

Redevelopment of the Crawley Town Hall Site



Proposed New Town Hall Design

Crawley Town Hall was built in 1964 and is the main administrative base for Crawley Borough Council. It was extended in 1989 to accommodate increasing numbers of staff. It is located in the centre of the town and has high levels of regular customer visits.

Over the last 5 years the numbers of staff in the building has reduced as the Council's transformation programme has enabled us to provide front line services more effectively with less staff. The layout is dated and there is a backlog of maintenance and operational issues leading to a need for significant investment. The long narrow layout of the customer service space is not ideal. The layout of the offices across the building is inefficient and could be rationalised to create much greater capacity.

In January 2015 the Council agreed that it would retain the current Town Hall building as the Council's administrative centre but commissioned a detailed feasibility and appraisal process to identify options for optimising utilisation of the complex. Architects were appointed to assist in this process and detailed consultation was carried out with staff, customers and Members of the Council.

The feasibility study identified that the building could be upgraded and the layout streamlined to allow the existing staff to be accommodated in a much smaller space. This would allow the spare space to be let to the voluntary sector or to commercial clients.

The option of co-locating with the voluntary sector was popular with the Council's administration as it would have created real synergies for teams who worked regularly with Council staff. However, the refurbishment work required was extensive. Different options were drawn up and costed by the end of 2015 but all of these were costed at almost 11m.

At that stage an exciting alternative proposal was identified to potentially allow the Council to move to a new Town Hall at a lower cost than the refurbishment option. Westrock are a development company who own a site adjacent to the Town Hall that is currently under development. They proposed a development of the car park on their site along with the Town Hall site that would create

250 homes in three blocks and a new Town Hall, with Grade A commercial offices above. The development could also accommodate a district heat network. This is a requirement of the Council's local plan and is also a significant element of our plans to decrease our carbon footprint. It would also ensure that the new Town Hall building met the excellent standard for BREEAM.

During 2016 work began to develop this proposal and approval was sought and given in 2017 by Cabinet and Full Council. Whilst it is a complex and challenging project to take forward, it is a fantastic opportunity for the Council to create a new and fit for purpose Town Hall on a much smaller footprint. The building will provide flexible and open working space, a new and improved customer service environment and a new civic suite of meeting rooms. The potential for further affordable housing in the Town Centre and a district heat network are key commitments for the Council administration and fit well with the wider regeneration plans for the area.

There will be some upheaval for staff during the development of a new Town Hall. Part of the existing building will be demolished and some staff will be relocated elsewhere in the building. Plans are underway to prepare for the move to a new building. This includes moving all remaining paper filing systems to electronic storage to assist with the transition and a continuing programme of communication and consultation with staff to make the final move as smooth as possible.

The first phase of decanting staff into a section of the old building has been completed and the planning application will be considered on 13 March 2018.