

CABINET

22 March 2006

WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL CLOSE PLAN

REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Contact Officer: Joan Ashton    Tel No: 01962 848442

RECENT REFERENCES:

CAB 1095: 'Winchester Cathedral Close Plan' – Cabinet 26<sup>th</sup> July 2005

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Chapter of Winchester Cathedral has produced a 'Winchester Cathedral Close Plan' for future development in the Close. The Plan has been prompted by the need for the Cathedral to seek additional sources of revenue for the on-going conservation of the Cathedral and its environs. In addition, Pilgrims' School needs to develop new facilities, in order to maintain its competitiveness and secure its future. The Plan puts forward proposals for modest housing development, additions to Pilgrim's School and other changes.

The Plan has been developed in consultation with City Council officers and the draft Plan has previously been considered by Cabinet in July 2005. This report updates the Cabinet on the Cathedral's consultation process and the changes that have been made to the Plan.

This report recommends that the City Council comments favourably on the Plan, subject to a continuing area of concern regarding affordable housing provision.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1        That the City Council welcomes being involved in the production of the Close Plan and the public consultation that was carried out on it, and broadly agrees that it represents an appropriate, coherent and sensitive Plan for the future of the Close.
- 2        That the City Council indicates that the detailed proposals in the Plan, including its provisions regarding affordable housing, can only properly be considered when planning and listed building application(s) are submitted, taking account of the prevailing planning policies and other considerations at that time.

CABINET22 March 2006WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL CLOSE PLANREPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVEDETAIL:1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Chapter of Winchester Cathedral have produced a master plan for the future development of the Cathedral Close. The City Council was first approached in early 2004 to explore the possibility of producing a 'development plan' for the Cathedral and Close. Since that time the Cathedral Chapter's planning consultants have worked closely with officers from the City Council on the development of the Plan.
- 1.2 The Cathedral needs to seek additional sources of revenue for the on-going conservation of the Cathedral and its environs. In addition, Pilgrims' School needs to develop new facilities, including a new pre-preparatory department, in order to maintain its competitiveness and secure its future. Consideration of these issues also provided the opportunity for the Chapter to look at other matters surrounding the future of the Close such as emergency access, re-arrangement of roads and lawns in the Close and the possible future development of the Wessex Hotel site.
- 1.3 A draft master plan was produced in June 2005 and published for a 6-week period of public consultation. Cabinet report CAB 1095 (26 July 2005) contained details of the main elements of the Plan. The key proposals are the proposed development of 16 new dwellings along Dome Alley and the development of a new quadrangle at Pilgrims' School, including a pre-preparatory department and replacement swimming pool.
- 1.4 Cabinet resolved that, whilst not pre-judging the outcome of any future planning application, the City Council welcomed the development of the Close Plan. Cabinet also expressed reservations over the assumption in the Close Plan that the affordable housing proposed would be solely for Cathedral key workers. Such an approach may not comply with the Local Plan Review's affordable housing policies. The Council's resolutions were communicated to the Chapter as part of the consultation process.
- 1.5 This report updates Cabinet with the results of the consultation and the changes made to the Close Plan by the Cathedral Chapter.
- 1.6 The Cathedral Chapter have requested that the City Council approve the principle of the development proposals outlined in the final version of the Close Plan (a copy of the document has been placed in the Members Room). This report recommends that the Council broadly endorse and welcome the master plan- -whilst avoiding comments which may be seen to prejudice the outcome of any future planning application - although concerns still remain regarding affordable housing.

## 2 The Consultation and Resultant Changes to the Close Plan

- 2.1 The consultation period on the Draft Winchester Cathedral Close Plan ran for six weeks, from 10<sup>th</sup> June – 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2005. The Plan was published by the Cathedral Chapter, to whom the public and interested parties were invited to make comments. The Chapter produced a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) in October 2005, which described the consultation process and analysed the comments made by respondents. The changes made to the Plan as a result of the consultation are also outlined in that document.
- 2.2 The Cathedral Close SCI states that the Plan was advertised in the local press and that there were features on local television and radio. The Plan itself was on public display during the consultation period and featured on the Cathedral's website. The exhibition was staffed for a total of five 3 hour sessions, during which about 50 visitors attended. The Chapter received a total of 36 written responses, including those from the City Council.
- 2.3 The SCI details the results of the questionnaire that was part of the consultation and discusses the general comments of respondents. The SCI states that there was widespread agreement regarding the overall approach and the level of development proposed in the responses received. The SCI states that the main points raised by respondents related to traffic and access issues, and that there were also some comments regarding the height and form of the proposed development in Dome Alley.
- 2.4 As detailed in CAB 1095, the City Council expressed concerned that the Close Plan implied that affordable housing provision would be reserved solely for Cathedral 'key workers'. The Council's consultation response stated that 'Affordable housing will need to be provided and occupied in line with housing needs in central Winchester at the time of a planning application'. The Cathedral Chapter will need to get permission from The Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England (CFCE) before implementing any development scheme. The CFCE state in their consultation response that the Cathedral Close is an area of 'special and particular character'. They argue that the housing of the Cathedral's own staff is a crucial issue for the proper functioning of the Cathedral and may affect the viability of the development scheme. The Cathedral Chapter themselves state that they will be likely to require at least 8 of the 16 dwellings proposed to accommodate their own staff. This would therefore comprise more than all of the affordable housing provision that the City Council would require.
- 2.5 It is clear that there is a potential conflict between the affordable housing policy as laid out in the Local Plan Review and the Cathedral's intentions for the new housing in Dome Alley. The City Council have acknowledged this in their comments to the Chapter and the Chapter are aware of this. The Cathedral Chapter state in their SCI that 'It is agreed that the issue of the provision to be made for affordable housing is not a matter for the Close Plan but one that (can) only be considered at the time that a planning application(s) is submitted.' They have not made any changes to the Close Plan in relation to the affordable housing issue. In these circumstances this issue should be best dealt with when the relevant planning application is submitted.
- 2.6 No major changes have been made to the Cathedral Close Plan as a result of the public consultation. However, there were a number of minor changes which are summarised below;

- Inclusion of a commitment to produce a construction and deliveries access strategy, which will be developed in conjunction with the local authorities and local residents and will be binding on building contractors. This strategy will cover details of the timing and method of delivery of construction materials to the Close;
- Revised text on secondary access for emergency vehicles, explaining that the improvements to the existing route would be the preferred strategy, but that emergency access via no 11 The Close could remain an option subject to detailed further discussions;
- Inclusion of various references to the Environment Agency's revised Flood Zone Map, which covers part of the site and to the need to gain Land Drainage Consent for works adjacent to certain watercourses.

### 3 Conclusion

- 3.1 The Plan represents a well-researched and appropriate response to the issues which the Cathedral Chapter has identified and it has been developed in consultation with City Council officers and specialist consultants. It is not proposed that the Cathedral Close Plan be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document and the Cathedral Chapter is not seeking this. However, it would comprise a useful supporting document which could be helpful in the consideration of any future planning application(s) and has enabled early public consultation on development proposals for the Close, consistent with the aims of the Council's emerging Statement of Community Involvement.
- 3.2 The references in the Plan to the key working housing for the Cathedral remain as in the Draft. The occupation of affordable housing solely by Cathedral 'key workers' may not comply with the relevant Local Plan Review policy. The exact nature of the affordable housing to be provided should be determined at the time of a planning application. It is therefore recommended that the City Council broadly endorses the Plan, but also points out that details such as the affordable housing provision need to be considered further at the planning application stage.

### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

#### 4 CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

- 4.1 Although not directly related to the Council's priorities, the Plan is of some relevance to the priorities relating to Homes & Environment, Economic Prosperity, and Cultural/Leisure Opportunities.

#### 5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 None directly for the City Council.

### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None.

### APPENDICES:

None.