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Appendix B

Forest Centre Business Plan Consultants Brief

Thames Chase Trust Brief:

Business Plan Preparation

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1. Summary

The aim of this project brief is to clarify for potential consultants, the work required in order to develop a business plan for the Thames Chase Trust based on the current proposal that the Thames Chase Trust should acquire the Visitors Centre and its ancillary buildings and the offices based at Broadfields Farm (hereafter referred to as the Forest Centre).

The business plan will focus on the 'commercial activities' undertaken by the Thames Chase Trust at the Forest Centre.

The purpose of the business plan is to demonstrate financial sustainability with a medium to low risk profile. Any profits generated from the commercial activities will be used to fund activities associated with the Thames Chase Community Forest. The business plan will not focus on the non-commercial activities undertaken by the Thames Chase Trust except in so far as such activities might have an impact on the financial viability of the Forest Centre. It is proposed that the development of the work is undertaken in 3 stages to ensure close working relationships with a steering group and other key stakeholders. The first stage will develop the initial options for consideration, stage 2 will evaluate those options and set out the final agreed options, and stage 3 will develop an implementation plan. How each stage is managed will be by agreement between the Thames Chase Trust and the consultant.

The total budget available for this work is £15,000 plus VAT. It is envisaged that this process will take 12 weeks.

All costs for the preparation and submission shall be borne by the consultant. All materials produced in fulfilment of this contract shall remain the property of the Thames Chase Trust.

2. Purpose

The Thames Chase Trust wishes to prepare a business plan to identify the financial viability and benefits/disbenefits of acquiring all or part of the Forest Centre. The business plan will focus on generating a profit from the utilisation of the assets at the Forest Centre.

2.1. Background

Thames Chase Community Forest (Thames Chase) is one England's 12 community forests set up in 1990 by the then Countryside Agency. Thames Chase is located to the east of London and south west of Essex. It covers the local authority areas of Thurrock, Brentwood, Havering and Barking and Dagenham. The overarching aim of Thames Chase is to increase the quantity of woodland to 30% of the landmass, while enhancing the natural environment and increasing biodiversity. This is to be achieved through a partnership of local authorities, national government and other agencies, and by working with local people. The ongoing outputs of Thames Chase also include increasing and improving access to green spaces, involving local people in environmental management (through, for example, education and volunteering) and aiding sustainable regeneration. In recent years and with the current government's agenda emphasis localism and the Big Society,

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Thames Chase is in an ideal position to be at the forefront of delivering social and environmental benefits. However, this comes at a cost and at a time when local and national government budgets are being dramatically cut. Therefore the economic sustainability of Thames Chase has become a significant issue for consideration.

2.2. Leadership and Funding

The management of both Thames Chase, the landscape regeneration project, and of the Forest Centre has recently undergone a transition process from control by a joint committee of local councillors to management by the board of Trustees of a charitable company limited by guarantee.

Funding previously came primarily from local government, but with increasing pressure on government budgets, income from this source has reduced. Some continuation of this funding stream is being agreed, but at a much reduced rate and only for the landscape regeneration project. Therefore in the future Thames Chase will have to place much greater emphasis on seeking new funding and income streams, in particular for the operation of the Forest Centre.

2.3. Assets

Thames Chase has recently been given the opportunity to acquire several key assets. These assets are currently owned by Essex County Council (ECC), a funding partner in Thames Chase. ECC have offered a peppercorn rent for all the assets with the exception of the office complex, which is offered for purchase. These assets consist of: the Visitors Centre, the car park, the storage barn, the 17th century barn and stables, the education room and the office complex – known collectively as the Forest Centre. It is close to Upminster (though transport links could be improved) and surrounded by 50 ha of green space leased and managed by the Forestry Commission. The Forest Centre is managed by a group of dedicated volunteers (with the exception of the café as noted above). The Visitor Centre itself and the play area were funded by charitable bodies, though no significant restrictions apply (other than their continued use for community benefit).

2.3.1. The Visitors Centre

Built in 2006 (and rebuilt in 2010 after a fire), the Visitors Centre is an iconic modern building. It currently offers a 40 cover (plus some outdoor space) café, that is managed by a third party through an annual concession, and a small gift shop. An area of the floor space is dedicated to providing information for visitors. There is a small conference room (circa 8 people max), and there is a free to use play area for children located outside.

2.3.2. Car Park

The car park serves the Forest Centre and surrounding Forestry Commission land. There is currently a charge of £1 per day to park with two pay and display machines accepting payments. On average, 12,000 cars park in the Forest Centre per annum.

2.3.3. Storage Barn

There is a large, modern storage barn that houses the woodchip store and boiler (serving the Forest Centre and office complex). The barn holds a small

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storage area for the Thames Chase volunteers, a small and dedicated team of conservation volunteers who work throughout Thames Chase. The barn is also used by Thames Chase partners for the storage of equipment relating to Thames Chase projects.

2.3.4. 17th Century Barn

The 17th Century barn houses the Forest Centre toilets at its western end (and is linked to the Forest Centre by a glass walkway). The main barn has received a level concrete floor and interior architectural lighting, but is otherwise unimproved. It has been used for several indoor/outdoor events, such as a farmers market and as an events venue.

2.3.5. Education Room

The education room is former cart lodge which has been developed to accommodate a range of indoor activities. There is a carpeted floor, storage heaters and ample lighting. The room has been regularly used for educational events, birthday parties and meetings (though the décor and furniture has been focused on a younger audience). The education room has a storage area to the north along with a small kitchenette that can be used to prepare hot drinks.

2.3.6. Office Complex

The office complex includes 4 offices (with subdivision possible) ranging from 3 to 5 people per office, toilet and shower facilities, kitchenette and a large hallway. The offices are split between the ground and first floor (with stairs, but no lift). Currently one office is leased to the Forestry Commission (a long term partner of Thames Chase), the other offices are empty.

2.4. Resources

The Thames Chase Trust has very few resources that can be called upon to assist in delivering business activities. The Trustees are volunteers with experience in overseeing similar projects, and commit varying amounts of time to the project. Equally stakeholders and partners can be called upon for advice and support, but are unlikely to commit significant financial resources to the running of the Forest Centre. The Thames Chase Trust, as a result of the acquisition of funding currently being agreed with the local authorities, with the Forestry Commission acting as its agent, will be delivering landscape regeneration projects within the boundaries of the Thames Chase Community Forest. However this funding is not intended to support the activities of the Trust at the Forest Centre. Therefore any resources required in the implementation of the business plan must be additional and accounted for.

3. Business Planning

3.1. Objective

The purpose of the business plan is to demonstrate that a financially sustainable business model can be developed to support the acquisition of the assets at the Forest Centre and if achievable, to guide the Thames Chase

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Trust in developing and delivering the income streams, to support its wider social and environmental goals.

3.2. Scope

The business plan will focus solely on the commercial activities that the Thames Chase Trust will undertake at the Forest Centre. The business plan will not encompass the costs and activities associated with the delivery of activities in the wider Community Forest, currently being agreed between the Trust and three Local Authorities. The business plan must therefore, as a minimum, show cost neutrality, but hopefully demonstrate that a profit can be generated to assist in funding the Trust's non-commercial activities both at the Forest Centre and within the wider Community Forest boundaries.

The focus of the business plan will be the acquisition of the Forest Centre and office complex, and the opportunities it creates. Additional profitable activities that do not rely on the Forest Centre are to be welcomed, but are likely to be outside the scope of this business planning exercise.

3.3. Risk Profile

The Thames Chase Trust believes that the most suitable risk profile is low to medium risk. The Trust does not wish to jeopardise the continued delivery of social and environmental (non-commercial) benefits.

3.4. Business Plan Audience

The business plan will deliver to two key audiences:

- a) The Thames Chase partners (specifically the local authorities) in order to demonstrate the project is worthy of their support, and
- b) Should any investment (loan or charitable funding) be required to deliver the business plan, the business plan must provide sufficient evidence to support that investment.

3.5. Contents

The contents of the business plan must include:

- Proposed Business Activities
- Competitor Analysis
- Assets and Liabilities
- Financial Forecasts
- Marketing and Sales Plan
- Skills and Resources
- Implementation Plan

4. Contract Delivery

4.1. Stage 1 – Research and Initial Options

The consultants will need to undertake research into the background to the Forest Centre, the past experiences of commercial operation, seek an understanding of the offer of Thames Chase and to understanding of the local sector(s) served by similar facilities. The research will also will need show

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evidence that the views of stakeholders and partners such as the London Borough of Havering, Thurrock Council, and the Friends of Thames Chase, the Forestry Commission and Essex County Council, as current owners of the complex and a funding partner, as well as those of the Trustees of the Thames Chase Trust, have been taken into account.

Based on this research, the consultants will present a number of outline options for the Forest Centre. In developing the options, the study will need to have regard to both the social, environmental and commercial imperatives which have driven the operation of the Forest Centre up until now as well as exploring what the Forest Centre could deliver in the future.

The output from stage 1 will be a set of options that have been agreed as worthy of further research.

4.2. Stage 2 - Evaluation of Options

Following consultation with the steering group, and the completion of any further market research required, the consultants will consider the business case for each of the preferred options. This information, along with the consultants' views, will be presented to the steering group. The project team, guided by the consultants, will then agree which activities will and will not be taken forward in the business plan.

The output from stage 2 will be an agreed final business plan.

4.3. Stage 3 - Implementation Plan

The Thames Chase Trust will require a detailed implementation plan setting out what needs to be undertaken to achieve the business plan. Such an action plan will need to take account of both the material and financial resources that will be required to ensure a sustainable future for the Forest Centre.

The output for this stage will be an agreed implementation plan.

4.4. Project Delivery

The Thames Chase Trust will oversee the delivery of this project. The Trust will set up a steering group to work with and assist the consultants.

The following joint meetings should be considered as a minimum by the consultants (additional meetings can be requested by the consultants to assist in the delivery of the project):

- a) Inception and briefing meeting
- b) Research meeting (led by consultants)
- c) Stage 1 presentation and agreement of initial options and briefing for stage 2
- d) Stage 2 presentation and agreement of business plan
- e) Stage 3 presentation and agreement, and project sign off

Regular liaison between the consultants and the Chairman of the Trustees should be anticipated throughout the entire project.

Research meetings with individual members of the steering group will be required. Similarly, research meetings with partner organisations may be beneficial to the project. The consultants should allow for this.

The overall timescale for this contract is 12 weeks. In any case, all works must be completed and invoiced prior to the 31st March 2012 as the funding for the business plan will not be carried beyond this date.

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4.5. Deliverables

The deliverables will include:

- Five bound hard copies of the entire business plan
- Digital (pdf) version of the entire business plan on a memory stick or CD ROM
- Digital (pdf) version of a summary business plan that does not contain any commercially or politically sensitive data (for example excluding detailed competitor analysis and detailed financial projections) to be used as a public facing document.

The main business plan must be a comprehensive, well researched and detailed document, meeting the needs of any commercially focused business plan (including seeking investment).

The summary business plan must be a commercially desensitised, public facing document that can be used to discuss general objectives, direction, top level financial and non-financial targets. Both documents must be concise and easy to read.

The main business plan and all work and communications used in its preparation should be clearly marked "Commercial Confidential".

5. Submission Requirements

5.1. Expression of interest

Consultants wishing to prepare a submission for this tender are advised to express an interest by emailing ann@bartleet.demon.co.uk no later than 15th July 2011 to ensure that any project brief updates or clarifications are received prior to submission.

5.2. Written Submission

Submissions must include the following details:

- a) Statement of what you believe the Thames Chase Trust is looking for from the business plan and the business planning process (max 500 words).
- b) Statement of your relevant experience in working with or on a project of this type and scale. It should also demonstrate your ability to work with the client, and Key Stakeholders to meet the overall objectives (max 1,000 words).
- c) Method statement of how each stage is to be delivered (max 500 words per stage).
- d) The budget allocated to each stage. These fees must include all disbursements, costs for drafts, final documentation and presentation material for consultation purposes.
- e) A draft programme, including an overall project timetable, which covers the tasks set out in the brief. This should include details of the lead-in time from appointment date to start of work and the completion date.
- f) A statement of any involvement and potential conflict of interest between this project and any other associated projects.
- g) The CV for each of the proposed project team members and details of the consultant's project manager.
- h) The following policies (or statement where you do not have a policy):

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- i) A clear commitment that your organisation abides by the principles of equality and diversity. A copy of a statement/policy should be included with the proposal.
- ii) Health and Safety Policy
- iii) Environmental policy
- i) A copy of your public and employer liability and professional indemnity insurance.
- j) A list of three clients for whom you have recently carried out similar work for. Please detail the value and nature of the work you have delivered (max 150 words each) and provide a contact in each instance.
- k) Should the consultant identify that the project can be delivered for a lower value than the identified £15,000, a statement of how the remaining sums could be spent to add value to the project should be included. This will be subject to approval by the Trust and will not be a condition of the submission. The total value should not exceed £15,000 plus VAT.

5.3. Submissions

Submissions should be sent to:

**Business Plan Procurement
The Thames Chase Trust
The Forest Centre
Pike Lane
Cranham
Upminster
RM14 3NS**

No marking (including franking marks) that could identify the consultant should be placed on the envelope.

The deadline for submission is **25th July 2011 at 12 noon**. Any submissions received after this date may be rejected without being considered.

Submissions must consist of 3 hard copies and one digital (pdf) copy on CD ROM or flash drive.

Consultants may be invited for an interview by a panel selected from the steering group. If required, the meeting will be arranged for within 2 weeks of the deadline.

Please note that:

- The Trust will not be bound by this brief to enter into a contract with any Consultants submitting a proposal.
- The Trust is not bound to accept the lowest price.
- The costs of preparation and delivery of the submission shall be borne by the consultant.

5.4. Project Team

The consultant's project team will comprise several disciplines, either from within a multi-disciplinary bidder organisation, or as a formally constituted group under an agreed lead organisation.

The team should be able to cover the following disciplines:

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Essential	Desirable
Business planning	Experience of green space development
Marketing, PR and communications	Working in the commercial visitor sector
Business risk analysis	Experience of working with large regeneration projects/programmes
Market research	Working with charitable / not for profit organisations
Destination planning and marketing	Consultation

5.5. Budget

There is a maximum budget of up to £15,000 plus VAT for this commission. This includes all disbursements, costs for drafts, final documentation and presentation material for consultation purposes. Additional funding is not available; £15,000 represents a maximum figure. Consultancies pricing the work at less than £15,000 will be looked upon favourably.

5.6. Clarification Process

Any consultant requiring clarification should contact the Trust by emailing Ann Bartleet (Chairman of the Trustees) at ann@bartleet.demon.co.uk or by post. All clarifications must be received no later than 15th July 2011.

5.7. Selection Criteria

The team selected will need to demonstrate an understanding of both the project and the goals of the partners as well as experience in the development of similar business plans.

Selection will be based upon the responses provided to the tasks described above. The selection panel alone will be responsible for defining criteria weightings against which a decision will be made.

Selection will be based on the following criteria:

- Technical ability, experience and programme 50%
- Understanding of aims and objectives of the Thames Chase Trust 20%
- Flair and innovation 20%
- Cost 10%

6. Submission Obligations

6.1. Intellectual Property

All information provided for the purpose of the study shall remain in the ownership of Thames Chase Trust. Correspondence, reports, illustrations and base information from which reports are compiled will become the property of the Trust and will be provided with the final report documentation. Copyright of the final documentation will be owned by the Thames Chase Trust.

6.2. Canvassing

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Any consultancy who directly or indirectly canvasses any officer, member, employee, or agent of the Trust or its members or any of its officers or members concerning the project brief will be disqualified.

6.3. Disclaimers

Whilst the information in this project brief has been prepared in good faith, it does not purport to be comprehensive nor has it been independently verified.

Neither the Trust nor their advisors, nor their respective directors, officers, members, partners, employees, other staff or agents:

- a) makes any representation or warranty (express or implied) as to the accuracy, reasonableness or completeness of the project brief; or
- b) accepts any responsibility for the information contained in the project brief or for the fairness, accuracy or completeness of that information, nor shall any of them be liable for any loss or damage (other than in respect of fraudulent misrepresentation) arising as a result of reliance on such information or any subsequent communication.

Any persons considering making a decision to enter into contractual relationships with the Trust following receipt of the project brief should make their own investigations and their own independent assessment of the Trust and its requirements for services and should seek their own professional financial and legal advice. For the avoidance of doubt the provision of clarification or further information in relation to the project brief or any other associated documents is only authorised to be provided following a query made in accordance with section 5.6, "Clarification Process" of this project brief.

Any Framework Agreement concluded as a result of this project brief shall be governed by English law.

6.4. Collusive Behaviour

Any consultant who:

- a) fixes or adjusts the amount of its price by or in accordance with any agreement or arrangement with any other party; or
- b) communicates to any party other than the Trust the amount or approximate amount of its proposed price or information which would enable the amount or approximate amount to be calculated (except where such disclosure is made in confidence in order to obtain quotations necessary for the preparation of the submission or insurance or any necessary security); or
- c) enters into any agreement or arrangement with any other party that such other party shall refrain from providing a submission, or
- d) enters into any agreement or arrangement with any other party as to the amount of any price submitted; or
- e) offers or agrees to pay or give or does pay or give any sum or sums of money, inducement or valuable consideration directly or indirectly to any party for doing or having done or causing or having caused to be done in relation to any other submission or proposed submission, any act or omission, shall (without prejudice to any other civil remedies available to the Trust and without prejudice to any criminal liability which such conduct by a consultant may attract) be disqualified.

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6.5. Modification and Withdrawal

Consultants may modify their submission prior to the deadline by giving notice to the Trust. The modification notice must state clearly how the Trust should implement the modification. No submission may be modified subsequent to the deadline for receipt.

Consultants may withdraw their submission at any time prior to the deadline or any other time prior to accepting the offer. The notice to withdraw the submission should be in writing via post.

6.6. Right to Reject/Disqualify

The Trust reserves the right to reject or disqualify a consultant where:

- a) the consultant fails to comply fully with the requirements of this project brief or is guilty of a serious misrepresentation in supplying any information required in this document; and/or
- b) the consultant is guilty of serious misrepresentation in relation to its submission; and/or
- c) there is a change in identity, control, financial standing or other factor impacting on the selection and/or evaluation process affecting the consultant.

6.7. Right to Cancel, Clarify or Vary the Process

The Trust reserves the right to:

- a) amend the terms and conditions of the project brief,
- b) cancel the evaluation process at any stage; and/or
- c) require the consultant to clarify its submission in writing and/or provide additional information. (Failure to respond adequately may result in the consultant not being selected),