

MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

REPORT FOR RESOLUTION

REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE
DATE 26th JULY 2006
SUBJECT LONDON ROAD FIRE STATION
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update the Executive on progress in securing the redevelopment of the London Road Fire Station and to seek endorsement of a series of development and regeneration principles for this building as a basis for wider consultation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive is recommended to:

1. Note the contents of the report;
2. Endorse the proposed development and regeneration principles as the basis for wider consultation; and
3. To request a further report from the Chief Executive on the outcome of the consultation exercise and progress with securing the redevelopment of the London Road Fire Station.

FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES FOR THE REVENUE BUDGET

None at present.

FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES FOR THE CAPITAL BUDGET

None at present.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Report to the Executive, 15th February 2006 'London Road Fire Station'.

WARDS AFFECTED

All wards with particular implications for City Centre

IMPLICATIONS FOR:	ANTI-POVERTY	No
	EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES	Yes
	ENVIRONMENT	Yes
	EMPLOYMENT	Yes

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Executive received a report in February 2006 detailing a potential option for the redevelopment of the London Road Fire Station building, devised by the Piccadilly Partnership. The 'Fire-Station Re-imagined' proposals present a vision for the future of the building, based on the creation of a music hub, allowing for a mix of uses including a major new performance space, retail, recording studios and a boutique hotel facility.
- 1.2 The Executive endorsed the priority which the Piccadilly Partnership has given to the importance of securing the redevelopment of the former Fire Station building and authority was delegated to the Chief Executive to work with the Partnership and the building owner to secure its comprehensive redevelopment.
- 1.3 The building was constructed in 1906. It is listed grade II* and is situated in the Whitworth Street Conservation Area. The building has been largely vacant since 1985, although it has been used for storage and other purposes. An appropriate, sustainable use, or mix of uses, has never been introduced and the condition of the building has deteriorated. The building is a landmark within the area and its importance is recognised with its grade II* listed status and with its inclusion on the English Heritage National Buildings At Risk Register since 2001.
- 1.4 As stated in the last report, the Fire Station's strategic location, along with its architectural and historical significance and its deteriorating condition means that securing its comprehensive redevelopment will be critical to the ongoing regeneration of Piccadilly.
- 1.5 This report updates the Executive on progress in securing the redevelopment of the Fire Station, proposes a series of development and regeneration principles, which should inform its future redevelopment, and seeks endorsement for these as the basis for wider consultation.

2.0 Progress Update

- 2.1 Following the previous report, the Chief Executive has been in dialogue with Britannia Hotels, their advisors, Turley Associates, and the Piccadilly Partnership. The Partnership proposals have been shared with the building owner and a meeting has been held between the Chief Executive, representatives of the building owner and the Piccadilly Partnership to explore the potential of a joint working relationship.
- 2.2 This dialogue has resulted in the withdrawal by Britannia Hotels of a number of defective applications for works to the building, which had not been pursued by Britannia Hotels after the Council asked for sufficient detail to determine them.
- 2.3 Following the meeting between the parties, proposals have been submitted to Britannia Hotels by the Piccadilly Partnership for an intensive program of joint working to fully evaluate the Partnership's proposals for a music venue. Britannia Hotels have yet to comment on this proposal and though they have

stated they are willing to explore the music venue concept, their commitment to a deliverable programme of joint working remains unclear. The Chief Executive is also concerned that Britannia Hotels have stated in recent correspondence that whilst they are prepared to consider the Partnership's proposals, they see themselves as the sole developer, occupier and end user of the building. This gives cause for some concern that any proposal by Britannia may not result in the diversified mix of uses the City Council is seeking on this site.

- 2.4 The Council has made clear to Britannia Hotels the urgent need to undertake a survey of the Fire Station building in order to assess its current condition and to enable an evaluation to be undertaken of the potential impact of any future redevelopment proposals on the historic fabric of the building. Even in the event that the building is not going to be redeveloped immediately, the survey will enable the City Council to seek the preservation of the building in the interim period, through the use of a repairs notice. The Chief Executive has received assurances from Britannia Hotels that they have commissioned such a survey, and the Chief Executive is currently seeking confirmation that Britannia Hotels will share the brief and the final report with the City Council. If co-operation from Britannia Hotels is not forthcoming, the Council will be obliged to consider undertaking its own survey of the building, and if necessary, using available powers to obtain our own survey without the consent of the owner.
- 2.5 The Chief Executive will continue to work with Britannia Hotels and the Partnership in order to seek agreement on a detailed programme of joint working over the coming months that will allow the Partnership's proposals to be fully evaluated. The Chief Executive will report back to the Executive on progress with these discussions in due course.

3.0 Development and Regeneration Principles

- 3.1 It is important that any proposals for the Fire Station building are informed by a series of robust series of principles that place the regeneration of the wider Piccadilly area at the forefront of our aspirations for any future redevelopment of the London Road Fire Station. These principles should set out the opportunity presented by this unique building to both house a range of vibrant uses whilst securing the building's architectural integrity and long-term future. Officers have drafted a series of development and regeneration principles, which are attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 These principles:
- Recognise the pivotal role of the Fire Station in the regeneration of Piccadilly and the wider area;
 - Set out the importance of ensuring that building is sensitively redeveloped having regard to its architectural and historic significance;
 - Highlight the fact that given its pivotal location the City Council is seeking a quality of development commensurate with the high quality of development the City now commands; and critically

- Recommend that any redevelopment of the Firestation should result in a vibrant mix of uses, in particular those which enhance the City's function as an international visitor destination.

3.3 The current owner has been consulted on these principles on an informal basis and has submitted a number of comments on these. In particular, Britannia Hotels have questioned the importance placed on securing uses which enhance the City's role as an international destination and which complement rather than replicate existing uses in the area (see paragraph 12 of Appendix 1). The Chief Executive strongly believes that this principle should be retained, as securing a vibrant mix of diverse uses will be critical in ensuring that the redevelopment of the Fire Station makes a positive contribution to the ongoing regeneration of the Piccadilly area and the Regional Centre more widely.

3.4 Subject to the endorsement by the Executive of these principles, it is proposed that they be issued for consultation with key stakeholders including; the building owner, neighbouring landowners, the Piccadilly Partnership and English Heritage among others. This will enable the views of key stakeholders to be taken into account as the principles are formalised.

4.0 Conclusions

4.1 Work continues on securing the redevelopment of the London Road Fire Station. The Piccadilly Partnership's proposals have played a critical role in helping to engage the building owner in dialogue, with a view to securing a range of vibrant uses as part of a comprehensive and sensitive redevelopment scheme for this important building. The Chief Executive has yet to agree a programme of joint working with Britannia Hotels but will continue to undertake discussion with the owner and the Piccadilly Partnership, and will report back to the Executive on progress with these discussions in due course.

4.2 The draft development and regeneration principles for the former Fire Station provide a strong framework to help inform and shape any proposals for the building, recognising its pivotal position in the Piccadilly area, and its unique architectural and historical heritage. The Chief Executive proposes that, subject to endorsement by the Executive, these principles be issued to key stakeholders for wider consultation and that a report be brought back to the Executive on the outcome of this exercise.

5. Implications for Key Council Policies

5.1 **Equal Opportunities:** the redeveloped building should provide barrier free access provision.

5.2 **Environment:** this Grade II* listed building is in key location opposite Piccadilly Railway Station, which provides visitors with a first impression of the City. The high quality re-development on this building will secure its proper preservation and significantly contribute to raising the profile of the wider Piccadilly area.

5.3 **Employment:** this site offers opportunities for new job creation.

Appendix 1

FORMER LONDON ROAD FIRE STATION DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION PRINCIPLES

Introduction

- 1 The purpose of this note is to set out the key objectives for the refurbishment and reuse of London Road Fire Station in order to ensure that it maximises the contribution that it makes to the regeneration of the Piccadilly area.

Background

- 2 The regeneration of the City Centre is a key component of the City councils economic strategy for Manchester. It represents a huge opportunity for job and wealth creation and the City Council has developed a series of initiatives to ensure that this is achieved in a planned and co-ordinated manner.
- 3 The Piccadilly regeneration initiative was created in 1997 and since then the area has undergone a quite remarkable transformation involving significant levels of investment from the public and private sector. The Piccadilly Partnership was formed in 2003 as a strategic alliance between the City Council, the private sector and other agencies to underpin and further promote the economic vibrancy of the area. The key factor, which has underpinned the transformation of the area, has been the commitment to quality by all of the partners. This has embraced all aspects of change including public realm, new public spaces, architecture and usage. It has been the ability to achieve high quality end users that has been fundamental to making the step change to create a destination of choice. It is perhaps this above all else which continues to drive the renaissance of the area.
- 4 One of the priorities of the Partnership since its inception has been the identification of sites in the area where a lack of activity is inhibiting development and thereby preventing the area from achieving full economic benefit. The Partnership has identified the sustainable regeneration of the Fire Station as being critical to the on-going regeneration of the area.
- 5 A number of other proposals have emerged over the past twelve months in and around the fire station area, which will have an impact on and help to guide its future use. Telecommunications House on London Road has been acquired by McDonalds Hotel and is being converted into a 250 bed, four-star hotel together with 100,000 sq feet of office accommodation. Planning permission has been granted for an 80-bed Sleeperz hotel on Fairfield Street opposite the entrance to Piccadilly Station. The merger of Manchester University and UMIST has rationalised the manner in which their estate will be managed and the consolidation of Manchester Metropolitan University onto the All Saints campus will see them withdraw from Aytoun Street within five years.
- 6 The outcome of these changes is that even greater emphasis must now be placed on the early refurbishment and reuse of the fire station building. It has

for many years been a prominent building at the main entrance to Piccadilly station, but it now has a pivotal role in the regeneration of a much wider area. It can now be seen to be at the very heart of a number of initiatives and will play a key role in terms of ensuring that these initiatives are linked and integrated to ensure that maximum benefit is captured.

The Fire Station

- 7 The building was constructed in 1906. It is listed grade II* and is situated in the Whitworth Street/ Princess Street conservation area. The building has largely been vacant since 1985 although it has been used for storage and other purposes. However an appropriate on-going use has never been introduced and the building has deteriorated to the extent that it is now included on the English Heritage Buildings at Risk register and there is real concern about the condition of the building and its future. The building has a negative and unacceptable appearance in the street scene action and intervention to bring about its re-use and improvement must be a priority in planning and regeneration terms.

Planning Policy Context

- 8 The scheme will have to be developed in the context of relevant national, regional and local guidance. PPG1, PPG 13 and PPG15, RPG13, the Manchester UDP, City Centre Strategic Plan, Manchester: Knowledge Capital and the Piccadilly Regeneration Initiative are all relevant documents and the scheme must be justifiable in relation to them.

Development Principles

- 9 The pivotal location of the building in regeneration terms and its prominence at a major gateway entry route into the City Centre mean that its future use must be very carefully considered. Whilst in a pure planning sense, the overriding priority may well be to bring the building back into active use, there are compelling reasons why its contribution to regeneration will be equal if not of more importance.
- 10 The building must contain uses that create activity and interest throughout the day and this should be expressed on all frontages to contribute to the creation of an environment that will achieve the full integration of the wider area. In essence therefore, the building must contain a significant amount of public access and public usage throughout the day, evening and at night time.
- 11 The quality and nature of the uses must complement the remainder of the Piccadilly area in order to ensure that the use is sustainable and ensure that that the renaissance of the wider area can continue. Such is the prominence of the building that consideration must be given to a use or uses that bring benefits to the wider area in addition to the Piccadilly area.
- 12 Uses that enhance the City's role as an international destination would add considerable value to the wider area and would be encouraged above other uses. It would not be advantageous to duplicate or replicate existing uses in the area and therefore uses that complement the existing range of activities in

a dynamic and inventive manner would help to maximise the sites contribution to regeneration.

- 13 The former fire station occupies what is effectively an island site and has prominent frontages to London Road, Fairfield Street and Whitworth Street. Similarly, each street frontage is an important interface with Piccadilly Station, the University and Piccadilly triangle respectively. These are all key routes, which form critical connections within and with the wider area, and as such the development must engage with and respond to these key routes.
- 14 The building must be restored in a sensitive manner that respects its architectural and historical significance. This should be based around the preparation of a conservation plan following appropriate survey work.
- 15 The quality of all aspects of design has been a core component of the success of the Piccadilly initiative. A commitment to design quality is essential to all aspects of the refurbishment of this building including sensitive restorations and modern contemporary interventions. A design team that has the knowledge and experience of dealing with such buildings in a sensitive and innovative manner will be critical to the success of the project.
- 16 The scheme is well placed in terms of accessing all forms of public transport. However, the future use of the building will inevitably generate a demand for car parking and the development must accommodate this either on site or nearby.