning application will be determined in accordance with existing adopted local planning policies and national planning policy guidance.

5. Background Information

- 5.1 The DSG site was used as a military vehicle repair facility. The site was vacated in about 2019 and has not been used since that time. It is understood that Defence Estates intend to dispose of the site in the very near future for redevelopment.
- 5.2 The site is within an historically sensitive location. Along the southern edge of the site lies the Roman Circus Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM). Discovered in 2005, it is the only known Roman Circus in Britain. The Benedictine Abbey of St John, which is also scheduled, is located to the east of the site. The site is thus located within an area of archaeological importance and there is high potential for encountering (previously unknown) below-ground archaeological remains of significance. The site was previously part of the Royal Artillery Barracks (later known as Le Cateau Barracks) which was initially constructed in 1874 - 75. The barracks complex featured stable blocks, living quarters, gun sheds, offices, a water tower, coal yard and guard house, along with schools, stores and recreational areas. The Barracks was enclosed by a high brick boundary wall, part of which runs along the northern boundary of the DSG site. Artillery Barracks Folley runs along the outer edge of the wall and appears to date back to this time. The Officers' Quarters - which adjoins the site to the southeast is listed Grade II listed and is currently being converted into housing. Within the site, most of the original barracks buildings have been demolished. There are however two buildings of potential historic or architectural value; these are the Infirmary Stables and the Carpenters and Telecommunications Shop, both of which are built onto the boundary wall along the northern edge of the site. The Garrison Conservation Area adjoins the site to the east, west and south and the Town Centre Conservation Area (Colchester Conservation No.1) adjoins the north eastern corner of the site.
- 5.3 The site is some 300m to the south of Colchester town centre and is situated in an accessible location. The redevelopment of this site has the potential to provide high quality housing that is benefitting the rich architectural heritage of Colchester. The site occupies approximately 4.3 hectares of land, 3.8 hectares of which has been allocated for residential use within the Emerging Local Plan. The Roman Circus Scheduled Ancient Monument extends over the southern part of the site and forms the remaining 0.5 hectares of land, which is allocated as open space in the Emerging Local Plan. The purpose of preparing a development brief for this site is to provide guidance on issues and opportunities and to set out the Council's aspirations for the redevelopment of this important site. The document provides a clear and robust development framework, which is intended to help for the smooth delivery of a suitable scheme.
- 5.4 An informal 'light touch' consultation was undertaken with Members, the landowner, Colchester Archaeological Trust, the Civic Society, Historic England, the Highway Authority and Essex Police in March / April 2020. The comments made by these organisations and interest groups have been taken into account in drafting the development brief that is the subject of this report. It is now proposed to seek the views of the wider public and other agencies on the proposed development brief. All representations will be considered, and the views expressed will be balanced in making recommendations for final version of the development brief.

6.0 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

6.1 None identified

7.0 Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 The Draft Development Brief encompasses the five key themes set out in the Strategic Plan, namely:
- Tackling the climate challenge and leading sustainability.
 - Creating safe, healthy and active communities.
 - Delivering homes for people who need them.
 - Growing the economy so everyone benefits.
 - Celebrating our heritage and culture

8.0 Consultation

- 8.1 Informal consultation has been undertaken when preparing draft DSG Development Brief. This report seeks authorisation to consult the public and other interested groups on the draft development brief.

9.0 Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 The purpose of this report is to seek agreement to consult the public and other interested parties on the draft development brief. Any publicity generated should be positive as the Council is providing the opportunity to influence future development at an early stage.

10.0 Financial implications

- 10.1 There will be potential costs associated with undertaking a public consultation exercise.
- 10.2 Appeals against refusal can expose the Council to significant expense and costs where the planning authority is seen to have acted unreasonably. The provision of a site brief will increase developer certainty and will become a material consideration in the determination of development proposals, thereby reducing risk of an appeal.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 The draft development brief promotes a high-quality development, which, if delivered, will help to enhance the health, wellbeing and safety in this part of the town.

12.0 Health and Safety Implications

- 12.1 None directly arising from this report.

13.0 Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 The provision of a development brief will serve to inform planning decisions and based on policies within the Local Plan and will therefore help to reduce the risk of inappropriate development.

14.0 Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 14.1 In order to support the achievement of sustainable development, the draft Development Brief recommends that new development is undertaken in the most sustainable way possible, delivering the Council's social and economic aspirations without compromising

the environmental limits of the area for current and future generations. The brief recommends that new buildings seek to fully integrate sustainable design and construction with urban design to ensure the delivery of a high-quality new development and to maximise the opportunities to enhance the environmental performance of new development.

Appendices

Draft DGS Development Brief

Background Papers

The Emerging Local Plan