

Meeting of the Cabinet – 9th December 2009

Report of the Director of The Urban Environment

Glass Feasibility Study, Stage 1 Recommendations

Purpose of Report

1. To inform members of the findings of Stage I of the Glass Feasibility Study and seek support to proceed with Stage 2 of the Study.

Background

The Feasibility Study

2. It has been established in the Council's Capital Strategy for a number of years that the amalgamation of the Red House Glass Cone and Broadfield House Glass Museum could lead to an improved visitor attraction, a better heritage asset and a facility of sufficient stature to celebrate our internationally renowned glass collection.
3. Accordingly, expressions of Interest were invited from 19 consultancies, which were selected from the Museum Association's web site or based upon known provenance/ or recommendation with support from the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA). 12 of these registered an interest and submitted documentation which was used to shortlist 5 organisations who were invited to submit a tender based upon this brief.
4. Following submission of tenders and interviews a team led by L & R Consulting with Brock Carmichael Architects and Headland Design Associates were appointed on 16th June to carry out the feasibility study.
5. The Brief requires that the study be carried out in two stages as follows:

Stage 1

6. The objective of this part of the commission would for the consultants to carry out a preliminary scoping exercise to test this aspiration. It would be anticipated that this would involve a review of existing documentary information and comparison with similar facilities. This should create a position statement/ baseline position and a professional assessment of whether it would be possible to deliver an amalgamated facility of suitable quality and scale either within the existing leased buildings, or within a slightly larger area to include the buildings which are excluded from the current lease.

Stage 2

7. Subject to the outcome of stage 1, the objective of the second part of the commission would be to establish how this would be achieved and what resources would be required to deliver it. Stage 2 of the study would focus on:

- **Physical/ Spatial Designs (RIBA stage D)**
- **Interpretation Plans**
- **Audience Development and Marketing Strategy**
- **Estimated costs and Funding strategy**
- **Implementation programme and priorities**

Stage 1 Study Approach

8. The stage 1 study has involved the following tasks:
- Familiarisation with the two sites
 - Review of technical, market and financial information
 - Consultations with a range of interested individuals and organisations, locally, regionally and nationally
 - Analysis of the collections and resources
 - Assessment of the uses, functionality and inter-relationships within the buildings at both Broadfield House and Red House Glass Cone
 - Preparation of schematic option proposals for the redevelopment of the Red House Glass Cone site, to test the amalgamation proposal.

Stage 1 Assessment of Sites and Facilities

9. The first stage of the study has involved analysis of the spaces within three existing buildings, namely; Broadfield House, Red House Glass Cone and Himley Hall, to identify the current level of provision for museum functions and allow assessment of the overall spatial requirements to amalgamate facilities at the Red House Glass Cone.

Stage 1 Consultation Process

10. The consultants engaged with a wide variety of interested parties, individuals and representatives of interest groups (such as the Friends of Broadfield House) and the Council's staff based at the two sites through face to face meetings and phone discussions. In addition they attended two Special Joint Area Committee meetings during the study and ran an on line survey posted on the Council's web site. A more detailed analysis of the latter is available on line.

11. A total of 348 responses were generated by the closing date of 1st September.

36% were from Dudley Borough residents
20% were from the West Midlands.
39% were from the remainder of the UK
5% were from overseas.

12. Many of the interested groups and individuals have voiced their opposition to any plan to close Broadfield House Glass Museum. It is clear that there are passionate and strongly held views from a wide variety of interest groups who

are primarily interested in the heritage of glass and contemporary collecting and display, as well as practitioners and those with academic interests.

13. However it should be noted that the brief for the Stage 1 study did not include a requirement for consultation with visitors or non visitors to the two sites. To this extent the voice of the majority of the visitor users has not been heard

Summary of key responses

14. The on line survey asked for respondents' top priority for the future of the glass collection:

28% want the glass collection to be kept together,
21% want the glass collection to be accessible.
14% want increased quantity of objects on permanent display
12% want increased access to the collection

15. Key concerns about relocation fell into the following categories:

- Insufficient space overall for display at RHGC and therefore less glass being on display
- Industrial heritage site being an inappropriate venue
- Insufficient parking at RHGC
- Fear that the collection would be placed in store and becoming unavailable or even broken up or sold.
- Reduced availability of glass studios and loss of the glass culture/ heritage of the borough and the impact on the visitor economy.
- Concerns about the structural integrity of the Cone.

Stage 1 Study findings and development options

16. Three principal options have been identified:

Option A:

Reconfiguration and development of the accommodation within the existing leased area at RHGC.

It was felt that this would be a compromise solution, would be cramped and would eliminate the current provision of craft workspace.

Option B:

Development of the buildings within the current leased area PLUS adaptation and refurbishment of the former Stuart Crystal shop, tearoom, associated stores and accommodation which is currently for sale

It was felt that this option would meet the client's accommodation brief but is subject to the Council acquiring the additional areas.

Option C:

As Option B but replacing the former Stuart Crystal shop, with a new two storey building.

It was felt that this option would meet the client's accommodation brief and provide the greatest level of accommodation and flexibility for current and future demands, albeit the most expensive option, and allow for the accommodation of the current off site glass store. This option is also subject to the Council acquiring the additional areas.

Note:

17. Both Options B and C are dependant upon the Council's bid for the former Stuart Crystal shop, tearoom and associated storage premises being successful. A bid was submitted by the deadline date of 9th September and we are informed this information has been forwarded to the Receivers for a decision.
18. Whilst Option C would provide the opportunity to accommodate the stored glass collection at the Red House, there is no immediate necessity to consider relocation from the existing secure off-site store. Whilst there are advantages to having stored material on the same site as that displayed, many museums favour separation.
19. It is evident from the outcome of Stage 1 of the Feasibility Study that the Red House Glass Cone site has the potential to be developed as an iconic heritage tourism & museum facility, subject to securing the additional buildings which are currently outside the lease. Furthermore, it will take a considerable period of time fully realise this aspiration. With this in mind the Council has already stated that the existing glass museum at Broadfield House will remain open until the improved facility at the Red House site has been delivered.
20. In reviewing the three Options, it is very much felt that whilst a possibility, Option A would be a compromise solution due to the limited amount of space available. Whereas, Options B & C would provide considerably more opportunity, but are both subject to the acquisition of the additional buildings.
21. In progressing Stage 2 of the Study the Council is eager to include local experts, organisations and interest groups to ensure that the Glass Community are fully involved in what could be a landmark development for the Borough and its glass heritage. To this end initial meetings have already taken place with representatives of this community to discuss how this project might proceed and such meetings will be repeated during the course of Stage 2, should it proceed.
22. At this stage none of these options have been costed in detail however they could range between circa £3 - £5 million. In the current economic climate the opportunities for leveraging significant capital resources from external grant making organisations will be challenging. Therefore the ultimate implementation of any development proposals at the Red House Glass Cone would, in all probability, need to take place over the longer term and possibly be phased.

Finance

- 23 The cost of the Glass Feasibility Study is to be funded from resources held by the Directorate of the Urban Environment.
- 24 As detailed in the report, estimated costs for options 1 to 3 are in the range £3m to £5m. This capital cost would need to be funded from external sources. If it were not possible to meet these costs from external sources, then any shortfall would have to be met from Dudley's own capital resources. If this were to entail prudential borrowing, then provision would have to be made for the ongoing revenue cost of that borrowing

Law

- 25 The Council provides museums under the provisions of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

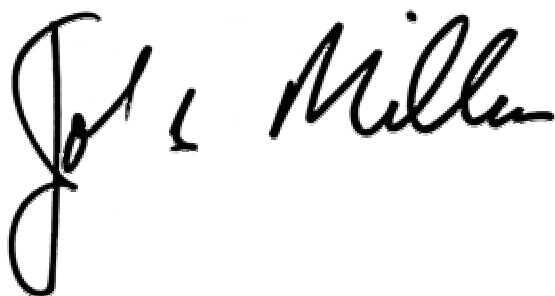
Equality Impact

- 26 The proposals within this report comply with the Council's policy on equality and diversity

Recommendation

It is recommended that:-

27. The Cabinet note the findings of stage 1 of the study
28. That should the Council's bid to purchase the additional buildings on the Red House site be **successful**, the consultants be asked to progress to Stage 2 of the study and develop more detailed proposals and costings for **Option B** of the Consultant's report.
29. That should the Council's bid to purchase the Red House site be **unsuccessful**, the Council would wish to maintain the status quo and the consultants be asked to implement a revised Stage 2, which would provide a detailed recommendations for improving the quality and range of the displays and increasing the visitor numbers at both Broadfield House and the Red House Glass Cone.



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List of Background Papers

RED HOUSE GLASS WORKS MUSEUM PROJECT, Brief and Tender Documents
(April 2009)

Stourbridge Glass Online Survey Analysis report

L&R Draft Stage One Report