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Dear Mr Barker

Slough Town Hall, Bath Road, Slough Forthcoming Planning Application

We act for Slough Borough Council in providing planning and property advice in relation to the above property. I write further to our recent telephone conversation.

Background and Recent Public Consultation

Our client is currently in the process of considering options for the sale of the Slough Town Hall site on Bath Road in Slough (I attach a site plan for information). As part of this process, Divers Jonas has been instructed to advise on the potential redevelopment of the Town Hall site for residential use and to prepare an outline planning application accordingly.

The Council's decision to take forward a residential-led redevelopment of the Town Hall site has been taken at Cabinet level, following a period of extensive public consultation on the option of either retaining the Council's civic offices at the Town Hall site or relocating this function to an alternative town centre location.

The main result of the public consultation exercise (which included 4 "road-shows"; formal presentations to staff and other business and public sector organisations; and an online service for respondents), was a majority support for the relocation of the Council's civic offices function to Slough town centre.

Former Mixed Use Option

To allow members of the public to consider the option of retaining the Council's civic offices on the Town Hall site, the illustrative material used for the recent public consultation included proposals for a mixed use redevelopment comprising new civic office development at the front of the site (facing Bath Road) together with residential development to the rear of the site, adjoining existing areas of housing.

The mixed use proposals included the retention of the central part of the existing locally listed Town Hall building (which accommodates the Council's civic chamber) as part of the design for the proposed new office buildings. The intention was that the retained civic chamber could complement the continued civic/ Council function of the proposed new buildings at the front of the site.

With the benefit of the illustrative material provided for the mixed use proposals, the public were also asked as part of the consultation for their views on whether the civic chamber and central part of the Town Hall building should be retained in either the case of the Council's civic offices being retained on the site or relocated to the town centre.

In answering this question, only a significant minority of respondents expressed the view that they would like to see the central part of the existing Town Hall retained as part of any proposals for the redevelopment of the site.

Emerging Proposals

Following a decision from the Council's Cabinet on the preferred approach to the sale of the Town hall site for predominantly residential redevelopment, there are currently two main options being considered:

1. Residential led redevelopment including the retention of the central part of the Town Hall building as part of the overall proposals; and
2. Residential led redevelopment involving the demolition of the existing Town Hall building to allow for the most efficient re-use of the front of the site facing Bath Road.

Discussions with Slough BC Planning Officers

There has been a long process of discussion and consultation with Slough BC planning officers and their conservation consultant in relation to this site. This has involved monthly meetings with officers since mid 2007 to review emerging options for the redevelopment of the site, and the relevant planning considerations that will need to be addressed as part of the consideration of any planning application.

The existing Town Hall building is not statutorily listed and does not fall within a conservation area. However, it has been agreed with officers that the "starting point" for the assessment of proposals for the redevelopment of the Town Hall site should be to test the potential for the retention of the central part of the Town Hall building (accommodating the civic chamber) as an ancillary element of the predominantly residential proposals.

In that regard, it has been accepted that if Option 2 is to be taken forward as the Council's preferred approach to the redevelopment of the site, then it will be necessary to provide suitable justification for the loss of the Town Hall building in planning terms. This will include a requirement for any planning application to be supported by an appraisal of the feasibility and viability of the building being re-used in the future as part of a predominantly residential redevelopment.

Pre-application Consultation

As part of the process of preparing an outline planning application for this site, it has been agreed that a further public consultation exercise (including local exhibitions) will be held at suitable venues within central Slough to seek the views of the general public on the Council's preferred proposals for the redevelopment of the site. In addition, this exercise will include appropriate consultation and meetings with other relevant local stakeholders, such as the Slough Civic Society who have already been consulted by the Council on the emerging proposals for the site.

In light of the information contained in this letter and the forthcoming process of pre-application consultation on the Council's preferred proposals for the Town Hall site, I would be grateful if you could advise as to whether you believe there would be merit in arranging a meeting with English Heritage at this stage to review the emerging proposals for the site.

Alternatively we would welcome any comments you may have that may be relevant to the process of preparing the emerging proposals and outline planning application for the site.

Yours sincerely

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