



Arts, Museums & Heritage Forum Briefing

25 February 2011

Following the exciting news that the Community Builders Fund has offered a grant/loan of £850,000 to the Hitchin Initiative to enable the 'Community' proposal for Hitchin Town Hall and new District Museum to go ahead, intensive work is underway to ensure that the tight deadlines for this financial support are met. Work is focussed on preparing management and lease agreements before the end of March 2011, which is 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 PPs 5 Statements												█							
Stage D Cost Plan													█						
Stage D Sign Off														█					
Submit for Planning/LBC															█				
Deliberation Period (8 weeks)																█	█	█	█

Planning Approval & Listed Building Consent

Applications 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.

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

Staff at NHDC and Hitchin Initiative are currently working hard together to ensure that they can meet 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 Workman's Hall Trust by



31st March although there is a possibility that these rules may be relaxed because there is a large number of approved projects which may not be able to meet these tight requirements. However until we hear otherwise, work will continue to meet the 31st March deadline.

Hitchin Town Hall – Hirers

A letter about the proposed closure of the Town Hall to hirers has recently been sent to all the existing user groups. Hitchin Initiative has committed to work jointly with NHDC to help these groups find 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:

	Apr-11	May-11	Jun-11	Jul-11	Aug-11	Sep-11	Oct-11	Nov-11	Dec-11	Jan-12	Feb-12	Mar-12	Apr-12	May-12	Jun-12	Jul-12	Aug-12	Sep-12	Oct-12	Nov-12	Dec-12	Jan-13	Feb-13	Mar-13	Apr-13	May-13	Jun-13	
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																												

Museum Plans

Later this summer we intend to use the main exhibition gallery at Letchworth Museum as a clean and secure space for a review of museum objects, including items in store at both Hitchin and Letchworth Museums, and at Burymead. This will give us the chance to assess the significance and condition of individual objects, and photograph any which don't already have digital images. The public will be able to see what we are doing, and talk to us about it. We will probably use a standard 'Significance Assessment Grid', which helps to prioritise museum objects in terms of their importance locally, regionally and nationally, and identifies material for different display themes. The process also enables the recording of an object's condition, and will point up work that may need to be done before display in the new museum. We would like this will be a group process, including volunteers; please contact me, by e-mail if possible, if you would like to be involved.

In the meantime if you have any questions please contact Ros Allwood, Cultural Services Manager on 01462 435197 or ros.allwood@north-herts.gov.uk

