6.1 – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What will be built on the sites?
At this stage we are requesting permission from Department for Education (DFE) to sell the land, we will only be in a position to consider what the land is used for when we have that permission and have been able to talk to potential buyers see what they might like to do.

Please note however the DFE approval is only the first step of the process any development will also need to go through planning application process in the same way as any development would it is at that point you will be able to see you specific plans and comment on them if you feel that is appropriate.

Will the college be seeking planning permission to develop the land?
Although this is not part of this stage of the process and no decision has been made on this we can say it is unlikely. The more likely scenario is that we enter into an agreement with the purchaser on a proposal they have put forward that is conditional on them receiving planning approval for their idea they would then put this forward as a planning application.

What happens next / How does the process go on from here?
This consultation period will support a submission to the DfE where we are requesting permission to sell the land identified. Any submissions we receive will be part of that and will be considered by them as part of the process. If they give permission to sell the land we will then move on to the next step which will be to identify a buyer (or buyers) for the areas identified. Any proposal of how the land will be used will then need to go through the usual legal process (such as planning permission approval).

Why is the college not selling all the land it has available to it?
We believe by selling the identified plots of land we will realise a significant capital receipt enabling us to significantly improve the building stock of the college. There are restrictions imposed on the College as to what land we can develop which have been considered in this proposal and we also believe that by developing a Community Hub in the area closest to the river we are able to provide a great area for the community to enjoy and minimise any detrimental impact on the environment and community of Totnes.

What is the future of the hockey pitch?
The intention is for the existing all weather hockey pitch, along with the ancillary services provided such as changing rooms, to continue to be used as they are currently and available to the local community. The replacement of the pitch that took place 4 years ago was partially funded by my South Hams District Council and has a community use agreement attached to it which safeguards its use. We are looking at how best to way this, and the grass area that will remain on the Elmhirst site, can be used and managed to best meet the needs of the sports clubs who use it and the wider community.

If you sell Redworth house the town will no longer have a 6th form for local students to attend

The College will retain its Sixth Form provision as part of this proposal. As you can hopefully see from the consultation document we propose moving the provision of the 6th form from Redworth House to the main college site and also provide dedicated 6th form facilities on the main site to keep the separate 'feel' of the 6th form provision – any facilities developed and used by the 6th form will also have the advantage of being developed for that purpose rather than adapted to a 6th form's use as the current building has been.

Why sell any land?

The college is in the fortunate position of owning significant land around its site that is no longer needed for educational purposes. Unfortunately, we also have building stock on the school site which is far from ideal and needs significant investment and improvement (in our most recent building survey approximately £2 million pounds of work was identified to keep the buildings functioning at their current level (i.e. not improving them at all) - this is obviously a huge investment that we are unable to fund through our normal school budget.

It is also unlikely that other funding becomes available through any 'normal' school funding source to fund this level of improvement. Therefore, the best route open to the college is to sell the surplus land and reinvest all of that receipt back into the college buildings.

Won't any receipt from the sale of land simply be absorbed into the school budget and spent on ongoing revenue costs?

Any capital receipt received from the sale of land can only be used to reinvest in capital projects on the school site such as the replacement and refurbishment of the buildings we have or on other similar resources. We are unable to use this buildings.

What impact will there be on students attending the College?

All disposals and changes proposed by schools are subject to approval by the Secretary of State to ensure that any proposals do not have a detrimental impact on the pupils, staff or College. As the majority of the disposals involve land which is not currently used for teaching students they are expected to have minimal impact whilst the receipt will bring a significant benefit by improving the teaching facilities and environment for all.

However, it is recognised that the disposal of Redworth House has the potential to impact on Sixth form students; therefore the Governing Body will ensure the disposals and proposed works are managed to minimise the impact. This means the College will ensure Sixth form students can be accommodated on the main site before Redworth House is released including the building of the new sixth form block. The disposals will be phased so that a receipt can be realised to fund the building of the new block.

Some of the land identified as surplus is leased by the College from Dartington Trust, what will happen about the lease?

The proposal is to retain the land that is currently leased – this is the area of land identified as Site G on the plans and houses the existing AWP used by local clubs.

However, the land has been identified as surplus so negotiations are ongoing with the freeholder about long term plans and management of the site. With the support and agreement of the landowner the College is looking at the possibility of a community group taking on the responsibility of the site and AWP. This is the long term aspiration but in the short term the lease will continue to be with the College.

What impact will these proposals have on the environment?
Whilst the College fully appreciates the importance of protecting the local environment, it will be the role of the Local Planning Authority and the statutory planning process that will ensure it is not adversely affected by these proposals.

Any proposed new development will need to comply with Local Planning requirements; this means any developers purchasing the parcels of land will need to undertake environmental impact assessments as deemed necessary by the local authority. This includes Ecology and Habitat Surveys, Arboricultural & tree Surveys, Flood risk Assessments and Topographical Surveys. The outcome of these assessments will be used to inform any planning decision and determine any arising planning conditions.

In addition, where necessary, South Hams District council will enter into a planning agreement with developers to secure a Section 106 financial contribution – this contribution would be used to minimise and mitigate against any arising impact.

The building works proposed by the College, the new AWP and improvements to the existing accommodation, will also be subject to planning and similar scrutiny. The College will be taking the opportunity to improve the efficiency of the building and the long term sustainability of remedial works.