**Clarification queries received and responses given**

1. We assume that the basis of the commission is to review the potential for a Conservation Area in Crewe (as one currently does not exist), define the extents of that potential area (with the relevant stakeholders) then produce a full Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (in accordance with Historic England’s and other guidance/requirements - i.e. https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-area-appraisal-designation-management-advice-note-1/ . If you could confirm that this is an accurate interpretation this would be appreciated.

ANSWER: That is correct, although it might be a consideration if there are conservation areas and heritage features of note and character for the town.

2. The sixth paragraph references a design guide, but it is not clear whether it is envisaged that the design guide is part of the commission, and if so the extents of this design guide, please could you clarify what the expectation is in this regard?

ANSWER: The provision of the management plan may provide design guides (or equivalent elements) that provide acceptable principles for developments in Crewe that impact on/could add value to building conservation

3. Could you clarify what existing information exists and whether any review of existing buildings has been undertaken to date? We are aware that the local history society and others have been active in promoting the town’s historic buildings and some consultation has (we understand) been undertaken.

ANSWER: Crewe Town Council holds a Local Heritage Asset Register which identifies buildings of possible heritage significance. Some of the register has been scored using a matrix. The intention is to use this register to highlight buildings to be nominated for Local Listing or Statutory Listing. The task is not complete and it is not possible to complete it before the conservation area tender is awarded. In addition, Crewe Town Council commissioned a Conservation Management Plan for the 50 phase 2 Railway Cottages that survive in the town. The CMP has detailed research into the significance of these buildings and touches on the wider significance of the town’s railway structures.

4. There is a minimum turnover of £250k set for applicants. We have considerable experience developing projects like this for local authorities across the UK and are currently leading projects with budgets in excess of £150k fees but would not qualify for this as our turnover is typically around £120-170k. We feel this threshold excluded SMEs and micro-entities like ourselves who would be well positioned to take on projects of this scale. Would you be willing to amend this? We can provide audited accounts and a statement from our accountants detailing our operations that demonstrate we operate projects around of this scale on a regular basis.

ANSWER: The threshold is set to ensure applicant bodies are of a scale to accommodate the mix of experience and expertise required as well as the necessary capacity to deliver a complex review of built heritage and conservation. If you have a current order book evidenced to be in excess of £250,000 we can take this as achieving the threshold.

5. Is there a maximum word count to respond to the seven quality questions? It suggests 600 words, 4200 words total in the template.

ANSWER: No maximum word count

6. Is there a particular reason why there a large number of questions to assess the quality of the bid (7), but quality it is weighted very low in terms of marking assessment 50%? We would typically expect quality to be marked around 70% (or higher), otherwise, it is our experience that the lowest fee tends to trump the quality of a good team submission. Given that there is set budget range of £50-70k, would you the council consider raising the quality benchmark to ensure quality is weighted to achieve a better outcome rather than the lowest price?

ANSWER: Qualitative assessment is more nuanced and complex than financial assessment, which requires the more detailed questions to ensure understanding of the submission. The balance of weighting is not expected to change.

7. It is assumed the quality questions are those outlined in 6.5 of the document ‘Tender Invitation’ however, ‘Appendix C – Quality Response Template’ only has one question. Do the following questions also have word counts and if so, what are they?

ANSWER: Correct. Appendix C is a template for you to insert your responses to questions. There are no word count limits

8. Can we produce the bid in our own format (whilst using the question headings)?

ANSWER: Yes, as long as it is clearly accessible and fulfils the requirements of the tender

9. If the template must be used, is it acceptable to support the tender template with other documents separately attached, such as CVs and the project programme?

ANSWER: Yes

10. The specification states *‘….to deliver consideration of design features relevant to Crewe that can be included in a design guide to protect and inform the character of Crewe and development proposals…’*. Is this intended as a separate document for the entire town or just the proposed conservation areas?

ANSWER: This is not predetermined to that extent. There are known local features that may warrant reference to design or protection (a common example that may be relevant in Crewe is the protection of traditional housing front garden walls to avoid the selective removal to accommodate informal parking spaces and potentially adversely affecting the continuity of the streetscene).

11. Could you please clarify what is meant by Q7 – Accessibility of information? Is this a question to answer how accessible the information we will be gathering will be? Would be good with a few more words on it, thank you.

ANSWER: This relates to the information supplied by tenderers within their tender submission to ensure that we as non-specialist officers can interpret the submission clearly for the purposes of comparison with other tenders in context as well as transparency of work being proposed to be included within the tender and the tender costs. Accessibility of the end product of the conservation area review and associated final documents is subject to the associated regulations of transparency, inclusion and accessibility and as such is expected to be delivered in a form that can be used for local planning policy and decision making as well as being interpreted by the end users, such as the community.

12. A query relating to Section 4, the Quality Response.  You have provided a Word template, would it be possible for us to use software to present the response in a PDF format so that we can have more flexibility with formatting and images?

ANSWER: Yes, as long as it clearly correlates to the template format

13. Is there any further elaboration on the questions themselves, from the table given in the ITT?  I note the quality template has some detailed information for Question 1 but then there is a blank template where we add in Questions 2-7 but is there any further elaboration on the question itself?

ANSWER:

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| Methodology & approach: This sets out how you would (and have in the past where relevant) take forward the project e.g. inception primary focuses; means of data gathering; understanding the setting; progressing options for consideration; evaluation of value of assets/spaces (not a requisite or exhaustive list - just as examples). |
| Contractor Team Practical Relevance (CV review): Provision of contractor project team relevant experience, capability, qualifications and suitability (not a requisite or exhaustive list - just as examples). |
| Projected Timescale for completion: An indication of how your proposal will be delivered in terms of milestones and anticipated timescales to reach each point up to and included anticipated project completion. |
| Local knowledge and context insight: Consideration of if a contractor has an understanding of local context, setting and relevancies as they relate to the project. |
| Allocation of hours/time commitment: A breakdown of estimated anticipated contractor time commitment to the project. |
| Accessibility of information: See ANSWER 11 above. |

14. The ITT seems to suggest the response should be printed and posted in a sealed envelope.  Is this the case?

ANSWER: Correct. We don’t currently have access to a digital tender submission platform.

15. Could the Council provide an estimated boundary map for the area to be included within the review?

ANSWER: Attached as document 9. This identifies areas of interest for review within the project (areas identified within the Heritage Strategy) but is not a fixed outcome and the end project may define a set area(s) within or associated with the attached map. The plan is indicative and not a pre-determination of anticipated outcomes. There are areas and assets of value and relevance to the rail and industrial heritage as well as link routes between the identified indicative areas that may warrant note and consideration within the project.

16. Re. Appendix A, para 3.0: Please could provide clarity around the statements

* + '*To draft, in consultation with the council and the planning authority such documents as possible to deliver consideration of [a] conservation area[s] including a management plan.'*
  + *'To draft, in consultation with the council and the planning authority, such documents as possible to deliver consideration of design features relevant to Crewe that can be included in a design guide to protect and inform the character of Crewe and development proposals.'*

We seek clarity regarding the exact nature and required format of the expected deliverables. We usually anticipate that management plans are produced in tandem with, or following the production of, a full conservation area appraisal, and not necessarily at this earlier review stage.

ANSWER: The point at which such documents are to be drafted is subject to the successful tenderer’s methodology and approach of project delivery. There is no fixed sequence intended or sought to be indicated within the tender documents.

17. How can we access the local list that is understood to be in preparation?

ANSWER: The Local List is attached (and will be included as an additional file document on the opportunity notice on the Contract Finder website).

18. Does the Council envisage 5 separate conservation areas with 5 separate appraisals and management guides?

ANSWER: The council is not predetermined with regard to the scale, shape or variety of conservation area(s). The map available identifies areas that may be considered relevant and have features that are distinct. Their treatment within the Conservation Area Review is entirely open to consideration during that process. The areas may be interconnected should the transition routes be found to show aspects of value.

19. Is the ultimate client Crewe Town Council or Cheshire East Council?

ANSWER: Crewe Town Council. Cheshire East is engaged and a positive partner in this project as the local planning authority and as such will be seeking to adopt the product documentation within local planning policy and process so will need to have consideration of consistency with that process.

20. Is there an anticipated deadline for completion of the document(s) in light of any specific consultation events etc?

ANSWER: No, although a reasonable timescale is required to ensure the end product(s) are relevant at the point of delivery.

21. The ITT document and one of the clarification answers indicates that the tender response must be submitted by post. Does that mean that the response needs to be posted by the 29th of September, or received by the 29th of September?

ANSWER: The submissions must be received by 29th September. We are not specifying the means of delivery (this could be via post, courier, hand etc) but a physical submission document must be received at our office by 12noon on the 29th September 2023

22. Regarding the section referring to Submission Format, we note that you would like to receive the final tender in a blank unmarked envelope. Can you please confirm whether you would like us to post the submission to you, and if so which address would you like it to, or whether you will accept an email submission?

ANSWER: The submission will need to be delivered to the council offices - 1 Chantry Court, Crewe, CW1 2DL. Solely digital submissions are not accepted although you may include a data stick version as well as a physical printed submission.