



Longmead Petition Response

The Petition

“We the undersigned petition Surrey County Council to 1. Halt the demolition of Longmead Adult Education Centre in Redhill 2. Retain the Edwardian character of the building; and 3. Develop it into a community hub.”

Submitted by David Sayer, Stefania Maulucci and Cllr Jonathan Essex

The Response

As part of regeneration of the town centre, Surrey County Council is developing two sites it owns, at Colebrook, Noke Drive, and Longmead in Holland Close. The proposals for both two sites are linked and phased in terms of their development.

The proposal is to create a new modern community hub in Colebrook and deliver a significant number of residential units in the town centre. The first phase of this regeneration is to relocate the service currently located in Colebrook (Surrey Choices) to release this site for development.

We have decided to relocate Surrey Choices to Longmead, where access and proximity to the town centre is similar to its existing site at Colebrook, so does not materially disadvantage the service or its clients. This would be a temporary move that would allow Surrey Choices to operate prior to a subsequent move to a permanent home.

In order to accommodate the service on the Longmead site, and to facilitate the future development, it was decided to demolish the existing building - the former Adult Education Centre. Its layout is no longer fit for purpose, and it is not configured to be an efficient and flexible space. The cost of bringing the building up to a habitable standard was significantly higher than the proposed alternative, making it economically unviable. It was, therefore, decided to demolish the building. As the building is not listed a demolition consent was obtained under a Permitted Development Order in June 2019. There were no objections received during the 6-week challenge period post-decision, nor any other objections in the past year, prior to May 2020.

As Surrey Choices will only occupy the site on a temporary basis, modular building units will provide the main accommodation required. In addition to this modular building, SCC will also provide a polytunnel to support horticultural activities and sales, a log cabin (also for horticultural use), and 44 parking spaces. Parking will be shared with SCC staff from Consort House.

Once the community hub in Colebrook is ready, Surrey Choices will vacate Longmead, which will then be redeveloped in accordance with the RBBC local plan for housing. As part of the Colebrook development, SCC has secured a £3m grant from Homes England towards the development. The grant will be lost if Colebrook cannot be delivered within agreed timescales – the funding must be drawn down by March 2021.

On 4 June The Victorian Society informed SCC that an application has been made to Historic England to ‘spot list’ the building in Longmead. Due to the nature and circumstances – imminent demolition of the building – Historic England is fast tracking this application. This process can, however, still take several months and thus cause a significant delay to the wider Redhill development programme.

4c The consequences of this process could be:

- Significant delays for the development of Colebrook site;
- Loss of the £3m Homes England grant and of affordable housing as a direct result;
- Lack of a suitable, alternative location for Surrey Choices to relocate to within Redhill;
- No allocated funding to make the existing Longmead building habitable, with the estimated cost of reinstating the building being between £1.5m-£2.5m, given it has been vacant for a more than a decade.

SCC decided to suspend demolition works on the site when made aware that Historic England was to consider the request to list the building. Historic England held an Initial Assessment meeting on 11 June. It is understood that it is considered unlikely at this stage that the building will be taken forward to a full assessment, given it is considered to be a plain and late example of its type. Until that decision is confirmed, however, SCC will not recommence any works, and has taken steps to ensure the fabric does not deteriorate unnecessarily as a consequence of the works that have already been carried out. These works were in accordance with the Permitted Development Order and commenced prior to the notification that a request for listing had been made.

The Council's proposals for the two linked sites in the Redhill area will provide significant benefits within the locality, including maintaining an important service provided by Surrey Choices and creating affordable housing that will otherwise be undeliverable. Saving a life expired building that does not have significant architectural merit will prevent these benefits from being realised.

Mr Mel Few
Cabinet Member for Resources
23 June 2020