

BACKGROUND PAPER

St Budeaux Library Redevelopment (Part I)



Background

Plymouth City Council own the St Budeaux Library; a post war, single storey building situated within the centre of St Budeaux, close to local shops, services and facilities. The building is close to the end of its economic life. Therefore, the Council is seeking to develop a new facility to deliver a modern fit for purpose library service as part of the already approved Plan for Libraries (PFL) within a new library building (this will include the ability to deliver the universal offer as part of the Health and Wellbeing Hub model). As part of a scheme, the development offers the opportunity to deliver some 24 homes, mainly as 1 or 2 bedroom apartments, utilising the upper levels within a mixed use development, & incorporating 4 specialist units which are fully wheelchair accessible being located on the ground floor.

The Authority's award winning Plan for Homes was developed through the cross-party Housing Needs Working Group, it has the executive and political leadership required to support delivery of our ambitious plans for 5,000 new homes over the next five years. There is a strong local commitment within the Authority for increased and accelerated housing delivery including identification of further Council and other public sector owned land to creatively use public and private sector investment to deliver new homes at pace & a commitment to the delivery of quality well designed homes & places. A requirement in the St Budeaux area has been identified for 1 & 2 bedroom downsizer accommodation that will allow older people to downsize & stay in area releasing family properties for other families.

St Budeaux is one of Plymouth's lower value areas, with house prices and rental values substantially below the average for the City. (tested out with one of the city's RP partners). This, combined with the presence of asbestos within the existing building, has impacted on viability of the proposed scheme. St Budeaux Library is popular and well used but is dated and inefficient in terms of the way that it is set out and in terms of running costs. The redevelopment of the library is in line with the PFL which was approved on 3rd July 2017.

The original business case for the Plan for Libraries made the commitment to invest in St Budeaux Library for the fit out as phase 2 of the plan. This business case identifies what is required to provide a new library facility on the site of the existing St Budeaux library at minimal cost to the authority as part of a mixed use development. Immediately following approval of the PFL, an accommodation schedule was drawn up which specified the Library Service's requirements for a new library at St Budeaux. This information together with informal planning advice and site information was publicised on the Plymouth City Council website and emailed direct to all Housing Providers in July. The deadline for submissions was 15th September 2017.

One compliant submission was received from a Development Partner, who have worked with the authority and have delivered a number of developments on behalf of the Council e.g. Astor Centre, Dover Road, Tamar Way and Yardley Gardens. Their initial proposal was costly and they were asked to revise it. They came back with plans which need some further work on the design (discussions are ongoing with the planning authority following the submission of a pre-application), and there is still a viability gap, but with support from the Council it is felt that the scheme is viable.

The Council's investment will result in a 21st century library which will deliver a modern fit for purpose library service as part of the already approved PFL, will improve the digital offer and will include the ability to deliver the universal offer as part of the Health and Wellbeing Hub model).

Benefits of delivering this scheme

- Removing a building that is reaching the end of its economic life from the Councils estate
- Replacing it with a 21st century library in line with PFL
- Reduction in running expenses for the new library

- Avoidance of having to spend £57,500 in backlog maintenance on a building that has reached the end of its economic life
- Provision of 20 1 & 2 homes
- Provision of 4 fully accessible homes
- Additional Council tax will be received from 24 new homes
- New homes bonus will be paid on the completion of 24 homes

Options Considered:

Option 1: Do Nothing

Maintain St Budeaux library as is, do not invest in buildings, ICT or the online offer. Retain limited outreach offer.

This option was rejected as it does not address any of the drivers for change and doesn't allow the Library Service to deliver defined library offers, outputs and activities. It also does not reduce the maintenance liability on a building that is close to the end of its economic life and will result in the loss of 24 units of accommodation including 4 wheelchair accessible units.

Option 2: Close St Budeaux library

This option was ruled out following the consultation on the Plan for Libraries

Option 3: Build a new library ourselves on the existing site.

This option was rejected on the basis that it would cost significantly more for PCC to build the library

Option 3: Developer provides with minimal PCC financial support

Identify a development partner who can provide accommodation as part of a wider mixed use development including, enabling a modern, high quality library to be developed on site, which would meet the aspirations set out in PFL at minimal cost to the Council.

St Budeaux is one of Plymouth's lower value areas, with house prices and rental values substantially below the average for the City. This, combined with the presence of asbestos within the existing building, has impacted on viability of the proposed scheme.

This option was rejected on the basis that the project not viable with only minimal funding provided by the Authority.

Option 4: Developer provides with PCC financial support

Identify a development partner who can provide accommodation as part of a wider mixed use development including, enabling a modern, high quality library to be developed on the site, which would meet the aspirations set out in PFL at minimal cost to the Council.

St Budeaux is one of Plymouth's lower value areas, with house prices and rental values substantially below the average for the City. This, combined with the presence of asbestos within the existing building, has impacted on viability of the proposed scheme. Recent marketing of the site has shown that there is a viability gap but with input from the Authority, the scheme is viable.

The preferred option is option 4 because the Authority is provided with a new library at minimal cost, whilst increasing housing provision within the city providing a development offering 24 units of which 4 are fully wheelchair accessible and the bulk of the accommodation consists of 1 & 2 bed apartments.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Leader of the Council:

- Approves the Business Case