

Living Berwick Q&A

September 2021

1. *Can the residential accommodation be used to provide homes for veterans?*

We are keen to work with organisations that provide homes for veterans, and have approached a number of such organisations on both sides of the border, including Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation, The Veterans Foundation, Launchpad, Housing Options Scotland, Veterans Housing Scotland, Erskine. The feedback we have received so far suggests there may not be sufficient demand in Berwick to warrant investment in this as an option, but we would certainly be supportive if a development partner wished to explore this further.

2. *How will the Parade Ground be used – will the Minden Day Parade continue?*

The Parade Ground is one of the most significant spaces within the Barracks and one of the most important public open air spaces within Berwick, maintaining its availability for the Minden Day Parade and other local festivals is central to our vision. We also want to invest in order to allow this space to be used more frequently throughout the year via a wider public programme which may include outdoor music, theatre and cinema, site specific work, workshops, heritage events, new lighting and sound displays.

3. *Can the profits from the residential element be channelled back into the Barracks or will they go to EH to use elsewhere or to the developer?*

Any profits made by English Heritage and the members of the Berwick Barracks Partnership will stay in Berwick. English Heritage currently invests around £250,000 across Berwick each year in order to maintain the heritage in our care in the town - including Berwick Barracks and Main Guard, the Ramparts and the castle ruins - with only limited opportunities to raise funds through ticket sales, retail income and rents at the Barracks site which amount to around £80,000 a year.

More significant conservation work will be required to these structures within the next ten years, which will cost over £2million. As these figures demonstrate, the current model of operations on the site is simply not sustainable. English Heritage does not currently have the capital to invest in the development of the Barracks but is committed to working with Northumberland County Council and our partners in Berwick to raise funds and deliver this vision.

English Heritage will be looking for a development partner willing to take on the parts of the site allocated for residential development on a long lease, and of course the proceeds from the sale of that lease will be invested in other parts of the site. However, as we cannot fund the residential part of the project ourselves any developer would need to take on a significant amount of risk to undertake the works, and in return we do understand that they would seek to make a profit from their investment. It is possible we may find an 'Angel Investor' who would be willing to make an additional contribution to the creation of the cultural offer as part of their investment in the site, and obviously we will be exploring this.

English Heritage became a charity in 2015, charged with generating its own funding independent of Government. You can read about our financial performance, structure and governance in our [Annual Report](#).

4. *Can we stop people buying accommodation as second homes or using it as Air B&B?*

This will be discussed with Northumberland County Council as we develop the full Planning application for the site.

5. *Can there be commercial uses on the ground floor so the public can access them from the Parade Ground (e.g. retail space and meeting rooms)?*

The scheme includes a retail outlet, gift shop, café/restaurant and an education space all at ground level which the public will be able to access from the Parade Ground. A new public entrance is being created to the left of the main archway to enable 24/7 access to the Gymnasium during the first phase of works in 2022 – allowing the gallery space to be used in the evenings and for 12 months of the year for exhibitions and events. In addition, the proposed glass link-building between the Gymnasium and the East Barrack Block will create more space that can be accessible when the main museum is closed.

We have consulted with Historic England on this matter, and they do not want to see any changes that will impact on the principle elevations around the Parade Ground, in order to preserve the original look of these Grade I listed buildings. We do not want to have shop-fronts opening onto the Parade Ground, turning it more into a plaza, as this will change the character of the space. There is no shortage of retail space in Berwick and Historic England would prefer to see investment in the existing historic retail frontages in the town.

6. *Will the square be open to the public 24/7?*

The vision is to make greater use of the Parade Ground for activities, installations and events, but this will need to be balanced against the needs of residents and tenants. We are not yet clear whether the Parade Ground would be open 24 hours a day, and obviously the security of both the museum collections and the residents will need to be taken into account.

7. *What can be done to improve the site for wildlife?*

As part of any building project wildlife surveys have to be undertaken to ensure wildlife is protected, and environmental sustainability will be a criterion in selecting contractors and our development partner. The Maltings (Berwick) Trust are keen to work with EH and other community partners on a long term project to restore and renew the enclosed Tennis Court / Garden to the south of the site, with care for wildlife as a key outcome.

8. *How can you make it work for the residents and the visitors? How will you ensure residents are not disturbed by visitors and events in Parade Square, and how will you make sure residents don't cause problems?*

As part of the planning application certain details will need to be approved – such as how waste disposal and issues around noise, lighting and parking will be managed. Within the terms of any leases English Heritage will also agree management restrictions and ways of working. We will be looking for a development partner who sees the cultural offer as being a selling point for the residential accommodation, and will be following established precedents set at other similar developments, such as New Lanark and Chatham Historic Dockyard. Our aim will be to make it work well for everyone.

9. *Will there be enough car parking?*

Parking provision for 28 cars is included within the current designs (at the rear of the site and behind the Clock Block). As part of the wider redevelopment of the site we also will be seeking to encourage non-vehicular access and reduce traffic.

10. *Is too much of the site being given over to residential use?*

Currently less than two-thirds of the space within the Barracks is occupied; our plan aims to create a vibrant and mixed public occupancy for the barracks which will bring every part of the site back into use through a combination of residential, cultural, heritage, creative industries and commercial use. Whilst it is true that just over half of the internal space would be residential if this scheme was delivered as proposed, the vision also helps to bring external spaces including the Parade Ground into more regular use for cultural activities. Creating a holistic plan for the site that enables it to be financially sustainable is the best way to safeguard the cultural and community space which is central to this vision for the Barracks.

11. *How did you research and model the final recommendation for residential (ie what was explored and then discounted)?*

We commissioned research from a team of specialists who have undertaken a full business options appraisal of the site. They took into account the resident and tourist markets in Berwick and the local creative industries and arts and crafts scene, and also undertook assessments of local visitor attractions, accommodation, food & drink, retail, events, venue hire, creative workspaces, housing and social housing.

This work included a full appraisal for converting the space into an hotel or self-catering accommodation, but neither of these options seemed to be viable.

We also looked further afield at a number of success stories at similar sites in the UK and Europe, including;

- The Piece Hall, Halifax
- Chatham Historic Dockyard
- Leigh Spinners Mill, Lancashire
- Holmes Mill, Clitheroe

- Portsmouth Historic Dockyard
- Suomenlinna World Heritage Site, Helsinki
- Staveley Mill Yard, Kendal
- New Lanark World Heritage Site, Scotland
- Saltaire World Heritage Site, Yorkshire
- Custom Lane, Edinburgh
- Somerset House, London
- National Museum of Ireland – Decorative Arts and History, at Collins Barracks
- Kenwood House, London

12. Will the proposed cultural offer be financially sustainable?

We commissioned research from a team of specialists, who undertook a full business options appraisal and considered the finances of the current partners based at the Barracks. They proposed a new operating model which they believe will help sustain the site and those partners into the future.

Improvements to gallery and exhibition space will make a visit more appealing to visitors and developing artist studios and flexible link space will help provide a new, if modest, income for the Barracks; and the redevelopment will provide other opportunities to streamline operations and reduce running costs.

The new Museum & Gallery in the East Barrack Block will provide 719 square metres of gallery and flexible exhibition space over three floors, with lift access to all floors, in addition to the Gymnasium Gallery space. The technical infrastructure will be upgraded to enable a more ambitious programme of permanent and temporary displays, dramatically enhancing its status and appeal for visitors.

The new link building between the Barrack Block and the Gymnasium will provide a space with additional height, enabling the display of larger items, and allowing the area to be programmed for a variety of uses, significantly increasing the flexibility of the Barracks for a range of cultural activities.

Providing physical access to every floor and enhanced public facilities, including a catering offer, will further increase the site's appeal for residents and tourists alike – it will become a must see attraction for North Northumberland - leading to an increase in visitor numbers and income. Offices, artist studios and accommodation, and the flexible link space will further offer new income streams and retail opportunities.

Selling a lease on the West Barracks and Clock Block will help to reduce the on-going maintenance liabilities on these buildings for English Heritage, although they will still remain responsible for the remainder of the Barracks, the Berwick Ramparts and Castle.

13. Will the Barracks include the Burrell Collection?

We worked with Museum's Northumberland and Northumberland County Council to develop these plans and commissioned the [National Conservation Service](#) to undertake a review of the collections and archives of all partners to ensure that the new proposals could accommodate all the current collections, and improve their care, storage and display. We believe the fully accessible, high specification infrastructure, contemporary specialist design, enhanced educational resources and increased gallery space provides an unrivalled permanent home for the Berwick Burrell Collection, showcasing its range, scale and status in the heart of Berwick in a way that has not been possible previously. Furthermore, its co-location in a vibrant cultural hub with a wide-ranging year round public offer will trigger a new dynamism in the Collection and its interpretation - and more practically guarantee an evolving series of opportunities to re-interpret and re-engage with the Collection over time for residents, children and young people, contemporary artists and makers, visitors, curators, academics and the wider heritage and visual arts sectors.

14. Will the site still be home to the KOSB?

Yes. The KOSB is one of the key partners working to develop the new vision and they will retain their base at the Barracks. The KOSB museum will be renewed and the collection will be showcased as part of the enhanced museum, enabling more of their most precious items to be displayed for the first time. The KOSB archives will be stored on site in improved and far more fitting conditions than is currently possible, and a new family and regimental research centre will be established in the East Barracks for people wishing to look into the history of the KOSB or their family connections with it in the area.

15. Why isn't the vision more ambitious, providing Berwick with a larger museum and visitor attraction?

We believe that the proposed vision represents an achievable, accessible and ambitious 21st century vision for the Barracks and for Berwick, creating larger museum and gallery spaces that will enable a fuller story of Berwick and the eastern Borders to be told, alongside new support initiatives for the creative industries, contemporary arts and crafts, and the wider cultural sector.

Our starting point was to consider the viability of a visitor attraction and archives facility that occupied all the spaces within the site. The market appraisal and visitor modelling undertaken by our specialist partners established that we would not be able to attract visitors in sufficient numbers to sustain an attraction of this scale; the surrounding population is too small and the marketing cost of competing to attract regular visits from the large conurbations of Edinburgh and Newcastle would be unaffordable. The Barracks site currently attracts around 11,000 visitors. Without a credible financial model for significantly increasing these numbers we cannot make a compelling case for generating the required return against the high level of public investment that would be required to deliver a larger visitor scheme.

16. Will the vision provide space for amateur artists and people who want to do art activity for fun or relaxation, as well as for professional artists?

We're aware that there are only a limited number of spaces in Berwick that are adequately equipped for practical art classes for amateurs, and it's entirely possible that this could be a feature of, for instance, the fit out of the new education spaces at the Barracks – as part of both the Gymnasium Gallery development and the East Block.

17. How will the current fragmented management structure be resolved? Who will run it?

All the work undertaken on the project so far has underlined the importance of one organisation having overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of the visitor offer at the Barracks once the capital development is completed; the consultant's recommendation was that one of the existing partners should take on this role. The partners are actively addressing the question of how precisely that day to day management role is best undertaken.

18. Will the community be able to be involved in running the creative arm of the project?

There will be a well-resourced engagement plan to encourage local participation and involvement with the project as it develops – this is likely to be a fundamental requirement of any bid for public funding. A cornerstone of our thinking to date has been to maximise the appeal of the site for the broadest possible cross section of the resident and visitor population. Partners' existing community contacts and volunteer networks will be consulted on and involved in the long term programme development – this is a site that will work with and for Berwick, and stake its future success on operating at the heart of the local and regional community.

19. How will interpretation in the museum be tailored to people with disability (not just physical access)?

Ensuring that the new displays and the site itself are accessible to, and inclusive of, as broad a range of people as possible – and their specific needs, experience and perspectives - will be an essential part of the brief for all new designs and interpretation strategies. English Heritage has a Visitor Access Manager who will be providing specialist advice to support this objective. The partners want to ensure that local equalities groups are fully involved and heard as plans are developed.

20. Will the archives be free to access? Generally, where will the pay point be? Will there be a free pass for Berwick residents? Will existing Friends (of Archives/Barracks) still get free access?

The paypoint will be inside the entrance to the Museum & Gallery space; this is inside the entrance to 'O Block' which is the current entrance into the KOSB Museum, making the Parade Ground space free for all. Full consideration will be given to a meaningful pricing policy for the Museum & Gallery (including discounts/incentives/loyalty schemes) in due course. Access to the archives will be free for all, as it is now.

21. What's the potential for factoring in a wet weather destination, somewhere to pass the time for families – sadly lacking in Berwick? What's being done for children - will there be family / child friendly spaces?

There will be more space available for public use in the new scheme than we currently have at the Barracks, presenting opportunities for us to programme family activities at weekends and during school holidays. Within the vision we hope to create a link building between the East Block and Gymnasium Gallery, which will provide a wonderfully light and airy space for events, activities and temporary exhibitions. Making as much of the site as family-friendly as possible will be a key selling point for the site in the long term, so it's something we will factor into our planning and programming from the start.

22. Could the old tennis courts be used as a community garden- a place for relaxation, learning and for growing produce?

We would like to see the old tennis court area coming back into use as a garden space with seasonal art installations. It is within the Scheduled Monument area and this will likely restrict any digging, say for planting trees, and temporary art installations may require Scheduled Monument Consent and would need to be free standing. Many other gardens fall within Scheduled Monuments it just requires the correct and well thought out approach.

23. Will the museum element tell the rich and dramatic story of Berwick itself?

Yes, this is something we are keen to do – building on the narrative already available on site.

24. How will we keep a glass ceiling clean?

A wide gutter/walkway would be designed in between the solid pitched roof and glass roof with a mansafe fall arrest system to allow operatives to walk along and maintain and clean the roofs. Also as its single storey it would be relatively easy to clean from a cherry picker / MEWP from either end with a cleaning pole - the total length of roof is 36m and a maximum cleaning pole is 24m (18m either end).

25. Why isn't the site better promoted currently, more eye-catching signage on the street, etc etc?

Currently, each partner is responsible for their own marketing activity and with limited budgets the most cost-effective marketing is done on-line. English Heritage also promotes the site to their one million members through their handbook, and this will continue. Having a single organisation take responsibility for repositioning and marketing all the different strands of Barracks activity under a single collective identity (on street, online, in the media and in print - regionally and nationally), is one of the many benefits and efficiencies of moving to a single management organisation once the capital development is complete. With a redeveloped site we will have so much more we want to tell the world about, and we hope that improved street signage can be delivered as part of the wider project.

26. *Timescale, when will it all happen?*

The complete vision may take as much as ten years to reach fruition, delivered, depending on how quickly funds can be raised and a partner found. However, some parts of the project will be delivered much sooner and the first phase of work to develop the Gymnasium Gallery and Mob Store space is currently scheduled to start in Summer 2022.

27. *Will local firms be able to undertake the construction and repair work?*

As a public sector organisation we are legally obliged to offer contracts via a competitive tendering process based on value for money offered where bids are evaluated against both cost and quality criteria. Whilst this does not allow us to show favouritism to particular suppliers, we are aware of a number of local firms who offer great value for money, and we really hope local firms will tender to undertake works at the Barracks.

28. *What level of noise and disruption will it cause?*

We don't know at this stage but clearly where practicable we will make every effort to keep noise and disruption to a minimum. The most disruptive element of the project will need to be done whether or not this project goes ahead. The gutters and drains on all the Barracks buildings need to be enlarged to cope with the heavy rainfall we now get which is leading to leaks inside the buildings, and there is rising damp in most blocks which also needs to be addressed.