

Public Response Civic Suite Site, Rayleigh

Pre-Application Engagement

In March 2021, Rochford District Council, and its partner **gbpartnerships** shared our initial proposals for the regeneration of the Civic Suite site in Rayleigh. The proposals were made available via the [Voyage Partnership website](#) and during a live public webinar on 17th March. Some people asked us to post paper copies of the proposals to them as they did not have online access, which we did. We also printed posters and commissioned an advertorial in the Echo.

We invited you to 'Have your Say' via an online survey and we are grateful to everyone who took the time to respond to us. We received 85 completed surveys along with letters, emails and phone calls.

As part of this pre-planning engagement, we also talked to stakeholders including Rochford District Council Planning Department. We held several meetings with the building users including representatives from local community groups. We considered all of the comments on the proposals and made some amendments to the proposed designs.

Scheme summary

The scheme will see a section of the Civic Suite retained and refurbished as a new commercial office space, supporting the local economy. Much of the garden area will be retained and the remainder of the scheme will see a much reduced residential development in two separate buildings on the footprint of the car park. The development will be highly environmentally sustainable.

Changes we made in response to your feedback

We have made the following changes to the scheme to reflect the feedback that you have given us.

You were concerned about Environmental Sustainability

We have undertaken a comprehensive review of environmental sustainability opportunities and our proposals incorporate renewable energy sources to make them as environmentally sustainable as possible. The proposals for this site include the following:

- Reuse and retrofit of the retained part of the existing council building.
- Roof mounted photovoltaics (solar panels for generating electricity).
- Electric Air Source Heat Pump heating.
- Enhanced insulation within walls, floors, roofs and glazing.
- Materials selection that prioritises low carbon and embodied energy.

The proposals promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, providing secure and covered bicycle storage for residents and electric car charging points.

You were concerned about the removal of trees and green space

The new revised proposals retain the lawned garden area to the rear of the listed Barringtons Building. The new buildings are located on the footprint of the current car park and the surrounding grass verge area resulting in a minimal loss of landscape garden area and ensure the existing trees within this garden are retained and unaffected by the development. The new buildings are separated to achieve views between them from Websters Way, set back from the pavement line to maintain a view of Barringtons and the Church from the south of Websters Way.

We will retain as many healthy trees as possible with all category A trees retained. Category A trees being of high quality and value capable of making a significant contribution to the area for 40 or more years. The proposals include the replanting of new trees to replace any that are lost. We promise that the number of new trees will equal or exceed the number of trees lost in the development.

The memorial tree identified along the southern boundary of the existing car park is in very poor health. The proposals include the replanting of a new improved memorial tree and associated plaque to the more pleasant and accessible location of the lawned garden to the rear of the historic Barrington's building.

You were concerned about Car Parking

The new proposals include 30 car parking spaces for commercial use by both the existing users of Barringtons and for the new commercial office space. Two of these spaces are accessible, these are clearly defined by their larger size and signage and are positioned adjacent to the office.

The planning policy compliant proposals provide 17 car parking spaces for residential use. This is a provision of 1 space per apartment and 2 spaces per house plus 2 visitor spaces. 2 of these spaces are accessible.

Six electric vehicle car charging points are provided.

You were concerned about over development

The revised proposals have been reduced significantly in scale and now comprise two smaller new buildings rather than one large one. The new building to the rear of Barringtons is a 2.5 storey apartment building, with 9 apartments. A second new building comprising 3 houses, is 2.5 storeys in height on the corner of Bull Lane and Websters Way, reducing to 2 storeys in height along Bull Lane. The revised proposals are appropriate in height relative to the surrounding buildings.

Heritage and Conservation Comments

The revised designs respond to an assessment of the conservation area in accordance with the Council's Conservation Area Appraisal. Whilst they propose a subtly contemporary appearance, they draw on the design, proportions and materials used in many of the buildings within the Rayleigh Conservation Area. The new buildings are proposed as a historic gault brick which are white in colour to reflect the Barringtons building with timber cladding which is a commonly used material in Rayleigh.

Traditional roof designs have been proposed to fit in with the character of the conservation area.

Summary

Having listened to the public feedback significant changes have been made to the original proposals for the Civic Suite site. In summary these include:

- Retention of more green landscaped spaces and Category A trees as well as a new tree planting scheme.
- Refurbishment of part of the existing building adjoining Barringtons as a new commercial opportunity.
- Reduced height and scale of the residential elements to two smaller new buildings.
- Use of materials in keeping with Conservation area.
- Inclusion of electric car charging points and solar panels and energy efficient heating systems.

Next steps

You can now comment on these planning proposals via the Rochford District Council Planning portal - Application Reference: [21/01331/FUL](#) & [21/01332/LBC](#)

This is an important period of public consultation. The Council has yet to make any formal decision about developing this site.