

Fairfield House • Fairfield Road • Burgess Hill • West Sussex • RH15 8QB
 Telephone: (01444) 239019 • Fax: (01444) 230761
 Email: mail@gwparchitects.co.uk • www.gwparchitects.co.uk

GWP
Architects

Project No.2353

Design and Access Statement

**NEW HERITAGE CENTRE
 ACCOMMODATING MUSEUM COLLECTION
 WITH VISTOR INFORMATION CENTRE AND FACILITIES,
 EDUCATION/LEARNING CENTRE AND NEW PUBLIC
 CONVENIENCE.**

SITE:

**ST NICHOLAS HALL/MILL ROAD CAR PARK
 MILL ROAD
 ARUNDEL**

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL				
No.	AB	4	09	CA
RECEIVED				

2353/DAS

GWP Architects Limited

Jan 09

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Context/Site Description
3. Planning Matters
 - (a) Background/pre-application
 - (b) Planning & Heritage Statement
4. Trees
5. Flood Risk
6. Design Development
7. Access
8. Appendices

1. Introduction

This Design and Access Statement is written in support of proposal for a new building to provide heritage centre, visitor information facilities, education facilities and public conveniences.

The proposed building works will involve the demolition of the existing St Nicholas Hall and subsequently allow the removal of the Mill Road public conveniences on the north side of Mill Road (opposite the site), once the development had been completed.

The scheme has been developed in consultation with various interested bodies and third parties both within the community and at a wider level (e.g. English Heritage and the Campaign for Protection of Rural England).

The aim of the project is to provide a building which will enable the consolidation of various existing uses and facilities, which are inadequately provided for at present, to be accommodated effectively and efficiently under one roof.

The strategic siting of the building should facilitate maximum use for both visitors and the resident community. The principal aims of the proposal are to achieve the following:

- 1) Heritage Centre incorporating the Museum Society collection (previously housed within unsuitable premises (now closed) close to the top of the High Street).
- 2) To provide visitor information facilities (presently only partially provided within the town by the tourist information centre).
- 3) To provide education facilities as an additional service of the Heritage Centre not previously provided within the town.
- 4) To provide updated and improved public convenience facilities conveniently situated for the majority of visitors.

2. Context and site description:

The site is situated opposite the main entrance gateway to Arundel Castle to the south side of Mill Road. There is a building currently on the site, plans and elevations of which have been provided as part of the application. This existing hall will be demolished. To the east of the site lies Mill Road public pay and display car park which provides the majority of car parking for

visitors to Arundel. To the south the site is bounded by the riverside footpath and the river Arun beyond. To the immediate west lies Blackfriars (formerly Maison Dieu) which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument comprising the remains of the priory the remaining ranges of which are still visible to the north of Mill Road itself. (In addition to the more obvious remains adjacent to the proposed site).

The site is nominally level and several mature specimen trees are evident on the surrounding ground and on the land between the priory remains and the proposed Heritage Centre (see tree survey appended).

Two interesting historic features are evident to the west of St Nicholas Hall. These are stone fish slabs or tables. They are listed structures and it is proposed to re-locate them by a small distance as part of this proposal (and to which end Listed Building consent is being made).

3. Planning matters:

3.a Background/pre-application process.

The scheme is of acknowledged importance with regard to impact upon its surroundings and the setting of important local buildings, (not least the priory remains as a Scheduled Ancient Monument and the castle itself being a Grade I Listed Building). Accordingly, preliminary sketch designs were developed and formed the basis of initial consultation with Arun District Council. The scheme was subsequently developed in more detail and these drawings formed the subject of further consideration at a senior officer level. The initial concept and design development sketches are attached as Appendix 'B'.

The Local Planning Authority provided confirmation and guidance with regard to applicable Planning Policies as well as suggestions regarding appropriate pre-application consultations with third parties. This guidance has influenced both the detailed design and the subsequent supporting documentation.

3.b Planning and Heritage Statement.

Arun District Council have provided a synopsis of the site constraints and applicable policies as follows:

"The whole site lies within the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, abuts the Arundel Conservation Area, is outside the defined built up area boundary of the town and there

is a strong possibility that the entire town of Arundel will be included within the proposed South Downs National Park".

Given the siting of the proposed building immediately outside the line defining the built up area boundary, it has to be accepted that the site therefore falls within the countryside.

Technically therefore, there is a requirement to justify the proposal, which may be argued to be ordinarily contra policy. However, the following factors should, we believe be assessed:

- i) There is an existing substantial building on the site (St Nicholas Hall).
- ii) The site is flanked by a large tarmacadam surfaced car park.
- iii) There are other buildings and structures both along the riverbank and further along Mill Road offering other leisure and visitor facilities.
- iv) The site is viewed against the backdrop of other buildings, most notably the castle itself.

In addition to the above physical/context elements, should also be weighed the advantages of the proposal, and these should further consolidate the special circumstances which need to be demonstrated as follows:

- i) The existing tourist facilities in the town are not well sited or accessible.
- ii) The existing Mill Road public convenience is at best an undistinguished building now offering a poor quality public convenience, randomly sited amongst the remains of the priory.
- iii) The existing museum collection is in temporary storage and the Museum Society have only the benefit of a temporary storage building within the Mill Road car park to allow very limited public access to the collection, having been required to vacate the local authority owned building situated towards the top of a steep hill within the High Street.

There is therefore a justifiable case for allowing planning permission for a single, accessible facility in such a practical location with its immediate proximity to the main public car park with direct access to the castle entrance, the town centre, the river walk and clear visibility and accessibility for pedestrian visitors entering the town centre from the station.

The following list of relevant Local Plan Policies were identified by Arun District Council as part of the pre-application consultation process. It should be noted that we list and subsequently address all identified policies. However, policies: Gen 1 - Sustainability, Gen 4 - Location of Development and Gen 17 - Access, were not saved policies, following the latest review of the

Local Plan as the Local Development Framework emerges. It may therefore be strictly assumed that these policies no longer apply, or at least not in their original wording as adopted in 2003.

Policies

Gen 1 – Sustainability

"All development must take full account of the need to protect the environment so that present day demands do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs or enjoy a high quality environment. All development must reflect the need to safeguard and improve the quality of life of residents, conserve energy resources and protect, and, where possible enhance the plan area's essential character and environmental assets....."

The existing site is part hard surfaced tarmacadam car park edge, some poorly maintained overgrown landscape areas and St Nicholas Hall timber frame building in poor condition. The environmental quality of the existing structure and site is low. The structure does not contribute positively to the quality of the environment. The presence of extensive car parking and hard surfacing does not offer much opportunity for environmental quality or provide a character worthy of maintaining. The existing trees are identified as an important townscape/environmental feature and these have been carefully considered as part of the proposal. The scheme aims to provide a building of greater quality than that which exists at present and to provide landscaping/environmental opportunities to improve the status quo.

Gen 2 – Built up area boundary

".....outside the built up area boundaries, development or re-development will not be permitted unless it is consistent with other local plan policies".

The cited reason for this policy states "to meet the aim of sustainability by locating development in areas of existing services, infrastructure and facilities". As previously set out in this statement, the site is bounded by the line defining built up area of Arundel. Notwithstanding this demarcation, the site remains within a very central, accessible and sustainable location both suitable for the proposed use and capable of accepting the proposed building in a manner which does not detract from the openness of the countryside or impact adversely on views into, or out of the town centre.

In light of the above, the plans were shown as part of the consultation with Campaign for Protection of Rural England (Sussex) and their letter of support (dated 9th July 2008) is appended.

Gen 3 - "Protection of the Countryside"

This policy has been addressed under the response to Gen 2 and CPRE consultation.

Gen 4

(No longer a saved local plan policy).

The location of development.

"When considering proposals for new development, consideration will be given to the effect the proposals will have on demand for transport....."

In response, it will be noted that this siting of the proposal is a very sustainable location easily accessible by public transport (both bus and rail). It is also adjacent to the main public car park and within walking distance for the majority of local residents. The siting has been deliberately chosen so as to minimise additional, local vehicular movements e.g. a visitor having parked in the main car park will, almost certainly walk immediately past the new building in order to visit any of the attractions or facilities Arundel has to offer.

Gen 7 - The form of new development.

"Planning permission will only be granted for schemes displaying high quality design and layout..."

This policy has 8 sub-clauses indicated that development will be permitted provided it:

- i) *"makes sufficient use of land or buildings ..."*

The site has been previously developed, the use of the land has been maximised given the constraints of rights of way, existing trees and historic features.

- ii) *"demonstrates that it responds positively to the identified characteristics and resources of the site and the area to create attractive places and spaces with the needs of people in mind and respects and enhances local distinctiveness".*

The design has been developed so as to sit harmoniously within the setting. Although the large mature trees which create the sylvan character of the surrounding will remain dominant. The building itself has been designed so as to make a positive contribution in a sympathetic and

traditional built form developed to acknowledge the maritime past of the town combined the use of local traditional materials and craft in a contemporary form. The building has 4 public façades – the Mill Road frontage has the main entrance to the visitor centre and collection, also has a relationship across the road to the main entrance of the castle via gates which are reflected in the curvilinear nature of the front elevation. To the car park, the building forms a backdrop at low level with a view towards the town centre. It incorporates the public convenience element and is dominated by a sculptural roof pitching to a low level below the canopy tree backdrop.

To the river frontage, the building extends in a manner reminiscent of the prow of a boat and the glazing will afford glimpses of the use within.

From the priory remains and "bridge" side the building is viewed through a stand of trees and beyond the stone fish tables. The roof pitch is above fenestration designed to allow both sufficient natural lighting and an interaction between interior and external spaces (those nearest the priory being the education room and ancillary offices).

The proposed materials comprise sheet metal standing seam roof reminiscent in form to the lead to be found within the castle and cathedral. The walls will be predominantly flint and local stock brickwork of which many fine examples can be found within the town (see appendix). The glazing will be simple casement timber windows with a vertical emphasis and within walls, effectively buttressed by ramps and stairs to the raised ground floor level, again, reminiscent of other examples to be found within the town in general and castle in particular. It is proposed to use traditional king post oak trusses for the principal structural spans and vaulting within the building and these will be visible and expressed from outside.

iii) *"Promotes sustainable development including the effective use in conservation of energy and reducing the need to travel particularly by private car".*

The design will rely upon locally sourced materials as far as practicable. The building has relatively small glazed areas, particularly to northern elevations. It will be insulated to a standard beyond Building Regulation requirements and naturally ventilated. It is not anticipated to provide any cooling by mechanical means. The level of sustainability for the siting of the building and impact on transport has been addressed elsewhere.

iv) *"Does not have an unacceptable adverse impact upon adjoining occupiers land, uses or property and where relevant facilitates the development of adjoining sites".*

There are no immediately adjoining occupiers, the site is surrounded by public land and all car parking on all sides. It is not considered that this development would prejudice future development of adjoining sites in any way.

v) *"Takes account of any unacceptable, adverse impacts that may arise from adjoining land uses or property".*

Given the particular circumstances in context of this site, it is unlikely that any adverse impacts are likely to arise from adjoining land uses.

vi) *"Retain significant open or wooded areas which in their own right, make a material contribution to the local environment".*

The site is not an open area. The importance of existing surrounding trees is acknowledged and care has been taken to ensure that the minimum impact on trees occurs and that there is scope to incorporate some augmentation of planting as part of the landscape proposal.

vii) *"allows for the safe movement of pedestrians and vehicles, giving priority to pedestrians".*

The development has no impact upon vehicular access to the site. The raising of the floor level ensures safe pedestrian segregated access in a safe manner.

viii) *"Provides for vehicle parking in accordance with Policy Gen 1.2 and Appendix 2 - Open Space in accordance with Policy Gen 2.0."*

It has been agreed in principal that no additional parking will be required as a result of this proposal which is sited adjoining the main public car park. Planning policy guidelines on parking state only a maximum space requirements and it is not considered beneficial to attract additional vehicles or car parking to the location. The proposal does not incorporate public open space and there is no requirement for such in this location.

Gen 17 - Access for people with disabilities.

The building and all its ancillary facilities have been designed to give full, disabled access throughout. All facilities are at ground floor level and will be fully accessible.

Gen 18 – Crime prevention

The proposal has been developed in a form which is intended to deter crime and vandalism. The conveniences are of a design which has been proven elsewhere. The main entrance is in the most public elevation and easily overseen from several strategic public vantage points. The

areas of glazing vulnerable to vandalism are of limited area. The building has been designed so as to minimise areas which might encourage loitering or concealment.

It is recommended that a degree of public external lighting and security devices would be advisable and these could be further considered as part of the planning condition.

Area 2 – Conservation Areas.

"Planning permission will be granted for development which preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the Conservation Area or its setting".

This policy wording is of course directly in line with PPS 15. Inevitably, the question of preserving or enhancing the character of an area relies on a degree of subjective evaluation. However, in this instance we have assessed this element as follows:

Although this is a proposal for a public building which will provide very significant public/social facility for the town. Its siting close to such main historical features (the priory remains and Arundel Castle) means that it should not seek to compete with the historic setting.

In addition to the man-made/built environment, the site also has the benefit of surrounding mature trees and proximity of the River Arun affording views east to open countryside.

The distinctive skyline of the town dominated by the Castle and at closer quarters by the mature trees of Mill Road and Priory Garden should remain a dominant feature and the new building has been designed to sit harmoniously within the unique townscape where it is hoped it will be perceived as plainly a new building which respects the character, scale and setting.

Policy Area 3

The setting of Arundel:

"No development will be permitted particularly in the area shown on the Proposals Map which would adversely effect views of Arundel or its special setting!".

Development will not be permitted within the town of Arundel or beyond which would adversely effect the rural views outside from the town and in particular, from the following locations:

- ix) *The Arundel river bridge in Queens Street (easterly views).*

The view east from the Queens Street bridge is of acknowledged importance both to the setting of the town and its relationship to the open countryside (including views of the Downs) and also

from the significance of the proposed new building. We have therefore prepared a perspective view showing the proposal in context from the bridge (see 2353 SK04). This demonstrates how the building will be perceived against the backdrop of the Castle, the priory remains and the river itself. It is considered that from this angle, the building makes a positive contribution, but remains subservient to the more important historical elements.

Policy Area 7 – Public car park

The local authority seek to maintain the public car parking spaces wherever practicable. This proposal does involve minor incursion within car park curtilage which will result in some loss of public parking.

Area 9 – Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

"It is demonstrated that it would not be harmful to the visual quality and characteristics of the AONB".

Although the site is just outside the built up area of Arundel and within a designated AONB, as previously stated, the building and its immediate environs are perceived as part of the town. As previously identified there are buildings connected with leisure and tourism scattered beyond the built up area e.g. bowls club, football club, Wildfowl and Wetland Trust etc, as well as boat houses and tea rooms.

The visual cohesion of the group of buildings from the edge of the town centre through to the priory and castle and existing St Nicholas Hall will be maintained and the majority of public views through from the town past the site will not have any adverse impact upon outlook or skyline.

Area 16 – Ancient monuments and sites of national archaeological importance

"There will be a presumption in favour of the preservation of scheduled and other nationally important monuments and archaeological remains. Development which adversely effects their sites or settings will not be permitted".

The site is adjacent to Scheduled Ancient Monument (as such English Heritage were consulted at an early stage of design development).

The key areas of interest were:

- a) Potential impact of the proposal upon Scheduled Ancient Monument.
- b) The potential impact of the proposal upon the setting of a Grade I Listed Building (Arundel Castle).
- c) Potential impact of building upon archaeological remains.

The written response to consultation with English Heritage is appended (Appendix C) and confirms English Heritage are satisfied with the building and its design in relation to the setting of both the priory ruins and the castle. It also confirms the outcome of the site meeting with regard to potential foundation design and impact upon any archaeological remains. The conclusion is that such remains as may be present should be preserved in situ and to that this may be achieved by appropriate use and design of a piled foundation system with suspended (raised) ground floor slab, thereby minimising potential disturbance of the ground. It should be noted that this method of construction is also favoured as a precaution against flood risk and the matter covered separately in this Design and Access Statement. It is suggested that further consideration will be given to this in detail as required by English Heritage as part of the geotechnical site investigation and subsequent pile design and layout as or when the building should be in a more detailed design stage. It is considered that this element would also appropriately cover the requirements of Local Plan Area 17 – Sites of Archaeological Interest.

Stone Fish Tables

Two stone fish tables/slabs on staddle stone legs are presently situated to the east of St Nicholas Hall. We are advised by English Heritage that these are Listed structures in their own right and as such Listed Building Consent is required for their relocation. The structures have been surveyed, drawn and photographed, their existing and proposed positions are indicated on plan.

It should be noted that the tables have been previously relocated having originally been sited close to the town quay near the Queens Road bridge. The position of the tables therefore does not reflect their original use or position and it is considered that their value is mainly as a piece of social history and a reminder of some of the previous trade and riverside/port activity of the town. It is therefore deemed that the slight relocation as shown should be acceptable.

4. Trees

The importance of trees and the necessity to maintain the viability of nearby retained specimens is acknowledged. A BS5837 tree survey has been commissioned and is appended (see Appendix B). The survey is straightforward and self-explanatory in its findings. It should be noted that the disturbance within Root Protection Areas is minimised by the use of previously mentioned pile system with raised ground beams and elevated suspended ground floor slab construction. This will minimise potential impact/root damage as well as mitigating potential ground compaction and allow natural ground movement around and below the building to the benefit of retained trees.

5. Flood risk – synopsis and design assumptions

The site is adjacent to the River Arun and is within an area identified on the Environment Agency's flood risk maps as being potentially liable to flood. River modelling suggests that there is potential for flooding from both fluvial and tidal effect.

The Environment Agency have predicted the 2115 1:200 year tidal flood levels as 3.3m AOD. Should the existing flood defences totally fail, then the flood level could be as high as 3.75m AOD. It should be noted that these projected tidal flood levels are in excess of the levels predicted in the event of fluvial flooding.

As a result of the above figures, the new building has been designed with a finished floor level of 3.9m AOD, this represents a rise above the existing St Nicholas Hall floor level approximately 500mm.

The raised floor level would give the opportunity to allow a void below the new building to flood, thereby not displacing flood water or exacerbating flooding elsewhere. The undefended flood level for which the building has been designed would allow 150mm "free board" to protect the contents and if necessary, occupants of the building.

It should of course be noted that the building is not for residential purposes and it should also be noted that the nature of the flood modelling projected should ensure a minimum 24 hours notice of this unlikely event and allow flood risk management plans to be put in place.

6. Design development

Design development sketches are appended (see Appendix D). They show the concept of the scheme including the idea of a central knave or barn with lean to side aisles reflecting the form of the original St Nicholas Hall structure as evidenced by an early 20th century photograph.

The requirement to make the building fully accessible lead to the adoption of a single level solution. The relatively lofty, central exhibition space is intended to allow natural ventilation and the exhibition of large exhibits also allows the introduction of natural light via north facing roof lights to give good quality natural light levels without solar gain or glare.

7. Access

As a requirement of all new public buildings, they must be fully accessible. The design therefore accommodates needs of the disabled including wheelchair users throughout. Further consideration will be given at the detailed design stage to assist those with visual and hearing difficulties.

The access ramps have been designed as an integral part of the overall building.

APPENDICES:

- A. Site photographs.
- B. BS5837 Tree Survey.
- C. Consultation responses from English Heritage and Campaign for Protection of Rural England.
- D. Design development sketches.