

## Public Response Freight House, Rochford

### Pre-Application Engagement

In February 2021, Rochford District Council, and its partner **gb**partnerships shared our initial proposals for the regeneration of the Freight House in Rochford. The proposals were made available via the [Voyage Partnership website](#) and during a live public webinar on 24<sup>th</sup> February. 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 62 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

This environmentally sustainable scheme will see the existing Freight House building retained and refurbished and a new extension with a glazed central atrium to bring the two together. The proposals retain the existing provision of community hireable function space within the Freight House while also providing flexible space for Council meetings. The new extension will be highly environmentally and financially sustainable and provide flexible and efficient working space. The glazed atrium will provide a welcoming reception area for the public and visitors.

### 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.

### Some were concerned about Environmental Sustainability

The council is committed to addressing climate change and so this project is to be a sustainable exemplar project that minimises the Councils energy use and carbon production. 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.
- The new extension building will have a roof made from solar panels (photovoltaic electric cells)

- The roof to the link between the new and existing parts of the building is proposed to be made of solid lightweight metal in order to manage the comfort of the internal atrium space in an environmentally efficient way.
- Electric Air Source Heat Pump to heat and cool the building as required.
- Enhanced insulation within walls, floors, roofs and glazing.
- Materials selection that prioritises low carbon and embodied energy.

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

### You were concerned about the ongoing provision for community use at Freight House

The proposals retain all existing community spaces including the three function rooms that can be used for public events and occasions. These rooms will be fully refurbished and upgraded including improvements to the sound and lighting to better accommodate a variety of events and activities. The systems are being replaced and upgraded to use renewable energy sources and improve heating, cooling and ventilation.

The area to the front of the Freight House and the new extension will be landscaped, the walkways improved and there will be places for the public to meet and sit outside of the building. Overall, the building will relate better to its surroundings, creating new access ways to the green open space behind and the reservoir beyond.

### Accessibility and parking were a concern of some.

The existing Freight House site is very well served by regional and local transport routes. Located right next to Rochford Railway station, trains to Southend run every 15-20 minutes through the day and to Hockley, Rayleigh and London at a similar frequency. Several local bus routes also pass the site along Bradley Way, and the proposals provide 83 car parking spaces within the site as well as being a short walk away from other public car parking spaces in Rochford.

Ten electric vehicle charging points will be provided for public use.

The proposals significantly improve the accessibility of the site for pedestrians. A new ramped pathway from the public footpath along Bradley Way, is provided that will enable pedestrians to safely access the site without walking through the car park. This new route is fully accessible for wheelchair users and adjoins Bradley Way at the safe crossing point by the junction with West Street.

## Heritage and conservation aspects were of interest

A survey of the existing building has identified opportunities for restoration and repairs to the exterior and interior of the building. These will be undertaken in a sensitive manner, utilising matching materials and traditional techniques.

The proposals for the new extension to the building are contemporary complimenting and reflecting the materials used in the existing Freight House such as red brick, across a number of bays that follow the pattern of the existing building. The new extension is taller than the existing Freight House, due to the sloping site, its location means that it restores the view of the historic buildings and across the conservation area. The old and new parts of the building are joined together with a glass atrium, this acts as a link between the two parts of the building and enables the existing Freight House to be clearly seen.

Large windows along the sides of the extension represent a reference to the entrances of the existing Freight House, where historically freight would have been loaded onto and unloaded from carts and trucks.

## Next steps

You can now comment on these planning proposals via the Rochford District Council Planning portal, [Application reference number 21/01339/FUL](#). This is an important period of public consultation. The Council has yet to make any formal decision about developing this site.