

Steyping Grammar School site and Brotherhood Hall **Statement by the Steyping Society May 2021**

The Steyping Society is most concerned about the future of the Steyping Grammar School site between Church Street and Fletcher's Croft. We understand that the Steyping Grammar School Foundation which owns the site is planning to sell the majority of the site to a developer, but will retain the ownership and responsibility for the Grade listed Brotherhood Hall.

Our concerns relate to the future of the Hall and the proposals for the surrounding former school site. We believe that these must be of the highest design quality and sensitive to the setting of the Brotherhood Hall and its adjacent buildings. This is the most important development proposed in the centre of Steyping for many years. It will have a major impact on the historic integrity of this medieval area and the character of the town.

We have put a number of questions to the Foundation and these are the answers from the Acting Chair of the Foundation, Richard Goodman (RG)

1. What is the timetable for bringing forward proposals for the site and the Hall?

RG's Answer: *We are still working to bring together consents from the various parties that have a formal role in the ownership of the land at Church Street. This includes The School, The Diocese, The Charity Commission, West Sussex County Council and The Department for Education. This will take some time but we would hope that such consents may be resolved during this summer. Thereafter there will be the usual planning submission which will include proposals for both the site at the rear and Brotherhood Hall.*

2. What will be the consultation arrangements with the local community?

RG's Answer: *We have already met and consulted with many local community groups. This started over a year ago and continues. Formal consultation will be a part of the formal planning process.*

3. If a developer has been chosen, what is their track record in terms of quality of design, undertaking a demolition programme and the conservation of listed buildings?

RG's Answer: *Firstly note that Brotherhood Hall, the Grade I listed property, is not part of the sale. It will be affected by the separation of the more recent buildings attached and we are currently engaging a specialist architect experienced in working on listed buildings to advise on how the rear façade might be made good and on interior remodelling. We engaged in a rigorous tender process managed by a national agency before selecting a developer to pursue. We have visited previous works of this developer.*

4. What guarantees can the Foundation give that the proposed development will be appropriate in respect of scale, density and height in its impact on the conservation area and adjoining listed buildings?

RG's Answer: *We have confidence in our choice of Developer. But we cannot be expected to offer guarantees to any particular interest group. Appropriateness and impact will obviously be scrutinised during the planning process.*

5. How is the demolition of the school buildings to be managed and accessed and is there asbestos on the site? Has the archaeological significance of the site been assessed?

RG's Answer: *Archaeological and asbestos surveys will be part of the formal planning process. Once the sale is complete these will be within the developer's remit. I would reiterate my confidence in the developer.*

6. Has the Foundation got any further ideas on the future of the Brotherhood Hall and community involvement?

RG's Answer: *We would very much hope that the school will continue to make use of Brotherhood Hall and we are discussing with Bohunt Educational Trust what use they may require. It is likely that they will want to keep at least part of Brotherhood Hall for some school use. If there remains space that is not required by the school we will be seeking other ways of utilising that resource – hence our discussions with a range of local groups.*

We have agreed with the Foundation that consultation on the proposals for the future of the Hall and adjoining site with Steyning residents and its wider community are essential. The Society will continue to engage in dialogue with the Foundation.

We have emphasised that It is essential that the best expertise and knowledge is used to ensure that the future of the Brotherhood Hall is safeguarded. We have reiterated that the supporting development must be of the highest quality so that the character and heritage of this historic centre of Steyning is not compromised but is retained and enhanced.

Steyning Society May 20121