



Middle Street Synagogue, Brighton - Feasibility Study

Business Planning Consultancy Commission

Introduction

The Foundation for Jewish Heritage (the Client) is managing the production of a Feasibility Study for the grade II* listed Middle Street Synagogue in Brighton, on behalf of the building's owners, Brighton & Hove Hebrew Congregation. The Study will set out options for the future development of the Synagogue, supported by an outline Business Plan that assesses long-term sustainability. We are now seeking to appoint a consultant to carry out the business planning component of the work.

Background

Middle Street Synagogue, opened in 1875, is a jewel-like synagogue at the heart of Brighton and its special Jewish story. Its stained glass windows, floral column capitals, wrought iron details, and original pews transport the viewer into a 19th century space of worship and contemplation. The interior of the synagogue reflects the history of Brighton's Jewish community and the commemorative plaques record the synagogue's links to wider society and the affairs of state via the influential Jewish families that lived and worshipped in the city. The synagogue, its objects, and its archival documents stand as important evidence of and testimony to Brighton's 250+ years of Jewish community life.

Regular services in the synagogue ceased in 2004 as a result of reducing attendance and it is now open only for special occasions and group visits. The synagogue is located in the Old Town Conservation Area which has been designated by Historic England as being at risk, and there have been various assessments of the synagogue's situation carried out in the recent past.

Brighton & Hove Hebrew Congregation (BHHC), the owners of Middle Street synagogue, recently carried out urgent repairs which have stabilised the building. It is now commissioning the Foundation for Jewish Heritage (FJH) to conduct a review process in order to assess what future function Middle Street could serve. A Steering Committee has been formed, professionally supported by FJH, operating under the auspices of BHHC. As a first step, the Steering Committee is looking to commission a Feasibility Study to research and evaluate the various options that could bring the building back into regular use and provide a sustainable future.

Brief and Deliverables

The business planning commission will deliver the following elements:

- identification of options for the future use of the site addressing cultural, educational, social and economic benefit, drawing on the limitations and opportunities identified by the project's planning & heritage and community engagement strands.
- 'benchmarking' – looking at models of comparable projects elsewhere, particularly in the context of addressing long term sustainability

- assessment of the broad financial aspects of the various options, and their economic viability in terms of expenditure and income streams, taking into account the costings identified in the planning & heritage strand of the project.
- preparation of an outline business plan, including projected income/expenditure, for the preferred option identified
- Liaison with the project's community engagement consultant to provide content for consultation on the preferred option/s and absorb the results into the final recommendations
- SWOT and risk analyses in relation to the preferred option – and mitigation strategies
- assessment of the potential of the preferred option for securing the necessary funding and the identification of principle funding sources, both (i) public e.g. NLHF, governmental, municipal and (ii) private philanthropy e.g. trusts, foundations, individual philanthropists

Relationships - Nature of Contacts

The Consultant will principally report to the FJH Projects Officer and the Middle Street Steering Committee. The FJH Projects Officer will coordinate the project and collate the final recommendations and reporting.

The Consultant will also be in contact with the FJH Chief Executive. The contact will be largely operational in nature, making use of all available communication channels.

The successful Consultant will be required to attend meetings in Brighton and/or online as necessary.

Schedules for meetings, invoicing and reporting will be agreed between FJH and the preferred contractor before the contract is finalised.

Knowledge and Experience

The Consultant should have the following:

- experience of carrying out options appraisals within the heritage sector, preferably for historic buildings
- experience of producing outline business plans within the heritage sector
- experience of assessing local economic and social context, preferably in Brighton and the surrounding area
- ability to collaborate effectively with other consultants working on the project
- excellent written and oral communication skills
- ability to work under pressure and meet deadlines.

Feasibility Study Timeframe

The deadline for tender submissions is midnight on Sunday 12th May.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited for interview online shortly after the deadline.

The delivery of the contract should begin in the week commencing 24th June 2024 and should be completed within 19 weeks.

Budget

The budget is up to £13,500 including travel and expenses, and any VAT.

The contract will be with the Foundation for Jewish Heritage, with staged payments to be agreed.

Tender Requirements

Consultants tendering for the work are required to submit a proposal that sets out the following:

- relevant skills set, knowledge and experience
- methodology to be used
- resource schedule with Consultant day rates (including expenses and travel) and anticipated service level (total days)
- summary CVs for key individuals in the consultant team
- total cost for the commission excluding VAT (Consultants should indicate if they are registered for VAT)
- three professional references.

Combined proposals

There are three commissions open for tender as part of this project, covering:

- Planning and heritage
- Business planning
- Audience development and consultation

FJH will be pleased to consider proposals from the same company or from partnerships to deliver more than one of these commissions.

Assessment

The contract shall be awarded based on 60% quality and 40% value for money.

Quality Assessment

The bids will be assessed against the following criteria:

- the experience of the Consultant
- the proposal demonstrating a strong understanding of the project
- the strength of the methodology proposed, and its suitability against the requirements set out in the brief.

Price Assessment

The price assessment will be based on value for money, with reference to resourcing and day rates, with the most competitively priced tender receiving maximum points, and others scored in relation to this price.

Submission

Submissions should be emailed to FJH Projects Officer Katherine Findlay via the email address below. Katherine is also available informally to discuss the commission.

FJH will inform applicants of the outcome of the process via email and all correspondence will be handled by the Chief Executive. No feedback will be given to failed applications.

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