

## **COMMUNITY UPDATE: Potential redevelopment of the Police Headquarters site, Martlesham**

### **October 2018**

**The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Suffolk is considering the potential sale of the Martlesham Police Headquarters site for residential development, in order to help reduce costs and provide better value for money to taxpayers without impacting on police services or jobs.**

**As part of a full review of the PCC's estate to see where money can be saved, we are exploring the possibility of relocating to more fit-for-purpose premises in the Ipswich area (which are likely to be existing public sector buildings).**

**In order to know what the value of the site is, and therefore determine whether it should be sold, we have appointed a team of consultants to look at how it could potentially accommodate residential development. Initial technical work suggests around 250 homes could be built on the site, should planning permission be granted by Suffolk Coastal District Council (SCDC).**

### **Background**

To date, a range of feasibility and technical studies have been carried out for the Police HQ site. Whilst it is still not certain whether or not the site will be sold, this 'fact finding' work has enabled the PCC to be satisfied that selling it might be a viable way to reduce costs for the police force and enable relocation to other premises.

In the summer, we held a period of public consultation which included a public exhibition at Martlesham Heath Pavilion in June. Draft illustrative plans were on display and members of the project team including the Police and Crime Commissioner, were available to discuss the outline proposals and answer questions. Feedback was invited at the event and afterwards, and this leaflet provides details on the themes of the feedback and how we are now considering them as the plans are developed further.

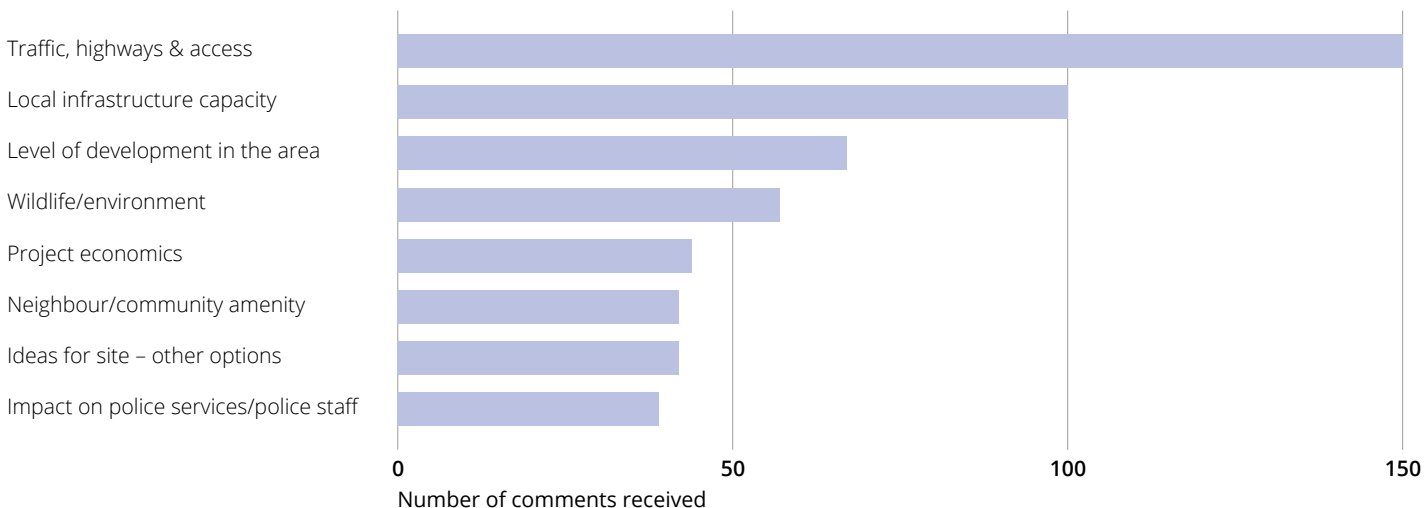
We are continuing to finalise the plans – with the feedback received in mind – and we anticipate that an outline planning application will be submitted to SCDC later this year.



## Community engagement so far

- Briefing sessions were held for Martlesham Parish Council and Kesgrave Town Council at Police HQ
- Consultation leaflets were posted to all properties in Martlesham parish
- Information was added to the PCC website including an online comment form
- Around 310 people attended the public exhibition in June
- 163 people or stakeholder organisations provided comments during the consultation period
- Over 75% of comments were from people living in the IP5 3 area (of the 125 responses where a postcode was provided)

## What you've told us – key themes of the feedback



This chart shows the topics or 'themes' that were mentioned in 5% or more of the comments that we received during the consultation period in the summer.

- 20% of comments were about **traffic, access or roads**
- Almost 14% of the comments mentioned the **capacity of local infrastructure**, such as schools and healthcare facilities
- Just over 9% of the comments referred to the **level of new development** in the local area
- Almost 8% of the comments were about **local wildlife**
- 6% of comments questioned the **economic viability** of the project
- The potential impact on **neighbours** to the site was mentioned in 5% of comments
- **Ideas for the use of the site** were raised in 5% of comments
- Just under 5% of comments were about the potential effect on **police services and jobs**

Other themes raised in fewer than 5% of the comments included: the retention of the Police Investigation Centre; suggestions and questions about the proposal and the site; the consultation process; other potential impacts (not covered by those in the chart above); land covenants; and the planning process.

All the feedback we received will be detailed in a Statement of Community Consultation, which will be submitted with the planning application to SCDC.

## What we're doing – considering your feedback

As we continue to develop the proposal we are taking the feedback we have received from local residents, staff and other stakeholders into account wherever possible, before the planning application is finalised. How we are doing this is explained opposite.

## **Traffic, access & roads**

We understand this is a key concern and we have conducted a full Traffic Assessment that will be submitted with our planning application. Currently, approximately 1,600 vehicle trips are made to or from the Police HQ and Police Investigation Centre (PIC) between 7am and 10pm. A development of 250 homes, plus the retention of the PIC, is estimated to generate between 1,500 and 1,800 vehicle trips between 7am and 10pm. Looking just at peak hours however, the assessment found that there would be fewer vehicles entering/leaving the site during these hours if it were to be redeveloped for housing.

In terms of getting onto the site, it would be accessed as it currently is, off Portal Avenue. As part of our planning application, we will be required to show that the access into and out of the site is safe and that the development does not have any adverse impacts on adjoining roads or junctions. Suffolk County Council Highways will be consulted on this to ensure their design and safety standards are met and we would expect them to acknowledge that they may need to consider improvements to local infrastructure.

## **Capacity of local infrastructure**

Your feedback highlighted the importance of ensuring schools and healthcare facilities can meet local needs. To reflect this, the County Council as the local authority responsible for health and education will be formally consulted and they will advise on any additional capacity requirements likely to be needed and how these can be met. Should the development go ahead, SCDC would collect a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) financial contribution from the developers for local public services such as transport, flood defences, health and social care, education, libraries and leisure facilities. Also, other approved development in the area, such as that at Adastral Park, will be providing new community facilities.

## **Level of development in the local area**

A range of technical reports are being drawn up to consider any potential impacts of the proposal alongside other 'committed development' in the area, including the future development at Adastral Park. SCDC will then decide as to whether housing on the site would be acceptable in light of potential net cumulative impacts.

A number of you asked 'why here?' in your feedback. Martlesham Heath lies within the 'Eastern Ipswich Plan Area' (EIPA), which is defined as a Major Centre in SCDC's Settlement Hierarchy. The SCDC Core Strategy identified that approximately 29% of the district's housing requirement (c.2,300 by 2027) will be in the EIPA. It is considered that Major Centres provide the greatest opportunity to deliver sustainable development, due to the range of (and accessibility to) local services and facilities including retail, employment, education, recreation and leisure, community and public transport.

Should the site be sold, we have been advised that the most suitable, compatible and viable use for the site would be for housing, as it is next to existing residential areas, it would not detract from the strategic employment and retail parks nearby, and because a residential use would also generate the most value (which would then be re-invested into local policing). It would ultimately be a decision for SCDC as to whether housing on the site would be acceptable.

## **Local wildlife**

We agree wholeheartedly that local wildlife must be considered during the planning process. Various surveys and reports have been carried out to look at which species are present on or near the site and what could be done, if necessary, to ensure that suitable alternative habitat could be provided on the site should it be redeveloped (or if not, that species could be safely translocated to habitat away from the site).

The site is well screened by hedgerows and trees, which would be retained wherever possible or replaced according to conditions attached to planning permission. Additional planting would also take place. The Portal Woodlands will not be affected by the proposal as they are covered by an Area to be Protected from Development policy.

## **Project economics**

Some of you asked about the economic viability of the project. Our aim is to maximise the value of the site to enable the PCC to consider the viability of the options available for the force to relocate to fit-for-purpose premises, and to reinvest into local police services. In order to decide if relocation is economically viable we need to obtain a realistic value of the site, which can only be done through the planning process. Even if planning permission is granted there is no guarantee the Constabulary would relocate - ultimately it is dependent on the business case, which will include what offers the best value for the taxpayer and the organisation.

Moving to new or shared facilities should reduce the current running costs of the Martlesham Police HQ. However, more detailed work needs to be undertaken to fully quantify and review all the options before any decision is made. In the interest of transparency, any figures in this regard will be made public (when they are known).

## Considering our neighbours

Protecting the amenity of those living adjacent to the site is very important to us. The site is already well screened by hedgerows and trees, which would be retained wherever possible or replaced according to planning consent conditions. The new homes would be distanced from the boundaries of existing properties along the southern boundary of the site by a substantial green buffer, good-sized gardens and appropriate boundary treatments, such as quality fencing and landscaping; and positioned to avoid any over-looking. The houses on Portal Avenue are already separated from the site by front gardens, the road and existing trees.

## Ideas for the site

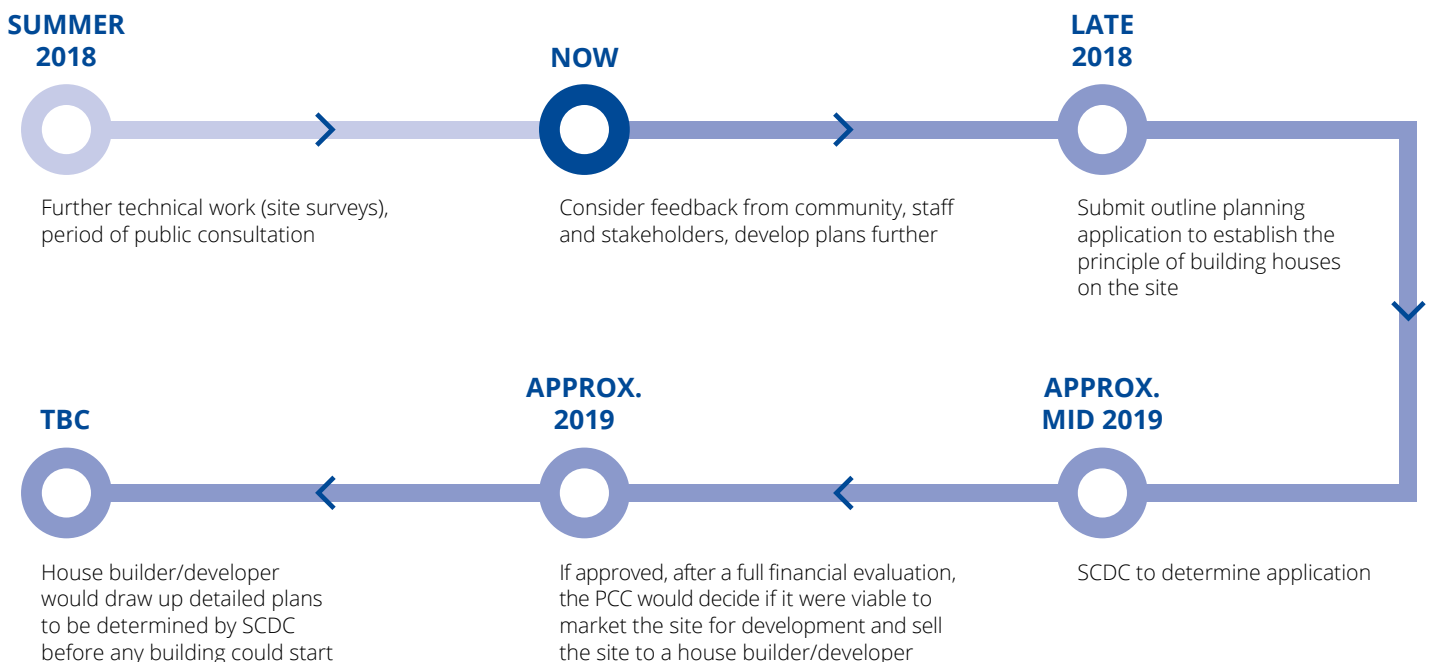
Several of you made suggestions for other uses for the site or said we should refurbish or rent out the current buildings. We have considered other employment uses, however with the nearby industrial, business and retail parks (and current vacancies within these), we do not believe there to be further demand for this in the area at the moment. We do not feel that the facilities we could offer to rent would provide enough of an income to cover the money needed for a basic refurbishment or to meet the current running costs. We must also consider what type of use would generate the most value for tax payers – as stated earlier we believe that housing would be the most suitable use for the site.

## Police services and jobs

If the site is sold and we relocate to other premises, any further money resulting from the sale of the site would be reinvested in police services to help keep Suffolk one of the safest counties in the country in which to live, work, travel and invest. Furthermore, we do not intend to have any impact on current jobs by selling the site or relocating to other premises.

## What happens next?

An outline planning application will be submitted to SCDC once our technical work is completed and the project team has had time to consider the feedback received from the community, staff, stakeholders and statutory consultees. We anticipate the application will be submitted later this year, but this process will not be rushed unnecessarily and we will keep the community updated with our progress.



## Find out more

Visit our website to see the information that was displayed at the public exhibition in June. You can also read more answers to common questions asked about some of the key feedback themes.

[www.suffolk-pcc.gov.uk](http://www.suffolk-pcc.gov.uk)

**We would like to thank everyone who has taken the time to get involved in the project so far.**