

20 February 2018 – Briefing Note re: The Old Rectory, Clifton Village

The Old Rectory was sold freehold at auction in 2004. Restrictive covenants were put in place to prevent development in the rectory grounds which extend to approximately an acre. This covenant prevents the land owner from building in the grounds unless we are compensated for the uplift in the land value.

Background

Since his purchase, the new owner has always argued that the refurbishment and redevelopment of the Old Rectory is not viable. Over the initial 10 years of ownership he did the bare minimum to keep the building wind and watertight whilst trying to find a builder to undertake a scheme within his budget or to sell the site on for profit in the open market, both without success. During that period the property fell in to disrepair as a result of botched attempts at refurbishment and vandalism. As the property is Grade II listed the Conservation Officer has been closely involved with enforcement action being threatened to bring about action. Local residents and Ward Councillors are also taking a keen interest wanting action to bring about refurbishment of this property, which is a blight on the village.

In recent years, the owner has adopted a different strategy and gained planning permission for three new detached houses to be built in the grounds of the Rectory site. This is regarded as enabling development. The rationale being that the profit from these sales would help finance the Rectory rebuild. When the Council asked for its uplift on this garden land (as per the sale covenant from 2004) the owner again argued that this would lead to lower margins and affect viability. Under considerable pressure from Council officers (primarily the Conservation officer), local residents and Ward Councillors the owner recently recruited a well-known national builder, Tomlinson Group Ltd (TGL) - who has experience of heritage and listed building developments - to refurbish the Rectory which is Grade II listed - and build out the three plots. Recent meetings between the owner, TGL and NCC officers have been positive. This has given the Conservation Officer and officers some comfort about the quality of any scheme to be delivered. TGL have also worked up, and shared with us, a detailed financial appraisal of Gross Development Value (GDV) and development costs that seems realistic.