

Property Review

Clair Hall, Haywards Heath

Contents

- 1.0 Executive Summary**
- 2.0 Introduction**
- 3.0 Site Description**
- 4.0 Site History**
- 5.0 Site Legal Title and Issues**
- 6.0 Site Condition**
 - **Condition Survey**
 - **Asbestos Survey**
 - **Ecology Survey**
 - **Arboricultural Survey**
 - **Topographical and Measured Survey**
 - **Current Purpose**
- 7.0 Planning Position**
- 8.0 Interested Parties**
- 9.0 Opportunities and Constraints Summary**

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.01 The Council has commissioned and undertaken various surveys and studies in relation to the legal, planning and physical building aspects of Clair Hall. These have identified and highlighted a series of risks and challenges but also opportunities and positive aspects of the property and site.
- 1.02 The Council owns the freehold interest in the property and this interest is relatively unencumbered. In terms of restrictions which might impact on the future use and development of the site it is considered that there are not any of significance.
- 1.03 The position in terms of town planning is generally positive. The property is located within the settlement area of Haywards Heath Town with broad planning policy support for sustainable development on the site. The property is mentioned specifically in the policies of the Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016 and the Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan SPD 2021.
- 1.04 The Council commissioned a detailed survey of the building fabric and mechanical/electrical installations including the presence of asbestos. The survey has highlighted the extent and estimated cost of works required to bring the property up to a modern operational standard for a community building and also those repairs and maintenance costs required for a thirty year period. These costs are substantial, totalling £5.7 million for both Clair Hall and the Redwood Centre; £2.9 million would need to be spent within five years.
- 1.05 Tree and ecological surveys have also been commissioned and these have highlighted a number of issues and possible constraints. Consideration must be given to the retention of trees that have a high and moderate arboricultural, landscape and conservation value. Regarding ecology, the main issue relates to roosting bats and the recommended emergence surveys will be undertaken in summer 2022.
- 1.06 The topographical survey has shown that the site is relatively flat, of a regular shape and measures almost 2 acres in area. Vehicular and pedestrian access to the site appears satisfactory but surveys and studies in relation to transport and travel have yet to be commissioned. The location of The Heath Conservation Area abutting the eastern boundary of the site will be a major consideration for design and planning issues.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.01 Council agreed at the 20th December 2021 Cabinet meeting to commission feasibility and options appraisal work to examine the potential to create a multi-functional community facility on the Clair Hall site. This was expected to cover a range of development and investment options. One option would be to examine retaining and re-purposing the existing building. The Redwood Centre which is located on the site and is attached to the Clair building, has been included within the scope of this report.
- 2.02 The first stage of the project was to consider the Strategic Outline Case (SOC) as defined in the Government Five Case Model, covering RIBA Plan of Work 2020 Stages 0 and 1, wherever possible preparing work suitable for inclusion in the subsequent Outline Business Case (OBC).
- 2.03 The Council commissioned the following site surveys and reports:-
- Topography and Measured Survey.
 - Asbestos Refurbishment Survey.
 - Condition and Lifecycle Cost Survey to establish building refurbishment costs and operational issues (part of the building fabric and condition survey).
 - Arboricultural Survey.
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.
- 2.04 The Council also commissioned an independent Planning Consultant to advise on planning policy and development management issues including managing pre-application advice with the Local Planning Authority.
- 2.05 Subject to advice on future options and opportunities for the property, the next (OBC) Stage would then involve further commissions for:-
- Architecture and design to prepare scheme options and plans.
 - Development management to include valuation appraisal.
 - Cost advice for scheme options.
- 2.06 This report summarises the findings of the reports received.

3.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

3.01 Mid Sussex District Council owns Clair Hall, a former community facility located on Perrymount Road in the centre of Haywards Heath. The property for the purpose of this report includes the main Clair Hall building plus the attached Redwood Centre which is occupied by Mid Sussex Scouts by virtue of a lease from the Council. The main Clair Hall building is currently used by the NHS as a Vaccination Centre. The site measures some 8,000 sq m in area with Clair Hall's Gross Internal Area (GIA) being approx 1,306 sq m and Redwood Centre 411.5 sq m, totaling approx 1,700 sq m.

4.0 SITE HISTORY

4.01 Prior to the pandemic, Clair Hall had operational challenges including declining demand for its offer. The hall was mainly used for community events and meetings. As a consequence, Clair Hall operated at a net cost to the Council for over 10 years. Its inclusion in the Council's Leisure Management contract with Places Leisure in 2014 came at a cost to the Council of approximately £35k per annum. In addition, the Council retained some liabilities and therefore held the full repair and maintenance responsibilities for the hall.

4.02 Clair Hall was closed to the public on 19th March 2020, in line with the national Covid19 lockdown restrictions. On 14th September 2020 a decision was taken by Cabinet to continue the closure of the hall with the request to commission work to develop a business case for a modern community facility. The lease with Places Leisure that was due to expire in 2029 was surrendered by mutual agreement in 2020. It reopened in December 2020 and currently, it is being used by the NHS as a vaccination centre.

5.0 LEGAL TITLE AND SITE ISSUES

5.01 The Council's in-house Legal Team have prepared a report detailing all relevant legal matters affecting the property.

5.02 The Council's predecessor, Haywards Heath Urban District Council purchased the site of Clair Hall and surrounding land in June 1930. Under the title, there are several restrictive covenants relating to the use of the site including no noisy or objectionable trade/purpose or the use part or whole of the land for the purposes of trade or business of a garage proprietor or motor engineer.

5.03 The northern part of the site is held for the purposes of public offices. The southern part of the site that currently operates as a car park is held by the Council on statutory trust for the use by the public as a public walk and pleasure ground having been acquired as an extension to Clair Park. The car park operates for the benefit of Clair Park (also known as Haywards Heath Recreation Ground).

- 5.04 The Clair Hall building was nominated by Haywards Heath Community Interest Company as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) and was listed on 26th November 2020. This will remain as an ACV for five years from this date unless there is a relevant disposal under the Localism Act 2011 or in the opinion as a Local Authority that the land or building is no longer community value.
- 5.05 A relevant disposal of the whole or part of the building under the Localism Act would require the Council to notify the nominator to give them an opportunity to put together a bid to purchase the hall themselves under the Right to Bid provisions and seek a 6 month moratorium on any sale. There is no first right of refusal or requirement to accept any community bid.
- 5.06 The Council has powers under the Local Government Act 1972 to appropriate the land for planning purposes. Through such an action the Council can engage Section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 which empowers the Council, if required, to override easements and other rights including covenants restricting use of the land, so that any development for which planning permission has been obtained may be undertaken.
- 5.07 There are a number of strategies, policy documents and reports relating to Clair Hall which would guide and influence any future use and development of the property. These are listed below.

Product Name/Owner	Description
Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan: Adopted March 2021 Business Unit Lead for Planning Policy	Guidance for the Clair Hall site detailed in Section 5.4.B of the Strategy details the 'Aims and Principles' for the future development of the Clair Hall site.
MSDC Design Guide SPD Adopted September 2020 Business Unit Lead for Planning Policy	General design principles to guide and advise all forms of built environment development.
MSDC Parks Investment Plan Business Unit Lead for Waste, Landscapes & Leisure	Proposals to prepare a masterplan for adjacent Clair Park
MSDC Parking Strategy Adopted 2021 Business Unit Lead for Parking Services	The Strategy sets out a proposed parking strategy for Haywards Heath Town Centre
Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016 Haywards Heath Town Council	Policy 1A of the plan details the development requirements for the Clair Hall site.

Sustainable Economy Strategy 2022	Addresses how economic development and social and environmental sustainability can successfully co-exist and sustained in Mid Sussex.
Mid Sussex District Plan (2018)	Part of the Local Planning Framework and sets out the main policies for Mid Sussex covering the plan period 2014 – 2031.
Equalities and Diversity Scheme 2020-24	How the Council will meet the requirements of Equality Act including the Councils Equality Objectives and the monitoring of them.

6.0 SITE CONDITION

Condition survey

- 6.01 The Council commissioned Crossley Anderson, a local Chartered Building Surveying Consultancy, to undertake a survey of the existing premises and to advise as to the likely maintenance and repair costs expected to arise over the next 30 year period.
- 6.02 The consultant reviewed the building and noted that works such as a new boiler installation in the late 1980s and air handling unit in 1995 were of good quality and have been well maintained over the years. Whilst most systems are still operational, to a degree (for example one out of the two boilers has failed), the majority of the plant and equipment is coming to the end of its serviceable life and should a reliable system with some longevity be required, many of the systems would need to be replaced in the near future. This includes much of the pipework infrastructure. The majority of the plant and equipment is obsolete and would need to be replaced with more energy efficient alternatives/replacements.
- 6.03 No significant structural defects were noted to the foundations or load bearing masonry structure to cause immediate concern. Generally, the building fabric is in a poor condition with most elements having reached the end of their expected life span.
- 6.04 General cyclical maintenance would be required to the external masonry walls including re-pointing to ensure that it is maintained in a good condition to prevent internal water ingress. The tiles hanging around to the external walls of the building are understood to contain asbestos and would need to be removed and replaced.

- 6.05 Windows and doors are a combination of powder coated aluminium, timber and UPVC framed glazed units. The aluminium units are in poor condition and have previously been re-painted, the seals and gaskets are degraded, and replacement would need to be undertaken throughout.
- 6.06 The roof covering to the flat and pitched roofs sections are in poor condition and would require replacement along with the upgrading of insulation levels to meet current Building Regulations. Asbestos tiles have been used for the pitched roofs and wall tiling which are generally in poor condition, and replacement would need to be undertaken. The timber soffit boards are in poor condition and generally decayed throughout and require replacement. The majority of the lead roof flashings appear to have been stolen throughout the property, some of which have been replaced by alternative products and some have not been replaced. These should be renewed as part of the required roofing works.
- 6.07 The internal parts of Clair Hall are dated and would need to be significantly upgraded and overhauled including the toilets and commercial style kitchen. Elements of the electrical and ancillary services installation are thought to be original and, as a consequence, are deemed to have exceeded or are reaching the end of their economic life. Consideration should therefore be given to replacement to prevent further failures of the installation.
- 6.08 The Clair Hall fire alarm system also covers the Redwood Centre. While the buildings are physically connected there is no internal access from one to the other. Therefore, it is suggested the hall and the Redwood Centre should have their own independent fire alarm system.
- 6.09 General maintenance of the hall was the responsibility of Places Leisure until 2020 and since then the Council have continued to maintain the building and ensure that statutory compliance is adhered to while occupied by the NHS as a vaccination centre. Ongoing maintenance costs for the systems are detailed in the consultant's report. It is recommended that systems are maintained on a regular basis in accordance with recognized standards and manufacturer's requirements.
- 6.10 The consultant's report has provided a forecast for expenditure required within certain timeframes as set out below. These were formulated using either recent tender submissions or utilising industry standard pricing books, further updated where necessary to add in a factor for the recent increase in inflation and general cost increases for construction work. The estimated lifecycle costs for the various building components follows industry standards, including CIBSE.

	Clair Hall	Redwood Centre
Immediate – within 12 months	£61,800	£15,550
Short – 2-5 years	£2,185,500	£661,250
Medium – 5-10 years	£147,500	£83,250
Long – 10-20 years	£531,000	£119,000
Very long 20-30 years	£1,367,500	£533,250
Total	£4,293,300	£1,412,300

- 6.11 The Council carried out a condition survey on Clair Hall in 2018.
- 6.12 The 2018 survey produced different cost outcomes due to this being more focussed on the Council’s responsibilities for the building at that particular time when the building was occupied by Places Leisure. In 2018, responsibility for maintenance and repairs of the building was shared with the operator. The 2022 survey in contrast, encompasses all repair and maintenance responsibilities that now rest with the Council.
- 6.13 Costs have increased significantly between 2018 and 2022. Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) Indices show a 22% increase in building costs between June 2018 and April 2022.
- 6.14 Since 2018, the Council and Places Leisure have maintained the building at a level conducive with ensuring the building is fit for use. Due to the uncertainty regarding the future of the building, no major elements of works to the fabric and services have been undertaken.
- 6.15 The 2018 survey also covered a shorter period of 20 years with a greater focus upon repair and maintenance of existing components rather than improvements. The 30 year lifecycle costing exercise included major refurbishment and replacements, significantly increasing costs.

Asbestos Survey

- 6.16 The Council commissioned PA Group to undertake an asbestos survey of the existing premises.
- 6.17 PA Group undertook a Refurbishment Asbestos Survey at Clair Hall and identified asbestos containing materials in multiple locations within the building. The risk level for each material sampled was identified as low or very low. The recommendation is any asbestos containing materials identified within the report should be removed if likely to be disturbed, prior to any intrusive works being undertaken. This should be undertaken by a licensed contractor.

- 6.18 There were six locations within the building that were inaccessible by PA Group at the time of survey. Depending on the nature and/or extent of any recommended works, these areas would need to be accessed or parts of the structure removed to allow access and testing.
- 6.19 A full Demolition Survey was not undertaken due to the limited access available and the damage to such an intrusive survey requires and subsequent time/cost in making good whilst the building continues to operate as a vaccination centre.
- 6.20 The Redwood Centre has an existing Asbestos Management Survey conducted in 2017 as part of the Council's wider asbestos surveys. The survey is a visual inspection with limited testing. The contractor identified 23 areas of asbestos containing materials, all risk rated as low or very low.

Ecology Survey

- 6.21 The Council commissioned PJC Consultancy to undertake a Preliminary Ecology Assessment of the existing site. No evidence was found of roosting, foraging and commuting bats or nesting birds on site at the time of the survey. The risk of roosting bats was rated as low or negligible. A further bat emergence survey has been commissioned for late June 2022.
- 6.22 The report also highlights future opportunities to enhance the ecology of the site. This includes the creation of habitats such as bat bricks, bird boxes or bee friendly plants.

Arboricultural Survey

- 6.23 The Council commissioned PJC Consultancy to undertake an Arboricultural Survey of the existing site.
- 6.24 A total of 30 trees, 6 tree/shrubs and 2 hedgerows were surveyed. A site plan of the location of each plant is on page 11 of the report and tree survey schedule of each tree on page 13. There are no Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) within the property; however, there is a chestnut tree on neighbouring land which is covered by a TPO. Any trees located within the adjacent Conservation Area will need to be afforded the same level of protection.

6.25 Summary of tree categorisation:

Tree Category	Interpretation of category	Individual Tree	Tree Group	Hedgerow
A	Trees of good condition and high arboricultural, landscape or conservation value. Must have a potential life span in excess of forty years.	1	-	-
B	Trees of moderate condition, with minor defects or sub-optimal form but are still of modest arboricultural, landscape or conservation value. Must have a potential life span in excess of twenty years.	18	-	-
C	Unremarkable trees of poor condition or form with limited arboricultural, landscape or conservation value, or trees with a stem diameter under 150mm. Must have a potential life span in excess of ten years.	11	5	2
U	Trees of such impaired condition that they cannot realistically be retained as living trees in the context of the current land use for more than ten years. These trees do not need to be removed if they are not dangerous and do not conflict with the proposed development but should not be considered a constraint to development.	-	1	-
Total		30	6	2

6.26 There are three subcategories against which each tree is rated based on arboricultural, landscape qualities or cultural values including conservation. Some of the plants are categorised in multiple subcategories. The tree listed under Category A is a Deodar Cedar located at the front of the property.

6.27 There is no immediate health and safety recommendation for any of the trees. Some preliminary management recommendations such as removal of ivy or self-seeding Sycamores have been highlighted on the report.

Topographical and Measured Surveys

- 6.28 The Council commissioned SE Surveying to undertake a Topographical and Measured Survey of the existing premises which was completed to inform subsequent surveys and future design work.

Current Purpose & Costs

- 6.29 Since December 2020, Clair Hall has been licenced to Alliance for Better Care on behalf of the NHS. This licence expires on the earlier of 29th February 2024 or mutual break with 1 months' notice to terminate on or after 31st October 2022.
- 6.30 Whilst the hall has been used as a vaccination centre the expenditure incurred in the day to day occupation and running of Clair Hall have been passed on to Alliance for Better Care. When the hall was occupied and operated by Places Leisure as a community facility in 2019-2020, the annual operational costs, less staffing and business rates, were in the region of £193,000, of which c £34,000 were for energy and utilities. The recharge to Alliance for Better Care for energy and utilities in 2021/22 were c£50,000. Having regard to recent and expected further increases in such costs, this figure will be considerably higher in the future. It is therefore likely that future operating costs for the current building could exceed £250,000 per annum.
- 6.31 The Council has carried out essential cyclical inspections, maintenance and repairs of existing components on behalf of the tenant; however, this does not include any initial set up costs for the vaccination centre -additional maintenance has been carried out by the tenant.
- 6.32 The Redwood Centre is currently leased to the Mid Sussex District Scouts. This lease is due to expire on 17th May 2023. There is no security of tenure. The Scouts sublet the building to a nursery and a church group. The tenant is currently liable for maintenance and insurance recharges for the centre. The business rates for the centre for the year 2021-22 are £6,528.
- 6.33 The car park and surrounding landscaping of the grounds is maintained by the Council which is liable for any expenditure.

7.0 PLANNING POSITION

- 7.01 The Council commissioned Vail Williams to undertake a review of the current planning policy background relating to the site, buildings and adjacent area.
- 7.02 The report highlights the proximity to a range of amenities and the highly sustainable location of Clair Hall. The recent developments in the vicinity of Clair Hall will form part of the justification for maximising the use of sustainable brownfield sites with the context of existing street scene and the neighbouring Conservation Area to the east.
- 7.03 A key consideration will be the transport and travel strategy for the site and will need to be examined further into alternative sustainable modes of transport.
- 7.04 There is also an opportunity to enhance the eastern boundary of the site to Clair Park and the Conservation Area. Vail Williams recommends that a high-quality design would assist in making the most of this opportunity.
- 7.05 There are policies which prevent the loss of leisure, culture or community facilities unless certain criteria are met. These are detailed in the Vail Williams report.

8.0 INTERESTED PARTIES

- 8.01 There has been a degree of unsolicited interest in the site from external developers and owner/occupiers for alternative uses, particularly retail. This is as to be expected of any town centre site, where dedicated site finders operate on an entirely speculative basis.
- 8.02 Whilst contrary to the current site intentions, it does provide a useful bellwether of the site value and should be considered as part of the wider business case for any future options for the provision of community services in Haywards Heath.
- 8.03 Whilst the Council has a duty to protect commercial confidentiality, it is noted that we have received enquiries from one commercial end user who has offered £6.5 million to purchase the site as their opening offer.

9.0 OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS SUMMARY

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Fully owned by the Council with no 3rd party interests and no major legal restrictions.</p> <p>Ownership and management of the on-site car parking.</p> <p>Current economic strength and demographics of Haywards Heath town centre and projected housing and population growth.</p> <p>Generally supportive planning background with the site located within the town settlement area.</p> <p>A well-located central site with strong transport links and adjacent to Clair Park.</p> <p>The site is generally of a good size (c2 acres), relatively flat and of a regular shape. There is a good established vehicular access.</p>	<p>Age and appearance of the building asset does not fit with the surroundings.</p> <p>Building fitness for purpose and cost efficiency.</p> <p>Future repair and maintenance liabilities of the building and grounds.</p> <p>Site security risks.</p> <p>Current under-utilisation of site.</p> <p>Development constraints and obligations including the proximity of the Conservation Area and adjacent buildings.</p>

Opportunities	Threats
<p>Improved utilisation of site and intensification.</p> <p>Additional space available for complementary community uses. This is in addition to accommodating existing users.</p> <p>Potential to contribute to wider sustainable town centre economy through increased visitor numbers, particularly for evenings and weekends and business spin off activity.</p> <p>Potential to accommodate increased demand for community and associated services, particularly resulting from the projected growth in population.</p> <p>Improve accessibility, public toilets and high-quality public realm, including access to and promotion of Clair Park.</p> <p>Deliver Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan SPD aspirations.</p> <p>Support the policy objectives of the Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Development Plan.</p> <p>Potential to plan and implement an exemplar sustainable and low carbon facility including the building design/construction and green travel plan.</p>	<p>Further changes and shifts in economy.</p> <p>Community response and possible objection to any proposed change.</p> <p>The current volatility and growth of building development costs, particularly construction and materials.</p>