

# The Old Gaol Development Information Pack



For an explanation of the development works please see page 3.

## **New Life in Old Gaol**

Abingdon developer Cranbourne Homes has been chosen by the Vale of White Horse District Council to transform and revive the Old Gaol site in Abingdon.

The deal not only opens the site up to the public with plans for cafes and shops on the ground floor and unprecedented access to the riverside gardens, but also includes provision for 24 affordable homes at two other sites in the town and space at the Old Gaol site for the Abingdon Bridge youth support project, which currently occupies the site.

The Old Gaol site will include 61 homes with underground parking provision, five to six shops and restaurants and an on-site manager. The scheme incorporates sustainable features including solar power, grey water recycling and “green” roofs.

Cranbourne Homes is owned and run by father and son team Mick and Shaun Dominic. They already own Twickenham House in East St Helen Street, which is next to the Old Gaol, and plan to redevelop the entire site to allow public access from East St Helen Street right through to the riverside gardens.

# **Old Gaol Information**

## **1. The Old Gaol**

The ground floor will have restaurants, cafes/bars with open access to members of the public and to the riverside garden. The developer wishes to have information about the history of the site in this space and would welcome help from the Town Council and community groups with this.

The upper floors of the Old Gaol building will be converted into ten apartments.

## **2. Riverside Garden**

Unprecedented access to the riverside garden will be guaranteed for the public. A pedestrian route along the riverside from Bridge Street will be opened up and an open route from the courtyard directly into the garden will also be created. These two access routes will not require people to enter any of the commercial premises in order to use the garden. For community safety reasons these routes will only be open during daylight hours.

It will be possible for members of the public to access the garden through the Old Gaol facilities during their opening hours.

Members of the public will also be able to walk around the back of the Old Gaol (between it and the new apartments) to access the garden during daylight hours except on Sundays and bank holidays.

The developers have also hope that the Riverside Gardens can become a setting for open air events and concerts.

## **3. Bridge Street and Bridge View**

The ground floors of existing buildings will be converted for commercial uses (such as shops) and the upper floors into five residential units.

## **4. The Old Police Station**

The Police Station Annex which links the Police Station to 25 Bridge Street will be demolished to give improved vehicular access to the site and to open a new view of the Gaol from Bridge Street.

The original Old Police Station will be converted to provide community space in part of the ground floor which will be offered to the Abingdon Bridge Project and the remainder of the building converted into three apartments.

## **5. Turnagain Lane (and access)**

Discussions will be held with the residents of Turnagain Lane to see whether they would wish to convert the road into a pedestrian street and access their properties through the new vehicular access.

## **6. Twickenham House**

Because Cranbourne Homes acquired Twickenham House last year the Old Gaol site will be developed alongside the company's proposals for Twickenham House. A new public footpath will be created from East St Helens Street to the Old Gaol site through the grounds of Twickenham House, and this will be available at least during daylight hours. This proposal means that for the very first time it will be possible to walk from the town centre to the Old Gaol without needing to go along Bridge Street.

## **7. New Apartments**

The sports halls added to the Old Gaol in the 1970s will be demolished to make way for 43 new apartments. These will be built along and over the boundary with Twickenham House grounds. The apartments will share the private gardens currently of Twickenham House. These new build apartments will be built to high standards of construction, materials, sustainability and technology including for example green roofs, photovoltaic panels and timber frames.

## **8. Parking**

69 parking spaces will be provided in an underground car park which means that every apartment will have at least one space.

## **9. Management**

There will be a permanent manager based on site.

## **10. Affordable Housing**

As part of the scheme there will be 24 affordable housing units elsewhere in the town. Ten of these will be provided at the Former Ambulance Station with the remaining 14 on Harcourt Way.

## The Old Gaol - Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why not more community or cultural space like a theatre or cinema?**

In 2004 the Council commissioned a report about the possibility of using the Old Gaol for community purposes like a theatre, cinema, library and museum. The conclusion was that it was unaffordable – requiring £20million to develop the scheme and around £500,000 year subsidy. The report also concluded that grant funding would not be available and it was unlikely a commercial cinema operator would be interested in Abingdon. Such a use is just not viable. Cranbourne's scheme does include good community access and space for the Abingdon Bridge youth support scheme. There is also the possibility of open air concerts and events in the summer.

### **Why Cranbourne?**

Quite simply because they had the best scheme. They had done their homework and worked with planners and English Heritage to make sure their plans were appropriate. Their scheme also had the most to offer in terms of public access, affordable housing, "green" construction and road access.

### **When does work start and when will it be complete?**

Work could start before the end of the year but depends on the planning process. Once started it is expected to take about two to three years until it is complete.

### **What restaurants and shops?**

These have not been confirmed.

### **Why homes and not hotels?**

There were four bids, two centred on hotel use and two on residential. The Council had no strong feelings either way, but Cranbourne's scheme was the best overall.

### **What style of design will it be?**

The Old Gaol will preserve its features and the additional housing will be in a modern style including sustainable energy features like "green" roofs, solar panels and grey water recycling .

### **Why has the Council been so secretive?**

We needed to be sure we secured the best deal for the Vale and we believe this is what we have achieved. No other commercial property deal would be conducted in public.

### **How will this raise Abingdon's profile?**

We hope the introduction of shops and cafes in such a beautiful riverside setting will attract people. The river has a high volume of tourists in the summer and a development like this should draw them into the town. This is

like a new start for Abingdon, and combined with the refurbishment of the Bury Street area should improve the town centre and give it a new life.

**Will the Old Gaol features be preserved?**

Cranbourne has worked closely with planners and English Heritage to draw up the plans to ensure that what is being proposed is in keeping with the surroundings. Cranbourne has shown a very responsible attitude towards the building's Grade II status which is one of the reasons why they have been chosen.

**How will you mark the history of the Old Gaol?**

It is hoped it will be marked in some way in the restaurant area. Cranbourne has invested in historical research into the site and hopes to incorporate this into the public areas.

**Will this be another Oxford Castle?**

Oxford is a city with a different style and requirement. The Old Gaol project will be as stylish and exciting.

**How will we be kept informed of progress?**

Both the Council website and Cranbourne's website will be regularly updated. We will also get the press involved at relevant stages.

