

INFORMATION NOTE: NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE MUSEUM AND COMMUNITY FACILITY

REPORT FROM THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER SERVICES

Following Council's decision on 11th November 2010 to proceed with the Hitchin Initiative sponsored 'Community' proposal for Hitchin Town Hall and North Herts Museum intensive work has been underway to ensure that the tight deadlines for the Initiative's application for financial support were met. Now that confirmation of the grant/loan award of £850k from 'Community Builders' has been received, work is now focussed on preparing management and lease agreements before the end of March 2011 – a grant/loan condition.

A project plan outlining the key stages in the short term is reproduced below and is currently on target:

	Programme																		
	29-Nov-10	06-Dec-10	13-Dec-10	20-Dec-10	27-Dec-10	03-Jan-11	10-Jan-11	17-Jan-11	24-Jan-11	31-Jan-11	07-Feb-11	14-Feb-11	21-Feb-11	28-Feb-11	07-Mar-11	14-Mar-11	21-Mar-11	27-Mar-11	
Appointment of Design Team	█																		
Briefing Meeting		█																	
Initial Consultation with Planners			█																
Develop Sketch Design				█															
Meeting with Client Team					█														
Refine Design Proposals						█													
Stage C Cost Plan							█												
RIBA Stage C 'Sign Off'								█											
Develop Stage D Design Proposals									█										
Second Pre Application Consultation										█									
Finalise Stage D Drawings											█								
Prepare PP's 5 Statements												█							
Stage D Cost Plan													█						
Stage D Sign Off														█					
Submit for Planning/LBC															█				
Deliberation Period (8 weeks)																█	█	█	█

Planning Approval & Listed Building Consent

Application for the demolition of 14 Brand Street, the construction of the museum and refurbishment of the Town Hall Complex were submitted on target on 28th January 2011. NHDC's Planning Control Committee will consider these on 17th March.

Project Board & Governance Arrangements

The Museums Project Board membership has been changed and a meeting was held on 16th February. At the meeting the Board noted the status of the loan/grant application, satisfactory progress on the project plan, final plans submitted as part of the planning application and the project risk log.

Hitchin Gymnasium and Workman's Hall Trust

A meeting was held on 10th January to formally present the proposals for Hitchin Town Hall and the Gymnasium to the Cabinet Sub Committee (Hitchin Gymnasium and Workman's Hall Trust) for the Trust's initial consideration. At that meeting the Trust approved the proposal in principle, subject to consideration of the Public Benefit Test and guidance received from the Charity Commission.

Community Builders Loan/Grant Aid – Conditions

Further urgent work is now underway with Hitchin Initiative in respect of the draft conditions attached to the loan/grant. We have been advised that, because of Treasury spending rules, firm agreements need to be in place between Hitchin Initiative, NHDC and the Gymnasium and Workmans Hall Trust prior to 31st March although there is a possibility that these rules may be relaxed because of the large number of approved projects which may not be able to meet these requirements. Until there is certainty on this however, work will continue to meet the 31st March deadline.

Hitchin Town Hall – Hirers

Notice of the intended closure of the Town Hall to hirers has recently been despatched to user groups. Hitchin Initiative have committed to work jointly with NHDC to manage the migration of user groups to alternative locations wherever possible and to encourage their return once the refurbishment works are complete.

Next Steps

Work continues to proceed in firming up the longer term project plan for the construction and fit out works. Appointment of architects to supervise the second phase of design and supervision of construction will not be initiated until the conditions of grant are confirmed. An outline of the indicative project plan from this point onwards appears below:

	Apr11	May11	Jun11	Jul11	Aug11	Sep11	Oct11	Nov11	Dec11	Jan12	Feb12	Mar12	Apr12	May12	Jun12	Jul12	Aug12	Sep12	Oct12	Nov12	Dec12	Jan13	Feb13	Mar13	Apr13	May13	Jun13		
Appoint Supervising Architect																													
Working Drawings Completed																													
Tender Documents Produced																													
OJEU Notice for Main Contract Works																													
Evaluation of Expressions of Interest																													
Tender Main Contract																													
Start on Site - Main Contract Works																													
Exhibition Fitout - Start																													
Final Fitout and Object Installation																													
Public Opening																													