



Arts, Museums & Heritage Forum Newsletter

16 May 2012

North Herts. Museum and Community Facility

I am delighted to report that this innovative £4.23 million project to create a first class museum and community facility at Hitchin Town Hall has been given the green light by North Herts. District Council (NHDC).

At a special Council meeting on last Thursday, NHDC Councillors agreed to enter into the Development Agreement and Lease for the project and enter into a Community Use and Management Agreement with Hitchin Town Hall Ltd. This means that subject to potential minor variations to Legal Agreements, the Council can now press ahead with appointing the Supervising Architect and main contractor for the works.

The project will transform the historic Hitchin Town Hall into both a community facility run by Hitchin Town Hall Ltd, and a Council-run North Herts. museum alongside it. The £4.23 million project is being funded from a number of sources: £850,000 from Hitchin Town Hall Ltd in the form of a grant and loan from Futurebuilders England Ltd; a grant from Heritage Lottery Fund for the museum fit-out and the remainder of the project will be funded by NHDC. It is estimated that the closure of Hitchin and Letchworth museums will save the Council in the region of £160,000 in annual running costs.

The project involves combining the museum collections of Hitchin and Letchworth museums and creating additional space so that much more of the heritage of the District will be on display, with improved opportunities for participation. Crucially, the project will create much needed improved physical access to the museum, which the two current museums don't offer. There will also be a dedicated learning and activity space for schools and special interest groups, opportunities for volunteers of all ages, and easier access to local history. The revitalised community space will include the large Mountford Hall, the Lucas Room, smaller meeting rooms, office space and a café.

Cllr Tricia Cowley, NHDC Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement said: "This is a truly innovative project which through our partnership with Hitchin Town Hall Ltd will bring wide-ranging benefits for the community as well as providing a fit-for-purpose, modern museum for North Hertfordshire. Much initial work has already been going on behind the scenes but we are now making preparations to move forward through the detailed design stage to awarding the building contract."



Brent Smith, Chairman of Hitchin Town Hall Ltd said: "There are still some issues which need to be clarified and agreed but we are hopeful that these will be resolved very shortly. We need to ensure that we are able to successfully operate the Town Hall for the benefit of all of us in Hitchin and the surrounding area."

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

