

ELM ROAD DEVELOPMENT BRIEF

Text only version with suggested amendments

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How to comment

~~In line with e-government policy, we would encourage you to respond to the consultation online via <http://southend.jdi-consult.net/ldf/>.~~

~~Responding online is the fastest, most efficient and cost effective method of response.~~

~~Representation can also be made in writing (preferably by using the response form downloaded from www.southend.gov.uk/ldfconsultation) and returned as follows:~~

~~e-mail – ldf@southend.gov.uk or~~

~~Post – the Director of Enterprise Tourism and the Environment, PO Box 5557, Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6ZF.~~

~~Representations on the Elm Road Development Brief must be received no later than 5pm Monday 13th May 2013. Unfortunately late representations cannot be considered as being duly made. Please note all formal comments will be made available for public inspection on the Council's website.~~

~~We recognise that not everyone has access to the Internet and that it is important that no one is excluded from participating. Copies of the Representation Form are also available on request by calling 01702 215408.~~

~~There are a number of questions posed throughout the Brief which we are interested in your views on. However, you may respond on any section of the document using the Representation Form.~~

I. Introduction

1. This development brief sets out a vision for the Elm Road site in Leigh on Sea [that can be taken forward by a developer to secure the sustainable future of the site](#). The majority of the site is owned by Southend Borough Council and is currently in public use in a number of ways. However, there is a clear recognition that the site has the potential to offer much more to Leigh, both in terms of the improvements to the quality of the environment which might be possible but also in improvements to local amenities and services.
2. This brief has been prepared through a collaborative process with a wide range of people. It has been led by Southend Borough Council as the land owner and planning authority, but has been substantially shaped by the outcomes of a three-day community planning event held in June 2012. This event was open to the general public, but also specifically included the key local stakeholders such as the Town Council, Essex Police, community groups and adjoining residents. An additional 'update' drop-in session, held on Saturday 29th September 2012 to provide interested parties with the opportunity to review the work undertaken at the June 2012 sessions, has further informed the Brief.

[The Brief has also been subject to a 4-week public consultation, and the representations received during this period have been considered by the Council in finalising the contents and approach taken by the Brief.](#)

3. The context for this brief is that a considerable amount of change is likely to take place over the coming years, with changing patterns of use in the Community Centre [including the relocation of Leigh Town Council from its former offices on the site to the Centre, and an on-going review of the police station building by Essex Police, and the closure of the youth centre](#). This brief therefore provides a framework within which development can take place to ensure that this site serves the people of Leigh well and makes an efficient and sustainable use of the land.

4. Status of this document

- This Brief provides a framework for guiding and managing development proposals on the site.
- It does not constitute an implementation plan or a development proposal, nor is it intended to prescribe specific phases for development. Moreover, it provides the urban context for the site.
- Once adopted by Southend Borough Council this Brief will be a corporate document, setting out [to prospective developers](#) the Council's preferred approach for development proposals on the site. It will also provide planning

guidance for development management purposes and will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for development proposals on the site.

- Any planning applications relating to the site will be determined in accordance with this Brief, together with the adopted planning policies at the time a decision on the application is made.

2. Site Context

The Site

5. The area covered by this brief is located on Elm Road to the north western edge of the district centre in Leigh-on-Sea. It is approximately 0.5ha in size and contains buildings which are predominantly in public use. The space to the rear of these buildings is occupied by one of the few public off-street parking areas in Leigh.
6. The site includes: Leigh Community Centre ~~and~~ (which encompasses the Leigh Town Council offices), ~~a Leigh~~ youth centre (closed on 31.07.13 and now proposed for demolition), a private house, and the adjoining former Leigh Town Council offices (currently vacant but being marketed for short term commercial use), Southend Borough Council depot facilities, a police station and car parking.

History

7. Although some parts of Leigh on Sea are very old, much of the development in the area dates from the late Victorian period and the early twentieth century. Historic maps showing the site indicate that although Elm Road is one of the older routes in the area it was once a tree-lined lane across open fields. By the start of the twentieth century, roads had started to be laid out to facilitate development, including the grid of streets to the west of Elm Road. This was rapidly followed by development of houses and other buildings.
8. During this period the key elements of the site were put in place:
 - The community centre bears the date 1914 on the gable facing the street. Historic plans show that it was originally designed as the Conservative Club and that it had four shop units on the ground floor facing onto Elm Road;
 - The police station dates from the same period and was originally built as the offices of the council. The area to the rear provided a depot for the council services, accessed from the route on the south side of the building. Immediately to the north of the building where the main car park entrance now runs was a fire station. This has since been demolished, leaving a rendered gable end and a few small remnants including a glazed tiled wall; and
 - The pair of semi-detached houses between the community centre and the police station were also built around this time. The left hand one of the pair is shown as having a large yard to the rear with a connection through to Lymington Avenue. It is understood that this once operated as a timber yard.

9. Although the largely public and civic character of the site has remained, the uses have gradually altered over time. The most significant changes have been the development of the youth centre block behind the community centre in the post-war period and the amalgamation of the areas to the rear of the buildings to create a public car park.
10. This area lies outside the Leigh Conservation Area. ~~The~~ although both the police station and the community centre are both regarded as being noteworthy local buildings, partly for their significance as civic buildings and partly for their scale and detailing. Of the two, the police station is the better preserved with a more coherent design whilst the quality of the community centre is affected by the bricked-up units at ground floor. As a consequence, the police station is locally listed whilst the community centre is not, although it has recently been added to the Council's List of Assets of Community Value.
11. The semi-detached houses in the centre of the site are good examples of their type and period, but by no means unique in the area.

Land ownership

12. The bulk of the site is currently in the ownership of Southend Borough Council, with areas leased to various organisations:
 - Essex Police has the use of the police station building, but it will revert to Southend Borough Council in the event that the police decide that it is surplus to operational requirements (the building does not currently offer a public counter and as such the frontage remains relatively inactive);
 - Leigh Town Council has taken a five year lease on the community centre building from August 2012;
 - ~~There is some continued use of the youth centre building by local youth and young adult groups;~~
 - The former Leigh Town Council offices, which occupied one of the two houses on the site, as office space are currently vacant and are being marketed on a short term basis for commercial use; ~~and~~
 - A large part of the site provides pay and display parking, owned and operated by the Borough Council; ~~and~~
 - The youth centre has now been closed and those few groups who were continuing to use it have been accommodated elsewhere. The building is proposed for demolition as part of the Council's asset management programme.
13. Aside from the Borough Council ownerships there are a number of other relevant interests which would have a direct bearing on any potential plans for the site:

- The right hand house in the semi-detached pair, [69 Elm Road](#), is owned and occupied as a private dwelling;
 - 12 Lymington Avenue benefits from a vehicular access to the rear of the property from the public car park; and
 - 22 Lymington Avenue adjoins the historic [access route lane](#) linking the body of the site through to Lymington Avenue. This area of land has been incorporated into the garden of the property with an appropriate license from Southend Borough Council permitting this use but retaining ownership.
14. As well as these owners who are potentially directly impacted by any plans, the impact of future development on other adjoining properties must be considered, particularly the amenity of adjoining residential properties with gardens backing onto the site.
15. **Key issues:**
- Land that is leased from Southend Borough Council would need to have leases terminated before redevelopment or changes of use could take place.
 - Southend Borough Council needs to have contingency plans for the closure of the police station [to ensure a sustainable future use for the building](#).
 - The private house attached to the Town Council offices impacts the potential for comprehensive redevelopment of the area [and the circumstances of these existing residents needs to be sensitively addressed](#).

Urban form

16. The Southend Borough Wide Character Study (January 2011) provides a significant amount of information on the character of the borough, including Leigh on Sea. [The study comments that](#) this part of the borough is characterised by perimeter block development with a well-defined grid of streets giving a clear and legible layout.
17. The block within which the Elm Road site is located is deeper than the surrounding typical residential blocks, being approximately 100m deep rather than approximately 70m deep. This creates potential for more flexible ways of using the core of the block, as demonstrated by the timber yard which was historically based on part of the site, and the car park which is now there. However, the car park in the centre of the block means that the predominant characteristic of the space is the views of rear boundaries and the blank side gables of neighbouring properties.
18. This does not help to create a space which is inherently safe through being overlooked.

Scale and massing

19. Buildings in this part of Leigh-on-Sea are generally modest in scale and those taller buildings which have been permitted are often regarded locally as unpopular.
20. There are a small handful of buildings which break the prevailing two/three storey scale of the area:
 - The telecoms exchange building which fronts onto Rectory Grove and backs onto the southern edge of the development brief site is designed as a three storey building. However, the scale of these floors significantly exceeds domestic dimensions meaning it is more relevant to think of it as four storeys;
 - Just to the north of the site, Havengore House is a five storey post-war block of flats. However, the floor- ceiling heights of this building are smaller than typical historical examples and the fact that the land levels gently fall away to the north means that this building has less impact on the context than might be expected;
 - Although both two storey buildings, the police station and community centre also have the generosity of proportions which makes them equivalent in scale to three storeys of domestic development.
21. Additionally, while the community centre and police station fall broadly within the domestic scale of the area they are distinguished as public buildings in a number of ways:
 - Both buildings have strong rooflines with gable ends to the street which clearly distinguish them as public rather than domestic;
 - The police building has a roof-top cupola in copper; and
 - The principal entrance of the community centre and the balcony above is placed to form the centrepiece of a symmetrical view down Pall Mall, establishing an imposing presence from this approach.

Access and egress

22. Access and egress to the site is entirely from Elm Road, and at present is very messy due to the number of entry points required by the various separate land uses. These include:
 - Three blue-badge spaces on the forecourt of [the Leigh](#) community centre, accessed [from Elm Road via a drop-kerb by crossing the pavement](#);
 - The side entrance to the community centre site which provides access to the rear car park;

- Two parking spaces on the paved forecourt of the private house with a further garage space;
 - Parking on the forecourt of the former Leigh Town Council office;
 - Side entrance to access the rear car park at the former Leigh Town Council office;
 - The main two-way access to the public car park;
 - Forecourt parking for up to seven police vehicles and one blue-badge holder in front of the police station with vehicles crossing directly over the footpath to access this;
 - Service vehicular access to the depot which disrupts the car park layout;
 - Private vehicle access to the rear of 12 Lymington Avenue; and
 - Wide services access and parking strip to the south of the police station for a number of premises including the telephone exchange, the police station and the Sarah Moore public house.
23. The impact of these various access points is that there is a very dense cluster of places where vehicles are crossing the pavement to join the traffic on Elm Road. This has a significant impact on pedestrian amenity, but when these entrances are seen in combination with the pedestrian crossing just to the south of the site and the T-junction opposite the community centre where Pall Mall joins Elm Road they also contribute to a very congested area for vehicle movements with limited 'drop-off space for the community buildings.

Public realm

24. The public realm of the immediate area is generally very weak and, as noted in the previous section, is dominated by traffic. The existing buildings are set some distance back from the pavement, and whilst this would be front garden space in a typical residential context, the nature of the buildings' usage means that the space has been taken over by hard surfaces and parking. In order to provide access to the parking there has also been a considerable loss of front boundary treatment and introduction of additional cross-overs/drop kerbs. The impact of this is to create a generally poor quality environment.
25. The area in front of the community centre is predominantly hard paving, with a large ramp and steps up to the front door of the building. The benches and cycles racks added to this create a somewhat cluttered feel to the entrance, whilst the parking spaces for disabled drivers alongside the entrance extend the hard paving and lack of boundary definition.
26. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the public realm along Elm Road is that although the police station, and community centre are nominally in essence public

buildings, between them they contribute very little by way of active frontage to enliven the streetscene.

Planting

27. The area is characterised by a distinct lack of planting, either in the form of trees and hedges or in terms of lawns or ornamental planting. Although the road is called Elm Road and the historic maps and photographs show an avenue of trees, it is presumed that these went some time ago. Only a small number of street trees are planted on Elm Road, south of the site. However, the decent set-back of the buildings from the street suggests that some new trees could be planted, and could help to soften the impact of any parking that needs to remain on the forecourt areas.
28. Planting within the body of the site is also limited, with just one modest tree in the centre of the car park, on the historic plot boundary.
29. The site area does benefit from considerable greenery from the gardens that back onto the car park and youth centre building. Particularly in the case of the youth centre building it is considered likely that this planting has been deliberately established or allowed to grow so as to screen the building and reduce intervisibility with private houses and gardens.

Land uses

The site is situated within the boundary of the Leigh District Centre, and is designated as a Secondary Shopping Frontage within the Borough Local Plan (BLP). This designation is being taken forward by the Council's emerging Development Management Development Plan Document (DM DPD) following a review of these designations. Both these designations terminate to the northern boundary of the site, and the neighbouring Havengore House marks the gradual transition outside of the Leigh District Centre to a greater prevalence of residential uses.

What is a 'District Centre'?

A district centre is comprised of a group of shops and other appropriate supporting non-retail facilities and services (including banks, building societies, restaurants, cafes, pubs, laundrettes, public libraries, community buildings, and healthcare facilities) that collectively form a shopping centre. In Leigh on Sea the District Centre includes: the Broadway, Broadway West, Rectory Grove and Elm Road. The full extent of this centre can be seen on the map below (as defined on the BLP Proposals Map)

What is a 'Secondary Shopping Frontage'?

A flexible approach is taken to the management of secondary shopping frontages, and there is generally no discrimination between shops (Use Class A1) and non-retail uses falling within Use Class A2 (financial and professional services) and A3 (restaurants and cafes) of the Use Classes Order, except where this would be likely to isolate other shops from the bulk of the shopping frontage or from main pedestrian flows, or would adversely affect residential amenities. The extent of the Secondary Shopping Frontage designation in Leigh can be seen on the map below (as defined on the BLP Proposals Map):

[Include Leigh District Centre and Secondary Shopping Frontages Map](#)

30. As has already been detailed, the majority of the land use within the site itself is public or civic. The Community Centre, run by Leigh Town Council on lease from Southend Borough Council from August 2012, attracts a number of visitors to a wide range of activities within the building; - uses that have been evolving successfully since this time. whilst the youth centre to the rear attracts a younger age group. The police station building, although quasi-public, no longer operates a counter where members of the public can walk in to contact the police decreasing its potential for an active frontage on Elm Road. However, the presence of the police on the site remains very visible.

31. It was noted during the consultation that the use of the Community Centre building for public events, concerts and large gatherings is well established and tolerated by the majority of existing neighbours. Nonetheless, the amenity of these existing neighbours and any future residents on the site must be a key consideration for the future use of the Centre and wider site.

The site also includes a private residential property that adjoins the former Leigh Town Council Offices, being situated in the middle of the site adjacent to the Community Centre and the access route to the public parking area. Any plans for the redevelopment and reconfiguration of the site will need to take account of these residents and be sensitive to the associated impacts upon them.

32. Parking is the other significant land use within the site. This location is one of the few pay and display car parks in Leigh. The car park is within the district centre of Leigh and although on-street parking both on the Broadway and in surrounding streets is free of charge the relative difficulty of parking on street or the time constraints imposed on the parking on the Broadway, is sufficient to encourage a significant number of people to use the car park. Analysis of data from ticket sales indicates that the car park is well used and that occupancy is relatively evenly spread throughout the week, with a modest peak on Saturdays. Usage varies through the day - during the week there is a slight peak between 9am and 10am and a second peak between

12pm and 1pm. On Saturdays usage builds up later in the morning, typically from 11am.

33. The car park provides 60 spaces for public uses and a further 7 which are marked as being for police use only. ~~The road leading into the car park is also the location for a local recycling centre.~~ Beyond the site boundary the land uses to the south are typical district centre uses, including a relatively high quality mix of shops, cafes, bars and restaurants. This pattern of uses stretches up Elm Road to meet the site at its southern boundary, whilst on the opposite side of the road there are a few commercial premises mixed in with residential uses ~~houses~~. Historically this would have placed the original ground floor shops in the community centre at the very edge of the retail district centre of Leigh.
34. To the north and west of the site the area is largely residential, comprised of predominantly Edwardian family housing but with one five-storey post-war block of flats just to the north (namely, Havengore House).

Key issues:

35. The site is located to the northern end of the Leigh District Centre designation, beyond which to the north there is a marked on the point of transition between the district centre uses of Leigh and the wider residential hinterland. Importantly, in keeping with its district centre designation, the site is also an important but is also a focus for public and community uses. This provides a great deal of flexibility for potential development and land use options. However, consideration should be given to the way in which any existing or new uses relate to each other, particularly in order to protect the amenity of existing residents, but also in terms of the provision of community space.

Question 1

~~Have we identified the key issues in terms of land uses on the site? If not, what have we missed?~~

3. Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework

36. The national planning context is provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was published in March 2012. The NPPF condensed the majority of previous Planning Policy Statements and Planning Policy Guidance Notes into one document, with the intention of making the planning system less complex and more accessible.
37. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and outlines how these are expected to be applied. It provides a framework for Local Authorities to produce their own distinctive local plans that reflect the needs of their communities.
38. The NPPF is published by the Department for Communities and Local Government and is available from:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/nppf>

Southend Borough Council's Local Development Framework (LDF)

39. The key Development Plan Document within Southend's Local Development Framework (the suite of documents that make up the Borough's planning policy) is the Core Strategy, which was adopted in 2007. The Core Strategy identifies Leigh District Centre, within which the site is situated, as a Priority Urban Area, which it will be important to ensure is vital, viable and accessible with quality local services and good public transport.
40. In addition to the Core Strategy, a number of saved policies from the Southend on Sea Borough Local Plan Second Alteration (adopted 1999) are still relevant. This includes the Proposals Map, which shows the Development Brief area to be sited within Leigh's defined district shopping centre, as a secondary shopping frontage, but not within a Conservation Area. These Local Plan policies will be replaced by emerging policy in the Development Management Development Plan Document (DM DPD) in due course.
41. The Design and Townscape Guide SPD1 (2009) sets the parameters within which proposals will be assessed in design terms in respect of local planning policy; while SPD2: Planning Obligations (A guide to S106 + Developer Contributions) provides guidance in relation to potential planning obligations or developer contributions in relation to development. It also includes procedural information and contact details to assist in the negotiation of legal agreements.

Current planning policy can be found on the Borough's website, at:
<http://www.southend.gov.uk/planning>

4. Summary of Key Issues from the Elm Road Community Planning Events

The Elm Road Community Planning Events

42. This development brief is based on workshops undertaken and comments received during a three day community planning event held in Leigh Community Centre from Wednesday 6 June to Friday 8 June 2012. The June event had over 150 attendees with some people visiting several times. It was publicised through a full page advert in the Leigh Times, letters to immediate neighbours, posters around the centre and by the Town Council and local organisations. A subsequent 'update' event was held at Leigh library on 29th September 2012.
43. Day one of the June consultation event focused on issues and opportunities and included two site walkabouts and question based worksheets. On day two draft options for the site were drawn during workshops, with the options then presented during an evening exhibition. Workshops on day three tested the options and focused on deciding the way forward for the development brief.

Day one

44. Eight questions were asked on day one, the comments received are summarised below:

What does Leigh need that this site could provide?

- Community uses;
- Youth centre;
- Adult education;
- Leisure/fitness classes;
- Cinema/theatre;
- Parking (better use of existing advocated, not major increase); and
- Open space.

What is the worst thing about this site?

- Under-used facilities;
- Poor quality facilities;
- Potential loss of youth centre; and
- Fragmented layout.

What is the best thing about this site?

- Community uses/facilities;
- The youth club / PHAB club;

- Police presence;
- Built heritage; and
- Central location.

What are the problems or issues for this site?

- Financial viability / funding;
- Impact on neighbouring properties;
- Youth club facilities;
- Parking; and
- Maintaining built frontage.

What are the opportunities for this site?

- Improved community facilities;
- High quality architectural design;
- Maintain heritage assets;
- Cultural centre / theatre / cinema; Markets;
- Public space; and
- Youth provision.

What aspects of the site should be protected?

- Historic frontages and buildings;
- All of it – nothing wrong with it;
- Youth facilities / PHAB;
- Access / amenity of adjoining homes; and
- Police presence / building.

What aspects of the site should change or improve?

- Parking;
- Town Council move into community centre;
- Youth facilities; and
- Community uses/layout.

My dream for the site is...

- A community centre / community facilities;
- Maintained youth provision / PHAB; and
- Improved environment / public realm / public space.

Day two

45. On day two, groups worked together during a workshop to produce a series of design options for the area. Four options were identified to display during the evening exhibition and these are presented here.

Comments on the options were received during the evening exhibition and on day three. The comments and key features are summarised beside each option.

OPTION 1 - MINIMUM INTERVENTION

Option 1 - Key Features

- Smarten the street frontage
- Retain the Youth Centre building
- Retain the community centre
- Convert Town Council building into nursery/ offices or residential
- Retain the police station and private house
- Remove council depot building to provide a slight increase in parking

Option 1 - Comments

- Support for retaining community centre and youth facilities within the site
- Support for retention of the historic buildings, particularly the police station
- Suggestions that this approach could be a missed opportunity to achieve something more valuable for Leigh such as a larger space.

OPTION 2 - CONSOLIDATED COMMUNITY

Option 2 - Key Features

- Youth centre facilities re-provided within the community Centre
- Police station retained, but with potential options for re-use and extension if the Police decide to vacate the building
- Car parking increased
- Private house retained

Option 2 - Comments

- Support for maintaining the key historic buildings
- Split views on whether parking should be extended or simply maintained
- Split views on whether separate youth centre should be maintained or if relocating would make best use of resources
- Opposition to supermarket, high-rise flats and multi-storey car park (NB - these comments are taken as general as they don't relate to the content of this option)

OPTION 3 - NEW COMMERCIAL AND CONSOLIDATED COMMUNITY USE

Option 3 - Key Features

- Retain community centre and merge community uses as with Option 2
- New development frontage onto Elm Road in place of the private house and old Town Council office - likely to be commercial uses and housing

- Expanded car park
- Retail police station building with potential for other uses

Option 3 - Comments

- Conflicting views whether more or less parking needed
- Support for the retention of the police station and community centre buildings
- Support for a range of community uses in the community centre, although some split of opinion as to whether youth facilities should be separate
- Some comments suggesting this is a missed opportunity for open space
- Concerns regarding viability

OPTION 4 - NEW CENTRAL SQUARE OPTION

Option 4 - Key Features

- Opens up the centre of the site to create a significant new public space
- Retains the existing community centre and youth buildings with potential for adaption
- Retains the existing police station building
- Potential for commercial development
- Long term flexibility to adapt

Option 4 - Comments

- Concept of the central square generally supported
- Support for reinstating shops in community centre
- Concern about balance of commercial and community uses
- Objection to pedestrian link to Lymington Avenue

Day three

46. Conclusions from the 'vision workshop' on the final day of the planning event:

- It is important that the police station and community centre buildings are retained;
- Options should be explored for adapting the Community Centre to include provision for youth activities – this is seen as compatible with the Town Council's aims;
- There is an expectation that there would need to be significant investment in the Community Centre building to achieve this a consolidation of uses;
- Options can be explored for the Elm Road frontage of the Community Centre to re-establish the ground floor units which could provide commercial or community enterprise space and establish a revenue stream for the building;
- It is desirable to retain the police within the site, either in the existing building or in a smaller capacity if the main station moves elsewhere;

- There is a consensus that the approach of creating a significant central space, as in Option 4, has good potential;
- Consideration needs to be given to the provision of parking and to how other uses, such as markets and events, could share the space; and
- It is not considered necessary to substantially increase parking provision as this would be unlikely to make a significant impact on the strategic issue in Leigh.

The Elm Road Community Planning Update Event – September 2012

47. On Saturday 29th September 2012 an update session was held at Leigh Library to enable members of the public and other interested parties to view the four options generated by the June 2012 consultation sessions. Attendees were invited to give their views on the site in general and the four options more specifically. Overall, there was a general level of support expressed for Option 4 and the outcomes of this session have fed into the development of this Brief and a summary is included within the appendices.

Question 2

~~Have the relevant issues for the site been identified through the community consultation events? If not, what have we missed?~~

5. Public Consultation 2013 – Outcomes

A 4-week public consultation on the draft development brief took place between 15th April 2013 and 13th May 2013. As part of this consultation respondents were asked whether they thought all the relevant issues and options for the site had been identified through the community consultation events. In accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement, the draft Brief was made available on-line via the Council's jdi consultation management system, with printed copies being available for inspection of the Council's offices and at all libraries in the Borough during normal working hours. In addition, printed copies of the Brief together with response forms and a public display board were made available at the Leigh Town Council Offices (Leigh Community Centre) during the consultation period – this coincided with Leigh Town Council's Annual Town Meeting, held at the Centre.

A total of 14 responses were received and these were analysed by the Council in determining an appropriate way forward for the Brief. A list of consultation responses can be found at Appendix 3 together with a summary of the Council's response and how this has informed the Brief.

In summary, there was a relatively good level of support for the Brief including reference to:

- Support for the approach that would encourage an increased level of planting on the site and Elm Road frontage;
- The retention of public car parking;
- The retention of relevant buildings for the benefit of the community;
- The Brief allows flexibility for the future.

The following issues were identified however:

- Potential for development aimed at maximum Elm Road frontage – including built development abutting the blank gable of the Police Station;
- Leigh Town Council is currently managing the Community Centre and have, in recent months, seen increased use of the Centre for community, social and cultural functions;
- When discussing increase in public space/markets the impact of noise on gardens which back onto the site should be taken into consideration, as should the policing of such events to guard against anti-social behaviour to local residents;
- Agree the connexions building does serve well but the building itself is not in keeping with the area and should be transformed (in character) or absorbed into the already established community centre building;
- Any new development must be in keeping with the Leigh area; must not overlook gardens which back onto the development, be overbearing, or reduce light.;
- The nature of business uses needs careful consideration due to the direct impact to residents backing on the area.
- Ensuring the correct emphasis is placed on the context of the site and its relationship with neighbouring development and uses;

- Failure of the Brief to add to the vibrancy of the site in terms of both form and uses.

These points have been taken into account and amendments made as appropriate.

56. Principles for Development

48. The work that has been undertaken to consider options for this site has identified that there are essentially two different strategies for future development.
49. The first approach ([Option A](#)) follows the form established by the existing buildings and is based on maximising the frontage along Elm Road, with allowed secondary activities such as parking to take place in the centre of the block. This approach has a limited impact with regard to the total level of potential development that can be achieved on the site and also leaves the car park area in its current condition, surrounded by the back fences of neighbouring gardens.
50. The second approach ([Option B](#)) would open up the heart of the site by removing the pair of houses on the Elm Road frontage. [While this would punctuate the existing perimeter block it would have wider ranging benefits for the regeneration of the site as a whole, creating new street frontages within the site and maximising its potential.](#) This then allows the car park area to be reconfigured so that it connects with the street and becomes a public space rather than a back-land car park. This means that the space can then also be used for other activities, but importantly it also opens up potential development frontage in the depth of the site. [The use of this new public space, and indeed any new development, will need to demonstrate that due regard has been paid to the amenity of existing neighbouring residential properties.](#)
51. Of these two options, ~~the second one~~ [Option B](#) is considered to offer the best long-term potential for attractive and sustainable development, and therefore constitutes the preferred option.
52. The following section of the brief sets out detail on those issues; ~~that~~ [which](#) are considered to be of importance for this site:

Urban form – the opportunity exists to establish a significant new public space for Leigh on Sea, retaining the character of the area and providing the opportunity for a genuine mix of uses.

Conservation – the locally listed police station has potential for reuse and remodelling, should the police relocate, and [the building](#) should be retained. The [Community Centre](#), in particular its façade, makes an important contribution to the local streetscene and should be retained.

Community facilities – options ~~are being~~ [should be](#) explored to consolidate community uses in the area, [with the recent closure of the youth centre, which was most recently used by only two groups, and its subsequent planned demolition that](#)

~~will allow this land allowing the youth building, for example,~~ to be released for other uses, ~~such as public car parking in the short term,~~ or for comprehensive redevelopment;

Sustainability – any new buildings should be built to a high standard, in line with local policy requirements, where possible, and the environmental performance of existing buildings could also be improved ~~through appropriate retrofitting works.~~

Planting and landscaping – there is opportunity to reinstate trees to Elm Road and introduce planting to the car park options for greening the character of the site should be investigated.

Parking – public pay and display parking should be retained within the site, but this provision should not dominate. New development will require parking to meet the Borough's adopted parking standards.

Development Framework – there are a number of principles to address when establishing a strategy for the development of the site.

Developer Contributions - the redevelopment of the Elm Road site will need to deliver a number of improvements in order to mitigate the impact of development and to enhance the contribution the site makes to the surrounding area. These are likely to be met through developer contributions.

Viable and Sustainable future – options should be sought to ensure that the site has a viable financial future, limiting the reliance on council funding to support it.

A more detailed exposition of these issues is laid out over the following section.

Question 3

~~Do you consider that the preferred approach (refer to: Approach Two Diagram) reflects the challenges and opportunities the site offers? If not, what have we missed~~

67. Development Brief Guidelines

Question 4

Do you consider that the Development Brief Guidelines outlined within Section 6 reflect those issues and opportunities identified within the Brief? If not, what have we missed?

Urban form

53. Development on this site presents an opportunity to re-think the way in which the layout of the area is structured and to provide a sequence of spaces and buildings that is more attractive and which better serves the area.
54. The following guidelines are therefore intended to ensure a flexible approach to development on the site, inspiring investor confidence.

Spaces and frontages

55. The existing condition of street frontage to Elm Road with back-land parking inside the block limits both the potential for new development which has street frontage and does nothing to improve the overall character or usability of the parking area. The proposed remodelling of the area therefore takes a new approach, which opens up the heart of the site.
56. This establishes an urban form of buildings around a central open space which connects with Elm Road. It will have the scale and character of a public square, accommodating parking during most of the week but also able to provide a space for markets and occasional community events, just as a traditional market square does in many towns. It is important that the design of the car park is carefully considered, including a strong provision of landscaping and good quality sustainable surface materials, to maintain a strong public square feel when being used as a car park. This is required to increase the attractiveness of development to the rear of the site and enhance the setting, where residential uses are considered to be appropriate.

[Due consideration should also be given to the amenity of neighbouring residential properties in regard to the public function of this space and associated uses.](#)

57. The approach is based on the following principles:
 - The central space should be framed by active building frontages as far as possible. Ideally this would include improvements to the police station building to establish a more active frontage as well as new development to the north and south of the site. There is also potential to open up the front of the community centre to re-

establish the ground floor units, and to reconfigure or redevelop the remainder of the building to provide additional active frontage onto the site;

- The space should have a simple, clear layout which lends itself to efficient use primarily for parking and other activities appropriate to a 'public square' such as markets associated with the Community Centre. The amenity of residents should be given due consideration when planning any activities for the use of the public square;
- The space should have a simple entrance and exit for vehicles to simplify movement, and could use a shared space treatment for most of the space; and
- Improvements are required to the rear boundaries at the western end of the space. This would help to provide an attractive edge, but would also permit some regularisation of the space to remove odd remaining kinks in alignment and offer some existing owners opportunity to acquire a little more garden space.

Routes and links

58. The site is principally accessed from Elm Road, but historically there have been other points of access and there may be other possibilities for the site which would improve linkages with the district centre of Leigh.

59. There is a historic lane adjacent to 22 Lyminster Avenue which has now been absorbed into the garden of this plot. It is considered that reinstating this would not represent a significant benefit in terms of connectivity in the area, but would introduce a new lane which has little overlooking or other passive policing. It is therefore recommended that this lane should not be re-established as a through-route.

In addition, 12 Lyminster Avenue benefits from rear access through the Elm Road public car park. It is not envisaged that the preferred approach to the redevelopment of the site will impact upon this arrangement, and it is recommended that this is retained and addressed through any development proposals.

60. There is an opportunity to create a north-south link from the centre of the site to Rectory Grove using the existing lane alongside the telecoms exchange building. This would need to be subject to review with British Telecom as to existing operational requirements, but may prove a viable long-term opportunity.

Scale and massing

61. The predominant scale of the wider area is two and three storeys, although for residential properties this largely equates to two storeys with rooms in the roof, and there is an expectation that this will be taken as a broad guide as to the likely suitable

height of future development within the site with particular consideration given to the height and position of neighbouring residential properties. Whilst there are taller buildings immediately to either side of the site in the shape of the telecoms exchange and Havengore House these are already regarded as exceptions in the area and so care should be taken when using these as precedent. The potential for any buildings which are taller than the prevailing two to three storey context would require careful justification to weigh the potential impact on the area against the potential benefits such as improved viability.

62. Due consideration needs to be given to the amenity of neighbouring residential buildings in terms of the scale and massing of any new development. Any development proposals will be expected to establish an appropriate relationship between habitable rooms which minimises inter-visibility. Whilst new development will be controlled by legislation on the rights of light for existing rooms in neighbouring buildings, care should be given to the relationship which new buildings establish with adjoining gardens. The risk of large blank gables dominating existing gardens should be avoided through careful stepping of the buildings and consideration of the overall massing.

Land uses

63. The site is within the Leigh District Centre designation and forms an area of secondary shopping frontage. A range of uses that meet the day to day needs of the local community could be considered appropriate, including retail, cafes/restaurants, and community uses, although regard must be had to the NPPF, the Council's adopted Core Strategy DPD and its emerging Development Management DPD together with other relevant LDF documents.

As the site forms an important transitional stage between the attractive offer of the commercial centre of Leigh and the wider residential hinterland it has been considered that in this instance areas of the site would be suitable for residential development. Any uses of the site should give due consideration to the character and amenity of existing neighbouring residential uses and the district centre and secondary shopping frontage designations to ensure an appropriate balance of uses is achieved.

64. Consideration should also be given to facilitating the community function of the site, and retaining a police presence on the site or within the local area where viable and feasible (this is a decision to be taken by Essex Police however) in the face of any new development.

Planting and landscaping

65. There are a number of opportunities for planting and landscaping in any development, some of which are aimed at softening the character of the area and others which help to facilitate climate change adaptations by providing shade and managing water run-off and an appropriate landscaping management plan should be put in place to ensure a positive, long term solution for the site, including:
- There is the opportunity to reinstate trees along the street frontage to Elm Road in agreement with the Borough Council's Parks Department. Trees in this location are clearly visible on historic photographs and would help greatly to soften the street- scene. However, consideration should be given to the need to maintain an element of visibility for the buildings, and particularly for details such as the axial view of the community centre entrance and balcony down Pall Mall;
 - The proposed central space should feature a grid of trees, providing shade to both the public space ground surface and to parked cars to reduce heat absorption;
 - The rear of the public space would benefit from structure planting which helps to screen the gardens beyond; and
 - There may be opportunities to introduce elements of soft planting at ground level including lawn and planting beds in limited locations to establish a greener character.

Conservation

66. The police station is locally listed in recognition of its architectural and historical importance. This heritage asset should be retained as part of any development proposals and opportunities sought for keeping it in active use if the police vacate it, adapting the building where required in a manner that sensitively preserves and enhances its character and appearance.
67. The community centre, although not locally listed, also makes an important contribution to the local streetscene given the prominence of its main façade, and associated local views of this from Elm Road and Pall Mall. The importance of its offer to the local community is also recognised, and the community centre has recently been added to the Council's list of Assets of Community Value. It is therefore anticipated that There the building will continue to function in its capacity as a community centre. The Brief recognises that there may be is potential to further enhance revitalise the contribution the community centre makes to the local area, which could include reconfiguration or redevelopment to create a more flexible space to the rear, an active frontage facing onto the proposed public square, and the retention of its important historic façade. Such works would however be for the future developer of the site to determine.

Police station

68. The existing building is the former council office and retains some attractive period details as well as the stature of a civic building. The community consultation events held during the production of this Brief highlighted the local community's desire to retain a police presence on the site, or in the centre of Leigh. It is not yet established however whether the use of the buildings as a police station is likely to be on-going and this decision would need to be made by Essex Police. In light of the uncertain future of the police station use, ~~and so~~ due consideration should be given to options which both retain and remove this use of the building.
69. In any event, the building itself should remain and the preferred approach would be to see it retained in some use which permits public access and use of the building at ground floor and which is compatible with the district centre location – including the creation of an active frontage both on Elm Road and within the site, onto the square. Here, the north gable end of the building is a rendered blank elevation. This follows the removal of the old fire station building at some point in the past. In the event that the central square option is established, opportunities which remodel this elevation as something which creates an active frontage onto Elm Road and onto the public square should be taken.

Leigh Community Centre

70. The Community Centre is a large and relatively complex building. For disabled users, the elderly and parents with children in prams and pushchairs, there is a ramp from the street to the entranceway and access is made possible to the first floor by a lift, however more generally accessibility is impeded by ~~and is particularly hampered in its role due to the small changes of level~~ throughout the Centre. ~~which happen around the building and significantly impedes accessibility.~~
71. ~~The building is likely to continue in its current form under the management of Leigh Town Council, who have taken over the management of the building on lease from the Borough Council for a 5-year period from August 2012. The Centre is, in its current form, being managed for a 5-year period from August 2012 by Leigh Town Council who are promoting its continued community use for a range of functions, including the Town Council Offices~~
72. ~~As a minimum, if it is determined that the building is no longer fit for purpose, or it is unviable to reconfigure the building, a flexible approach will be taken to ensure a viable future for the building and the wider site. Options to remodel the~~ Community Centre building to improve and diversify its use, accessibility and environmental

performance may be possible if its community use remains viable in the long term, although this would likely require a significant level of investment from the developer. Alternatively, consideration could be given to [the its redevelopment of the building](#).

This should include [as a minimum](#) the retention of the [prominent](#) Elm Road façade, although would provide scope for a comprehensive redevelopment of the remainder of the building. Any modifications to, or redevelopment of, the [Community Centre building](#) would need to be handled [sensitively](#) in a way which respected the scale and massing of the original building and [sought to preserve and enhance](#) key historic features ([such as the red brick gabled façade](#)), but as the building is not listed there is reasonable license for creative changes, [particularly internally](#). It would particularly benefit the character of the historic frontage if the original units to the ground floor frontage could be reinstated or opened up in a more sensitive manner to incorporate an active use, [such as small individual retail units](#), at ground floor, and the landscaping of the space given careful consideration.

73. Also, any changes to, or redevelopment of, the rear [section](#) of the building should be in scale with the original structure, sensitively addressing the character of the Elm Road facade. In the event that the central square option is established, the option to redevelop the rear part of the building could provide an active frontage onto the square, with a new entranceway.

Community facilities

74. The community planning event demonstrated that there is a significant strength of feeling around provision of community space in the local area for a range of activities.
75. The relocation of the adult education function from the community centre means that there could be potential in the short term to accommodate other functions in the building ~~including the youth services provided by PHAB and other groups~~ under the management of Leigh Town Council. However, in the longer term there may be a need to establish a more flexible approach for the site that will ensure it stays in active use to meet the needs of the local community. This will be informed by an on-going review of Council-owned assets.

Sustainability

76. Any comprehensive development project like this offers a useful opportunity to review the overall sustainability of the buildings and spaces and the way in which they are used.

Resource minimisation

77. The use of resources such as energy and water will need to be considered as a core part of any new buildings or as part of any refurbishment plans for existing buildings.
78. Any major modifications or adaptations should be taken as a chance to review the how energy is used and whether there are opportunities to conserve heat and reduce the energy requirements of lighting. Policy KP2 of Southend Borough Council's adopted Core Strategy requires a minimum of 10% of energy needs for new development to come from on-site renewable sources and should be applied to new development in conjunction with any other relevant local and national policies.

Sustainable travel

79. Due to the size and importance of the site, characterised by existing public buildings and public parking, it has a key role to play in influencing the approach to sustainable travel in the local area. It should be possible for a large proportion of the people who use the buildings to walk, cycle or travel by public transport.
80. To promote green travel any development scheme should prioritise the quality of routes and spaces for pedestrians and cyclists over private car users, including measures such as provision of high quality cycle parking provision in a prominent location; the approach taken to sustainable travel should be detailed within a Travel Plan.

Climate change adaptation

81. As well as changing buildings and patterns of use to try to reduce the carbon emissions, buildings and spaces can also be adapted with a view to limiting the impact of climate change. This can take a number of forms:
 - Using SUDS (sustainable urban drainage systems) to reduce the impact of rapid water run-off from the hard standing areas of the car park and help to reduce flash flooding;
 - Consider the design of buildings to include provision of shading to reduce internal solar gain and also to use pale roof surfaces to limit heat absorption through increased reflectivity; and
 - Using tree planting in areas such as the car park to provide a significant element of shade at peak times in the summer to reduce heat absorption into the paving and vehicles.

Parking

82. Parking is an important feature of the site, which is beneficial to Leigh's commercial offer. However, provision of parking should not be seen as the dominant aim of any development project. The scale of the public car park is not expected to decrease in size and any new development would require an appropriate level of parking provision.
83. The Elm Road site should continue to provide a public car park which supports Leigh's commercial centre and which can also be of benefit to those using the site. The amount of parking required should be equal to or in slight excess of the existing parking provision, but is not expected to grow substantially. Options for decked car parking and extended areas of parking were discussed through the community planning event but a number of factors weighed against it:
- The impact of any potential bulk and massing on the character of the area, including the potential for impact on the surrounding gardens and properties in terms of noise, air-quality and over-looking;
 - The cost of building decked car parking spaces may prove difficult to recoup without significant increase to charges and given the widespread availability of free parking in the area. For this reason a decked car park is not considered to be a viable option for the site; and
 - The strategic pressures on parking (largely created by commuting) would be unlikely to be significantly tackled through a project like this, meaning that parking could therefore dominate the project and have a substantial negative impact without making a significant difference to parking provision in the surrounding area.
84. The approach of creating a central square is not intended to deliver a significant change to the parking provision in the area, with only a small increase envisioned. However, it is intended to transform the way in which the space works and to create something which is much more flexible and attractive than the existing back-land car park.
85. The approach to the layout of the urban area means that the parking which is provided will be more accessible and easy to use, and will be presented in a safer environment., including a sympathetic lighting scheme that complements all uses of the site.
86. As the parking is to be located in a better defined public space rather than tucked away behind buildings it is expected that the space will also be used for other activities such as markets or events.

The brief supports the continued provision of a public car park on the site, with the number of spaces equal to or in slight excess of existing provision.

Do you consider this approach to be appropriate? If not, what are the main issues for parking provision in the local area? Could the site contribute to this and how could this be achieved?

87. This is not intended to be a predominant feature of the space and would work on the same basis as many market squares across the UK. It is therefore considered an appropriate approach which will have limited impact on the parking available.
88. Parking for new development should be provided in accordance with Southend Borough Council's adopted standards.

Development Framework

89. The principles for development set out within this brief should be addressed when establishing a strategy for the site, including a robust framework within which its sustainable redevelopment can be undertaken.
90. At present, the site offers a limited length of street frontage for new development however the preferred option set out within this brief, established through the community planning event, opens up the body of the site to create an urban framework which facilitates the potential for new frontages to be created within the site itself.
91. Where circumstances do not allow for the site to be brought forward in a single phase, the following points should be taken into account when bringing forward the site in a phased approach:

Initial development – Acquisition and Site Clearance:

- Clearing of the existing Council depot to the rear of the site to allow for redevelopment;
- [Clearing of the existing Youth Centre following its closure in July 2013 to allow for redevelopment;](#)
- Acquisition of the private dwelling to allow for this property and the adjoining former Town Council offices, owned by Southend Borough Council, to be cleared;
- It will be important to ensure the new public realm structure is in place to complement new development.

New Development – Creating active frontages within the site:

- Once the Council depot has been cleared, new development could be brought forward in the southern part of the site. [The selection of a developer for the site will be managed by the Council's Asset Management Team.](#)
- With residential development, parking would need to be provided in line with the Council's adopted parking standards, and works to the public realm would need to be completed prior to occupation;
- The car park will need to be surfaced using quality, permeable materials creating the sense of a public square with provision of landscaping and tree planting to ensure the rear of the site is suitable for residential uses;
- If required, the northern section of the site could be developed at a later stage if necessary, to allow time to consider how the existing buildings will be reused or redeveloped, or to determine how these buildings can be redeveloped to provide modern, flexible space for a range of uses (including community use);
- Any redevelopment will be required to provide an active frontage onto the proposed square.

Question 6

~~Do you consider the proposed Development Framework to be an appropriate guide for future development on the site?~~

Existing Development – Re-use and Redevelopment:

- In accordance with the requirements of this brief, the comprehensive redevelopment of the site should retain the locally listed police station building (although adaptation of this space for future use is likely to be feasible) and the façade of the [Community Centre](#) as a minimum;
- Existing buildings may provide opportunities for re-housing existing uses whilst work is being carried out.

Developer Contributions, Section 106 agreements and Planning Conditions

92. This Brief should be read in conjunction with the Council's adopted SPD2 Planning Obligations: A Guide to Section 106 and Developer Contributions. SPD2 describes the Council's approach in securing planning obligations when considering planning applications.
93. Where there is a choice between imposing conditions and securing a planning obligation through a legal agreement the Council will consider whether planning conditions can adequately control all the direct and indirect impact of the

development, and secure the desired planning obligation, before it decides that a legal agreement is necessary.

94. The redevelopment of the Elm Road site, and renovation of existing buildings, will need to deliver a number of improvements in order to mitigate the impact of development and enhance the contribution the site makes to the character of the area and to existing and future users. This will be important in ensuring that sustainable development is achieved, and economic, social and environmental gains will be sought simultaneously through the planning system.
95. On this basis, the following improvements have been identified within the Brief. Planning obligations will be required to facilitate the sustainable development of the site in line with the objectives outlined within SPD2, and to mitigate for the loss of existing facilities:
- For residential schemes, the Council seeks the provision of affordable housing from the threshold of 10 or more residential units or 0.3 ha as set out within the Core Strategy Policy CP8: Dwelling Provision. Planning obligations may also be sought to address the demand for existing services generated through residential development.
 - Re-provide community facilities to compensate for the loss of existing facilities as appropriate, and to support new residential units, should comprehensive redevelopment take place.
 - Re-provide surface car park, for management by Southend Borough Council, to include levelling, improvements to drainage, resurfacing, tree planting, landscaping and lighting.
 - Improvements to the Elm Road street frontage to include landscaping and tree planting.

A viable and sustainable financial future

96. There is a need to ensure that any proposals for the site are both deliverable and sustainable in financial terms.
97. The preferred approach, as outlined within this brief, proposes substantial public realm interventions requiring the acquisition of a private house with the aim of establishing an area and facilities which will make a sound long-term contribution to Leigh.
98. Options may also be considered which can under-write the viability of the site in the long term. This could include options such as opening up existing commercial spaces on the ground floor of the community centre to establish an on-going income that

are compatible with the Leigh District Centre and secondary shopping frontage designations.

99. These uses could therefore be commercial in nature, or alternatively they could have a community enterprise aspect to them. Although this would not be as lucrative as commercial space, it may be regarded as sitting more comfortably with the public and community use of existing buildings on the site.
100. As part of the work undertaken to develop this brief, commercial property consultants have given high level advice on the likely viability of the various options which were developed at the community planning event. Their work indicates residential development is likely to prove the most viable, with a strong emphasis on houses rather than flats, although given the district centre location this use should not overly dominate the site.
101. Whilst the location is not considered ideal for retail development, from a viability perspective, the indication was given that this could be retained as an option. On this basis, it was recommended that an element of flexibility should be retained in the brief to allow for further exploration of the opportunities within the overall framework. However any development proposals of this nature should have regard to national and local planning policy in terms of retail policy.