

Saxonvale, Frome

A brief for the preparation of an Implementation Prospectus

1. The purpose of this brief

Frome Town Council wishes to commission the production of an Implementation Prospectus for Saxonvale, Frome that identifies a process by which the Council's objectives for the site as set out in the Draft Neighbourhood Plan for Frome can be achieved. This brief sets out not only the background to this piece of work but also the desired outputs.

2. Background

a) The site

The core site (Area A shown in Appendix 1) extends to 4.76 hectares and is located to the east of Frome's historic core. 5 landowners are currently involved including Notts Industries Pension Fund, Mendip District Council, Frome Town Council, Terramond and Silk Mill Studios. Additional land extending to 0.67 hectares (Area B on Appendix 1) may become available for development in the future subject to the agreement of the private landowners involved.

Much of the core site was formerly a mixed use industrial area known as Merchants Barton and occupied by Notts Industries. Current uses include:

- the Silk Mill Studios, a regional arts initiative operating from a former textile mill. Launched in 2008, the Studios provide workshop and gallery space for creative businesses
- the Saxonvale Training Centre also opened in 2008 that provides classroom based training facilities run by Somerset Skills & Learning; the land is owned by Frome Town Council
- The Merchants Barton Car Park and abattoir both on land owned by Mendip District Council

b) The Draft Neighbourhood Plan

The Plan promotes the comprehensive and sustainable regeneration of the Saxonvale site. Specifically, Policy TC5 within the Plan states that plans for the redevelopment of Saxonvale should seek to achieve the overall vision for the redevelopment of the site based on the 2005 Garsdale Planning Brief. In detail Saxonvale is expected to deliver:

- An exemplar model of low impact and low carbon living
- 300+ new energy efficient homes of mixed price and tenure
- New incubator and grow-on space for small and medium sized businesses

- Integrated retail, hotel and leisure facilities
- Replacement training facilities for Somerset Skills & Learning
- Artisan workshops and creative studio space
- An urban park alongside the river
- Improved traffic management in Vicarage Street, Christchurch Street East and the surrounding road network

Consultation on the Plan undertaken in late 2013 demonstrated a high level of public support for this policy. The Plan has now been submitted to Mendip District Council and will be subject to further consultation, independent examination and a referendum.

c) The problem

The problem is multi-faceted:

- So far, the various landowners at Saxonvale have been unable to work together
- As a result, a number of planning applications have been received that do not deliver a comprehensive scheme as envisaged by the Draft Neighbourhood Plan and the Garsdale Planning Brief. 2 live applications namely the proposal by Frontier for a mix of retail, workspace etc. (2013/2260/OTS) and the application by Terramond to build 60 new residential units (2014/1224/OTS) illustrate this point. Between those two schemes there are dead spaces, spaces where no use is proposed, changes of level not adequately addressed, inconsistent approaches to design and no overall plan for traffic or pedestrian movements. To complete the picture a third application by McCarthy & Stone (2014/0937/FUL) for 36 retirement apartments on part of the site has recently been refused due to concerns over its scale and therefore overbearing impact on the adjoining site and the impact on the local highway network.
- Parts of the site are contaminated and in general neither the existing site infrastructure nor the surrounding existing highway network will support a major redevelopment as things stand.

3. The Implementation Prospectus

A new prospectus is needed that sets out a new route to delivery and helps to build a coalition of the landowner interests and other public and private sector partners that can help overcome the obstacles highlighted above and ultimately deliver a more comprehensive scheme for Saxonvale.

This prospectus should include:

- A more detailed articulation of the vision for the site that will attract public funding and investor interest; this should include 'hooks' that would encourage

bodies such as the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) and the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to become involved at an early stage in the process

- An assessment of the planning powers that could be employed if necessary
- Suggestions as to how the landowners can be brought together – the expectation is that the landowners will be engaged as part of the process of preparing the prospectus
- The identification of potential delivery vehicles
- A detailed programme of work including timescales that will move the Town Council and partners toward the delivery of a comprehensive scheme – to include an estimate of the costs associated with this work

In preparing the prospectus, all relevant stakeholders will be engaged.

4. Budget

The budget for this commission is up to £10,000.

5. Submissions

Fee proposals are invited by suitably qualified and experienced professionals to prepare an Implementation Prospectus to include the elements identified above. Proposals should include the approach to implementing the brief, the timescale for production of the Prospectus and be accompanied by CVs of relevant staff involved.

The deadline for submissions is: Friday 10 October 2014.

Submissions should be sent in hard copy and by email to:

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