



View to Brand Street
Main Hall Retained Scheme

 buttressfullerallsopwilliams - architects

A Business Plan Prepared by Hitchin Initiative on behalf of Community Groups

Acknowledgements

The Directors of Hitchin Initiative would like to acknowledge the wide spread support of Community Groups and Voluntary Organizations in making this submission to NHDC. We relish the opportunity of putting forward an alternative proposal on the use of the Hitchin Town Hall to accommodate the Council's Museum Service whilst preserving the historic Mountford Hall for ongoing community use.

Hitchin Forum, The Hitchin Society, Hitchin Historical Society, keep Hitchin Special , and the Arts Council for North Herts.

The work of the Council's Officers and consultants is also acknowledged; Buttress Fuller Alsop Williams Architects, who have provided the architectural feasibility relating to possible modifications of the building. We also acknowledge the work of Roland Geffery who was the author of the previous bid for Asset Funding and from which much of the following information is based.

Information contained within this plan can be considered to be commercially sensitive and its distribution is therefore restricted.

Why the Community Plan?

This document has been produced with reference to NHDC's own business plan for Hitchin Town Hall and therefore highlights only those areas of significant difference, making reference to that document where the information is common to both. The main difference being that the Mountford hall is retained for community use and the gymnasium converted to Museum use to satisfy the preferred options of the Community Groups as expressed at public meetings and via petition to the Council.

This proposal increases the foot print of the existing Town Hall complex by including the adjoining property and raising the Gymnasium roof to provide two spacious open plan Museum Galleries, an enlarged Foyer, Reception, Cafe and Retail area. This, by using the Gymnasium rather the Mountford Hall as the footprint for the new Museum, ensures that a meeting space of a significant size and status commensurate with the needs of our growing historic market town is retained. The facade of the building will be substantially enhanced (as shown in the artist's impression above) and avoids the necessity for shared access which is a feature of the Council's scheme. We believe that this alternative scheme also provides far better access for visitors with mobility issues and parents with children in push chairs. The retention of the Mountford Hall will ensure continued community involvement in the ongoing management of the facility in partnership with the Council and on a not for profit basis as Hitchin Initiative will enter into a long lease for the new complex in order for this to act as security for us to raise the funding need to bridge the gap between our scheme and the funds available from the Council.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We recognise that North Hertfordshire District Council needs to change the way it delivers a number of its services in order to secure their long term future and viability. These changes are needed in order to ensure that the services provided are of a quality to meet the needs and aspirations of our communities.

The Community Groups recognise the Council's aspiration to address the short comings in the Cultural/Museums service they identified in 2005 following a Fundamental Service Review. This identified lack of public toilets, access to upper floor levels for those with mobility problems, and lack of teaching space as key negatives affecting the service provided. In addition, whilst an attractive and historic town centre asset, Hitchin Town Hall has been identified as needing a major upgrade for modern operation and its on-going annual subsidy has led NHDC to look at alternative usages for this facility.

This plan sets out details relating to the regeneration of Hitchin Town Hall as a refurbished museums and community venue, not only to serve the people of Hitchin and its rural hinterland but also for the wider district. It would become the only NHDC operated museum.

The community Groups view is that this alternative plan provides a better community venue and a better refurbished Museum than that being put forward by the Council.

This project is based on modification of Hitchin Town Hall complex to incorporate a new museum into the Gymnasium Area whilst retaining community use of the Mountford Hall, and Lucas Room with significantly enhanced foyer entrance area encompassing a Bar/Cafe operated by the Hitchin Initiative on behalf of

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Hitchin Initiative Draft Business Plan for the Hitchin Town Hall

the Community Groups which would serve the users of the entire facility and which may a destination in its own right.





With the agreement of Hitchin Town Hall Workman's and Gymnasium Trust the site will be leased by Hitchin Initiative as one entity, but managed in partnership with the Museums & Galleries team who will undertake responsibility for operation of the site during Museum opening hours, and building maintenance and service provision more generally whilst Hitchin Initiative will operate the Cafe and Catering Facilities supporting the complex as well as being responsible for hall hire and marketing of the new venue.

Following completion of the refurbishment, Hitchin Town Hall will be re-launched as a venue offering the Mountford Hall and Lucas Room for hire with greatly improved facilities and appeal, alongside a much improved museum facility.

The project as estimated by the Council seeks investment in the region of £3.4M of capital funds. With the additional footprint and other improvements arising from the communities alternative the overall cost estimate for this scheme rises by £800K. Savings to NHDC in annual running costs remain consistent with their scheme.

The additional £800k is being sought by the Community Groups via the Communitybuilders Fund and is likely to be supported by a local Community Share Appeal.

The loan element of the Community builders funding (60%, £480k) would be repaid on an arranged basis with over a 10 year period with a balloon payment at year 10 to be refinanced over a further 15 years if required dependent upon the level of funds raised from the community share appeal. Income derived through Hall Hires and the operation of the bar/cafe and catering facilities will cover the monthly repayments and operating costs.

Within the figures we have shown at section 7 we have made an allowance equal to 13% of projected income to accommodate the subsidised use of the Mountford Hall and or Lucas Room by existing community users, other hirers will be charged at the prevailing competitive commercial rates.

1. ASSET BASED DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTH HERTS MUSEUMS SERVICE & HITCHIN TOWN HALL

The North Herts Museum Service

Please refer to NHDC own business plan.

Hitchin Town Hall

Please refer to NHDC own business plan.

Hitchin Initiative Ltd was founded in 1995 and leads the regeneration of Hitchin Town Centre. It is a voluntary sector body structured as a company Limited by Guarantee, that brings together stakeholders from the commercial businesses, professional people, residents and other community organizations to regenerate the historic Town Centre as a thriving place to shop, work live and find recreation.

Encouraged by the successes of HI to date - during which period HI has been sustained by its member's contributions and revenue grants from NHDC. HI is now exploring asset-based development as means to sustain its activity into the longer term and further develop community activity. This is in common with a number of forward thinking community enterprises and Development Trusts across the country who are practicing asset-based development as a means of moving towards sustainability without revenue grant support whilst at the same time remaining true to their community objectives and non profit-distributing status

The Hitchin Town Hall Project is proposed as the first asset based development of HI, bringing together the skills, experience and strong brand of HI to revive the Hitchin Town Hall as a community facility for the people of Hitchin.

Hitchin Initiative made a successful application in 2006 to the Market Towns Asset Development Programme funded through EEDA which resulted in a £30k bursary grant and a commitment to fund a maximum amount of £250k, however the balance required to carry out the work was not forthcoming so the project could not be progressed.

Now that NHDC have identified capital funding of their own which would enable long term revenue savings to the council by establishing the Museum on the Town Hall site the community groups are keen to work in partnership to provide the very best solution for the onward use of the facility and to ensure the communities stake in this key historic town centre building.

2. HITCHIN TOWN HALL

Please refer to NHDC own business plan.

3. DEVELOPING THE ASSETS

Hitchin Town Hall is sleeping asset, which is ripe to be re-awakened. To achieve this it needs:-

- a radical transformation of management culture to an entrepreneurial imaginative one that maximises the unique qualities of the site
- major repairs and a transformation of the image of the built fabric of the site.

Hitchin Town Hall will be attractive to a wider range of hirers of Halls for Hire, if energetically marketed/promoted. The vision of HI will be to combine a range of uses which serve the local residential and business community by short-term mostly daily hiring's of spaces. Flexibility to accommodate a varied programme on competitive terms will be a key part of the offer. Uses to be developed include: Marriage ceremonies and wedding celebrations; anniversary and memorial events; dance, movement, fitness and exercise of various sorts; conferences for 30 to 200 people; business training; corporate entertainment; educational and other youth projects; private receptions; professional examinations; community and public meetings; award ceremonies and use by voluntary and statutory agencies. As with any successful venue the Project will be alert to emerging uses HI is committed to developing differential charging to offer reduce hire fees to local community and charitable groups. HI will seek a diversity of uses in order to operate in several market niches and in order to develop an inclusive range of uses across as many sectors of the community as possible.

Expanded and well managed community and commercial use will underpin the appeal of the museum and may draw visitors who would not usually be attracted to a museum only facility. The museum visitors may be introduced to the Mountford Hall as a potential venue. In this way the complex as described in our proposal acts as a mutually supportive venue rather than the community facilities merely being an adjunct.

PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP A MUSEUM & COMMUNITY VENUE AT HITCHIN TOWN HALL

EXISTING MUSEUM ACCOMMODATION AND PROPOSED USE OF SPACE AT HITCHIN TOWN HALL

Buttress, Fuller, Alsop, Williams Architects have assessed the area provided in each of the proposals against the existing provision (museum space at Letchworth and Hitchin), together with the community space provided by both proposals post redevelopment of the Town hall complex. This is shown below;

USE	Existing Musuems Area (m2)	Gym retained NHDC proposal, Area (m2)	Mountford Hall retained HI proposal, Area (m2)
Retail	32	123	128.4
Perm. exhibition/ Gallery	430	506*	487.1
Temporary exhibition/ Flexible Use	128	149*	91.1
Community Use (inc Education)	78	399	511.1
Offices	60	148	195
Storage	60	158	245
Toilets	20	44	56.8
Circulation	n/a	287	338.4
Roof Terrace & Garden	n/a	128	121.4
TOTAL	808	1942	2174.4

* Adjusted to reflect 3 small galleries (98 sq. m.) will be used as temporary exhibition space

Our proposal, Mountford Hall retained, shown on the right hand side of the table above, retains by far the greater proportion of space for community use whilst at the same time delivers open plan museum exhibition space which has been acknowledged as being more useable than the mezzanine shown for the Gym retained proposal. It also provides a much improved and dedicated entrance to the complex from Brand Street, further enhanced by the provision of a cafe and glass fronted foyer. Neal Charlton, the architect from BFAW, describes our scheme “as providing a new street frontage and public presence for the museum as well as retaining the main hall. The retention of the main hall increases the opportunities for existing public activities within the overall scheme and can accommodate larger numbers of people”. This we believe should be seen as a major benefit in terms of both community use and regarding the viability of the commercial operation as ‘footfall’ is undoubtedly increased.

EXISTING HALL ACCOMMODATION AND PROPOSED USE OF SPACE AT HITCHIN TOWN HALL

Hitchin Initiative's proposal, made on behalf of the wider community, is specifically aimed at preserving the historic meeting space provided by the Mountford Hall by the conversion of the Gymnasium to provide accommodation for the Council's Museum.

We agree with NHDC's opinion that it is inevitable that some displacement of users will occur with either scheme as both reduce the amount of existing community space, albeit our scheme less drastically, however the type of use which can be enabled by the retention of the Mountford Hall is quite different from that which the Council's scheme would provide by retaining the Gymnasium and providing smaller a shared main access to the facility.

The type of events which would be retained include; the Schools in Concert, Beer Festival, Wine and Food Festival, as well as major public meetings and civic receptions. The Council's own submission makes the following statement;

Whilst there is no wish to displace any groups, it is clear that some displacement would occur if a museum was created by conversion of the main hall into a museum. This will effectively remove the main hall from general hire. Therefore events of a scale too large to be relocated into the Gym or events which utilise the space of the whole of the building will be impossible to house in their existing format.

It is our intention to ensure through direct discussion with each existing user groups, many of whom are members of our supportive community group, that as great a percentage as possible are accommodated on the existing site or by negotiation and support found acceptable alternative local premises.

The left side of Table 1 below shows the current regular hirer hours for each of the primary rooms of Hitchin Town Hall, and reflects the Council plan re the Gymnasium retained proposal. The right hand side of the table sets out the Hitchin Initiative proposals, Mountford Hall Retained, and estimates future usage based upon the Council's own aspiration estimates for usage at 50% of maximum and the opening times which are presently quoted in their plan.

Table 1: Summary Weekly Regular Hired Hours Hitchin Town Hall – Jan 10

	Council Operated Current usage in hours			Council Plan, Gym Retained usage in hours			Community Plan, Mountford Hall retained, Target Usage	Community Plan, Mountford Hall retained, Target Usage	Community Plan, Mountford Hall retained, Target Usage	Community Plan, Mountford Hall retained, Target usage total hours
	Main Hall	Lucas Room	Gym	Main Hall (in Gym)	Lucas Room	Gym	Mountford Hall	Understage & Meeting Room	Lucas Room	
Monday	0	2	5		2	5				
Tuesday	3	5.5	3.5	* 3	5.5	3.5				
Wednesday	4	3	1.5		3	1.5				
Thursday	4	5	3	*4	5	3				
Friday	Monthly Hire ~	2	2		2	2				
50% of Max							42.5 hours		42.5 hours	85 hours
Saturday	0	2	0	0	2	0				
Sunday										
50% of Max							17 hours		17 hours	34 hours
Total	11	19.5	15	7	19.5	15	59.5 hours	C To be negotiated	59.5 hours	119 hours plus C

We note the Council's current utilisation report and annual footfall estimate, we also note that 30 bookings were attended by in excess of 200 people although there is no way of knowing how many visitors attended the wine and food festival or the baby and wedding shows that tend to be open all weekend. Events of this type would be encouraged by the retention of the existing Mountford Hall and we believe significantly increase footfall for the benefit of both the museum and the bar/retail operation and cafe.

The Council's own analysis indicates there is an overcapacity of general community provision for hire. It is the strong belief of the community groups that no venue comparable to the Mountford Hall exists within the Town Centre. The Mountford Hall therefore is a key venue serving the Town and surrounding villages and should not be removed from this role.

As part of the investigation into the future use of Hitchin Town Hall, a desk top analysis was undertaken to establish the extent, usage and nature of all the community facilities (35 in total) within Hitchin (3000m radius of the Hitchin Town Hall). This work was reported to Cabinet at its 26 June 2007 meeting, key findings included:-

- The analysis identified a range of different community buildings within Hitchin urban area and that there is surplus capacity at these other venues, i.e. That these also were not operating at full capacity. This suggests that there is an over capacity of general community provision for hire, and that some rationalisation could take place.
- There is strong community expectation and aspirations that the Town Hall should continue to be used for general community purposes, as it is the only building of its type in the town.
- Usage of the Town Hall in core times at between 34%-41% of capacity, with a broad split between 70% community and 30% private/commercial. The Hitchin Initiative proposal seeks to increase this to 50% in line with the Council's own aspirations.
- It is likely that some activities currently taking place at Hitchin Town Hall could not be relocated elsewhere in North Herts.

This current Feasibility Study shows it will be possible to retain a large majority of the existing groups who use the Town Hall on a regular basis. However, this proposal does not allow the required use of the building for a museum and also allow full retention of the main hall, which, although it has some regular usage, is predominantly used at the weekend for events.

Analysis of the room use has found that the Town Hall is underused generally, with the Main Hall used for approximately 50% of the available time; and the least used space being the St John's room which is used for 1½ hrs per week.

In addition, the size of the gymnasium is restricted and is far smaller than the size recommended for most indoor sporting activities. It is best suited for fitness and martial arts classes at a recreational level due to severe restrictions both in floor area and ceiling height.

4. MAJOR REPAIRS & UPGRADE

See Council proposal

Also see the report supplied to Council by their Architect Consultants Buttress Fuller Alsop Williams which has the details of both proposals up grade requirements. .

The Hitchin Initiative Proposal agrees with the Council that the building is a good size and location for a museum to be developed. The building is generally sound in condition and able to be adapted for this use.

We feel that our proposal identifies a better spatial arrangement to create an exciting new museum facility, whilst consolidating existing provision into one venue. This scheme also maintains a much valued historic Hall improved community provision.

The Council's overall construction cost of £2,408,465 and a fit-out budget of £1,033,373 (inc. professional fees) give an overall expected out-turn cost of £3,441,838(excl. VAT). The additional cost of construction has been estimated by BFAW at £450k, acquiring the shop footprint at £250k, totalling £700k (£800k inc VAT on the construction and a contingency sum).

This shows that the overall concept of a museum on the Hitchin Town Hall site is both physically and economically feasible.

An inspection of the building was carried out by Neal Charlton of Buttress Fuller Alsop Williams - Architects, and Jane Hogg of Thomasons structural engineers on Thursday 6th August 2009. This comprised a visual inspection of the building from accessible rooms and at ground level externally. The building's physical condition was noted as well as overall defects which inhibit public use, such as lack of accessibility and poor fire strategy.

The conclusion of this inspection was that the building is generally sound and suitable for adaptation and reuse. The following defects were noted:

- ☐ Lack of accessible entrance
- ☐ Lack of vertical access (lift etc)
- ☐ Dampness to basement areas – particularly the stage
- ☐ Numerous small level changes throughout the building
- ☐ Poor drainage
- ☐ Minor defects noted to Workman's Hall roof
- ☐ Poor decorative condition throughout the building

The Community Plan address's the necessary improvements to the entrance and street profile, improves accessibility to the upper floors and renews the roof to the Gymnasium/Workmans Hall. Both schemes would address the other issues.

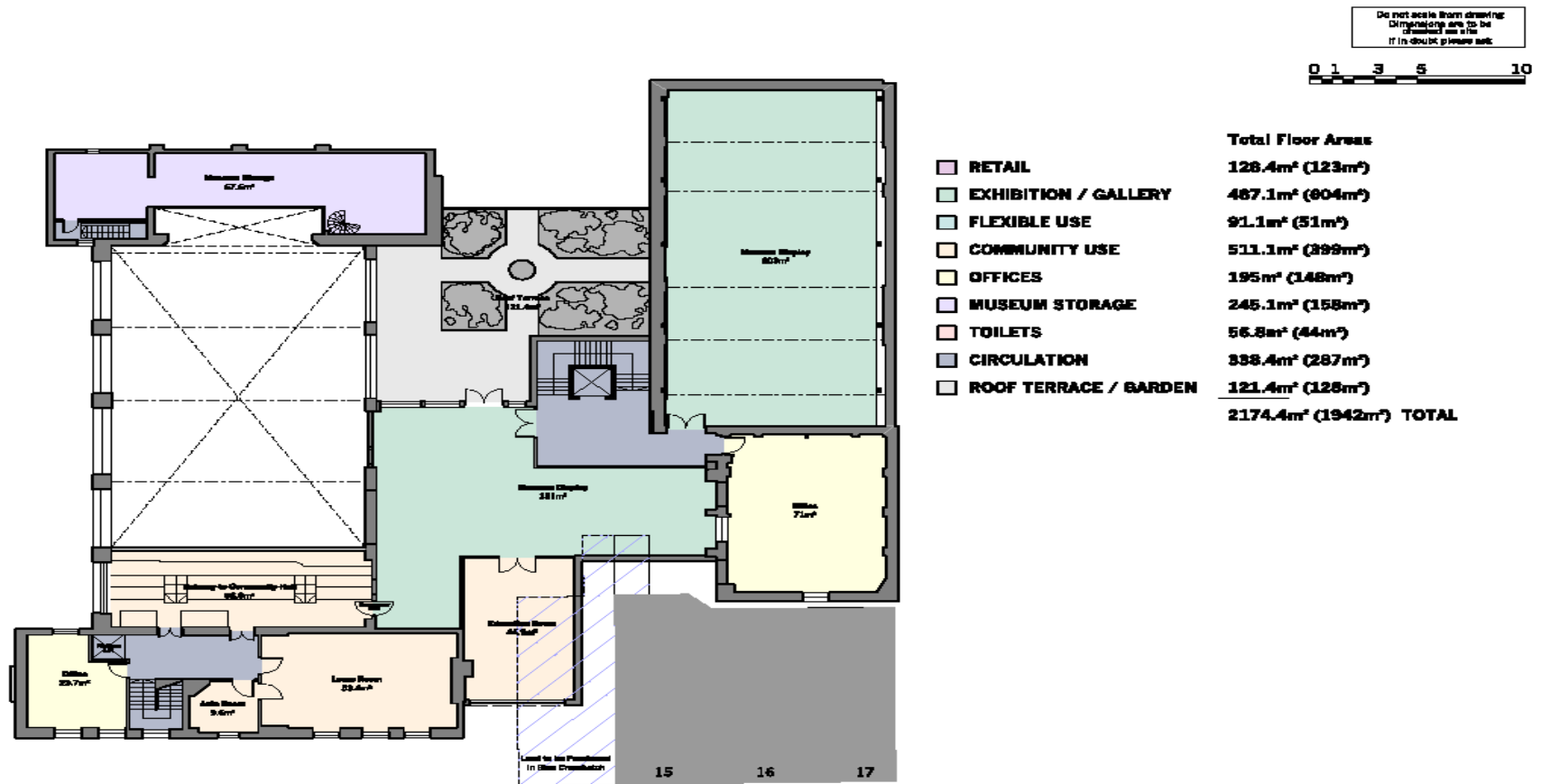


View to Brand Street
Main Hall Retained Scheme

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External Concept Sketch – Mountford Hall Retained Scheme



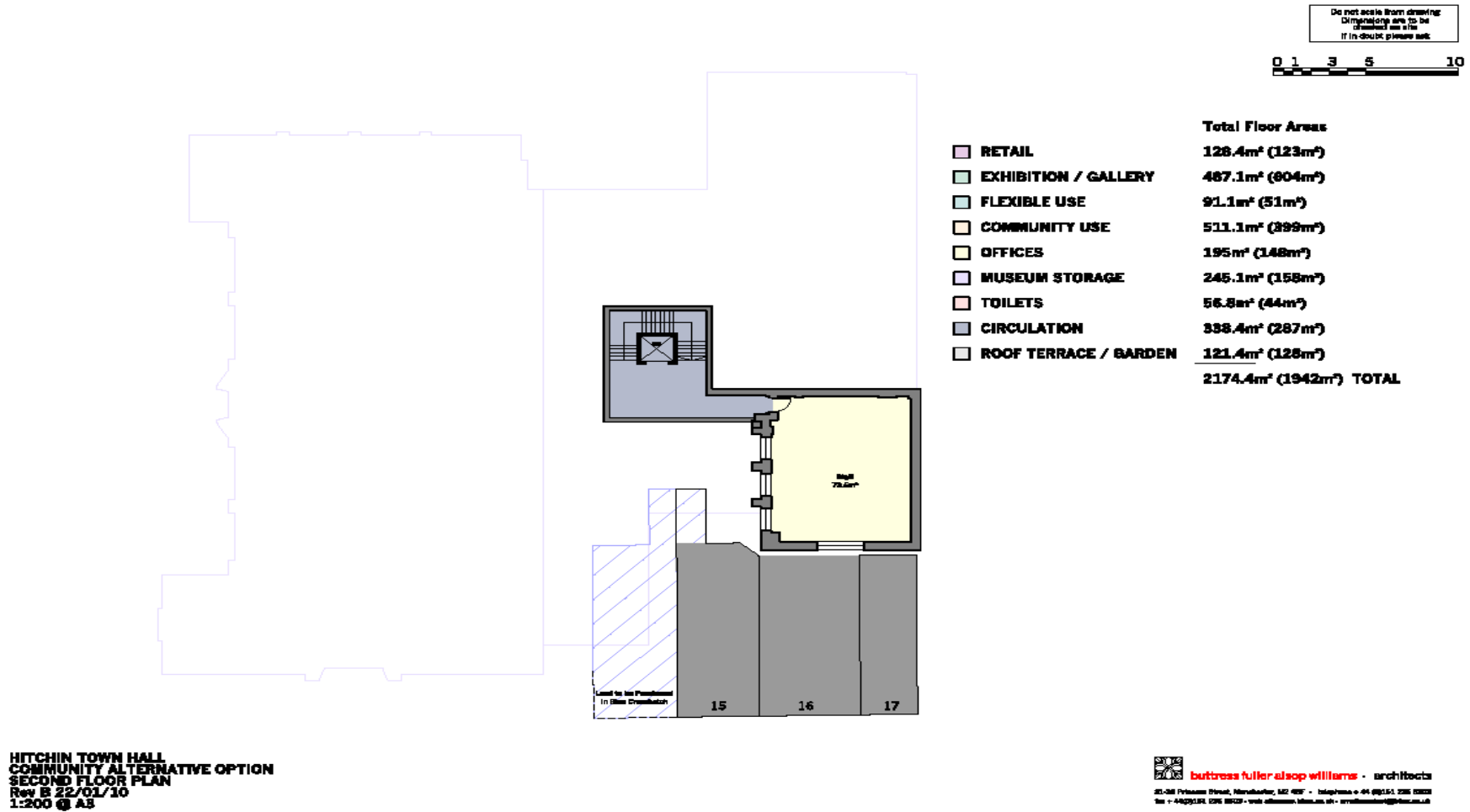


HITCHIN TOWN HALL
COMMUNITY ALTERNATIVE OPTION
FIRST FLOOR PLAN
Rev B 22/01/10
1:200 @ A3

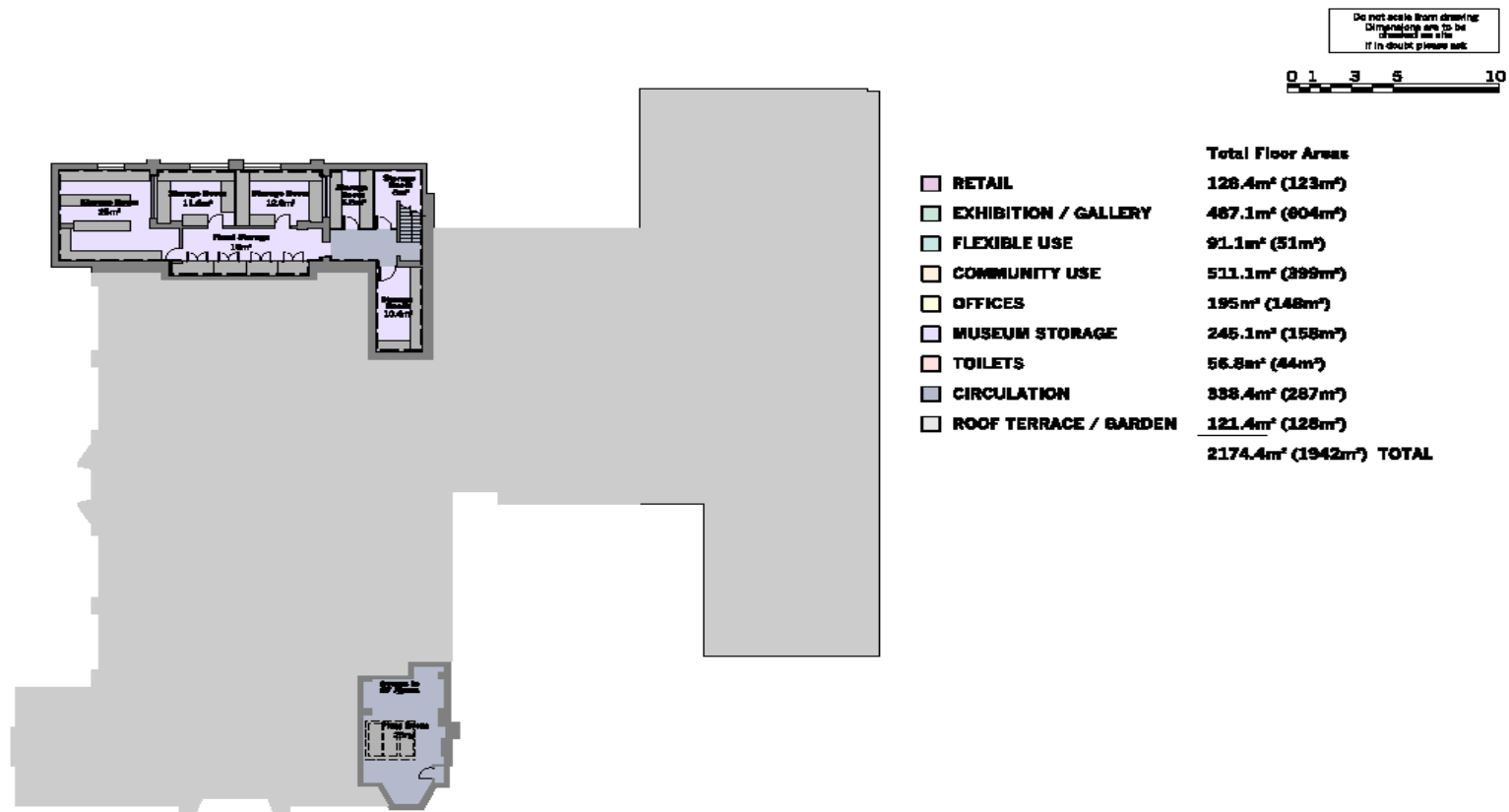
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Floor Plan – Mountford Hall Retained Scheme

First



Floor Plan – Mountford Hall Retained Scheme



HITCHIN TOWN HALL
COMMUNITY ALTERNATIVE OPTION
BASEMENT PLAN
Rev B 22/01/10
1:200 @ A3

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Basement Floor Plan – Mountford Hall Retained Scheme

The NHDC Proposal utilises the main hall as a museum display area, with a mezzanine added to provide a second floor with a significant amount of floor space lost as a result of needing to install a central stair well and the necessary floor supporting columns. The stage is lowered to floor level and the mezzanine extended into the volume of the stage, this drastic level of alterations to what is the main feature of the Town Hall also involves the removal of the sprung dance floor which is a rare example of Victorian craftsmanship which itself attracts visitors to the venue. The Council's scheme also includes the expense of relaying a dance floor in the Gymnasium, in the opinion of local people none of these changes should be made and there is strong opposition to what is proposed in that it completely ruins the Hall, and removes the only venue capable of hosting large gatherings in the Town Centre.

The proposal being put forward by the Hitchin Initiative on behalf of the community groups retains the beautiful Mountford Hall with all of its rare period features including the stage and sprung floor.

The Gymnasium would be used, together with the additional footprint of the adjacent shop to provide a two storey open plan Museum Exhibition area, enlarged open cafe area and much improved access and public circulation space. The Lucas room is also retained unaltered and together provide the accommodation for community use and commercial room letting and event hire. We believe that event hire opportunities would be greatly improved by the investments being made in the refurbishment of the building and due to the added interest of there being a museum on site.

Community use is retained in a number of ways.

- The Mountford Hall is retained as the Community Hall, providing a large open plan and historic multi-purpose venue.
- The Lucas Room is retained as a meeting room.
- A local history studies centre will be established within the ground floor of the museum area adjacent to the cafe
- A large education room will be established which will allow activities for school parties of all ages.
- Temporary exhibitions area will accommodate differing types of local exhibits.

The Gymnasium roof will be lifted high enough to provide for a first floor area to be constructed as per the plans shown in this document.

Under the Community Proposal the cafe will have an open aspect and provide a welcome entrance to the entire facility which will be particularly enticing to passers-by. Access to the cafe will be by the new entrance from the covered street access and unlike the Council's own proposal this entrance will be much more open, and not be shared with the adjacent shop. This is the shop's only access point for deliveries and the removal of rubbish.

The provision of a local history study centre is accommodated on the ground floor which will be much more accessible to Museum users and creates the opportunity for it to be opened to study groups outside of Museum Hours

5. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

The Community Proposal understands the importance of Hitchin Town Hall as a significant civic monument in the Hitchin Town Centre Conservation Area and makes an important contribution to it. Our proposal seeks to treat its historic fabric with appropriate respect, ensuring historic features and fittings are preserved including the most substantial element of this which is the Mountford Hall itself. Whereas the Council's scheme makes drastic changes to the fabric of the Hall against the wishes expressed by local people.

The Town Hall is set back from the main building frontage in Brand Street and as a result 'hidden' when viewed from the Town Centre. Our proposal includes a much improved entrance area and treatments to improve accessibility from street level which cannot be undertaken as part of the Council's proposal.

Although there is only limited on street parking which will be designated for disabled users, the site is well served by public transport, hence its importance as a community venue, and has a number of convenient public car parks near at hand.

Heritage Building Listing

English Heritage (EH) have advised that they have received an application to list Hitchin Town Hall under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.

Letchworth Town Hall has recently been listed despite the EH advice two years ago was that it was not of sufficient merit. Our Officers have discussed this with one of the EH officers who advises that greater consideration is being given to the merits and interests of town halls as important civic buildings for any historic settlement. Given that the resulting changing approaches to listing town halls, it would seem reasonable that this new emphasis will also influence the decision for Hitchin Town Hall.

If the Secretary of State does decide to list Hitchin Town Hall, any proposal for re-development will require the Secretary of State's consent.

6. GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP

Ownership

Whilst the town hall itself is in the ownership of North Hertfordshire District Council, the Workman's Hall and Gymnasium are under the guardianship of the Hitchin Town Hall Workman's and Gymnasium Trust. Under the Hitchin Initiative proposal a long lease interest would be taken by HI on behalf of the local groups and HI would enter into an agreement with NHDC for them to operate the Museum on the site of the Gymnasium and adjacent shop.

Trust

Under the terms of the conveyance (which passed the gymnasium within the Hitchin Town Hall to the former Hitchin UDC) it states that any future use of the gymnasium must be for use as a gym *or for other purposes mentioned in s6(3) Museums and Gymnasiums Act 1891* and also for any other (charitable) purpose for the benefit of the North Herts District. The Museums and Gymnasiums Act 1891 has been replaced by the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. Broadly, there are powers in these two Acts for local authorities to provide recreational facilities, museums and art galleries. The trusts relating to Hitchin Town Hall are therefore ideally suited for its use as a museum, but this would still be subject to consideration by the Cabinet Sub-Committee (Hitchin Town Hall Trust). The Council is the Trustee, however the Cabinet Sub-Committee has been constituted to act on behalf of the Council to consider all matters in connection with the future use, operation and management of the Trust property. Its role is to act exclusively in the best interests of the Trust.

Currently work is being undertaken to register the Trust's interest in the property within Hitchin Town Hall with the Land Registry and to re-register the Trust with the Charity Commission.

In order to do this the site management of the Property must be segregated between the Trust and the Council, including in terms of income and expenditure. For the current management arrangements for this site to be formalised (to continue to be used as a single site) the consent of the Charity Commission will be required. The absence of formal arrangements for the management of this site were identified during discussion about possible community asset transfer. To allow any significant investment at this site the absence of this agreement needs to be resolved.

The Gymnasium and Workman's Hall are collectively known as the 'Hitchin Town Hall Workman's and Gymnasium Trust' for which the Charitable Objects are understood to be as follows:-

"Upon trust to use or permit it to be used as a Gym for the benefit of the residents of Hitchin and for other purposes mentioned in s6(3) Museums and Gymnasiums Act 1891 and also for any other (charitable) purpose for the benefit of the North Hertfordshire District for which North Hertfordshire District Council can lawfully use building and land vested in them".

For ease of understanding the operational areas that come under the ownership of the 'Hitchin Town Hall Workman's and Gymnasium Trust' can be broadly described (as currently identified) as follows:-

Ground Floor

- Gymnasium
- Gymnasium Store
- Kitchen
- Bar
- External area to rear of building used for staff parking

First Floor

- Ladies Changing Room (incorporating showers and toilet facilities)
- Gents Changing Room (incorporating showers and toilet facilities)

Second Floor

- St. John Ambulance Training Room

Precise delineation of the area under the ownership of the 'Hitchin Town Hall Gymnasiums Trust' can be seen in APPENDIX A.

The following assumptions and exclusions have been included in the draft Management Agreement between NHDC and the Trust. However this will need to be updated should this project progress.

Assumptions

- Complete operational responsibility for the combined facilities will be with North Hertfordshire District Council
- All income generated by the hire of the combined facilities shall belong to North Hertfordshire District Council.
- All staff salaries and operating costs for the operation of the combined facilities shall be paid by North Hertfordshire District Council
- The areas of the building owned by the 'Hitchin Town Hall Workman's and Gymnasium Trust' will be leased to North Hertfordshire District Council
- No requirements for any financial arrangements or reconciliations, other than the payment of a peppercorn rent shall exist between the 'Hitchin Town Hall Workman's and Gymnasium Trust' and North Hertfordshire District Council

The responsibility for the operation of the building, within North Hertfordshire District Council will lie with the Strategic Director of Customer Services. This responsibility to be delegated via the Head of Service for Community and Cultural Services, to the Community Facilities Manager. Under this proposal this will be changed to the Cultural Services Manager.

7. FINANCIAL ASSUMPTIONS & PROJECTIONS

Currently the operation of HTH and the Museums & Heritage service costs NHDC just under £1 million per annum, inclusive of all cost including NHDC central overhead recharges. Part of this is off set by income charged to service users, but essentially the museums service provides free access to its service.

Financial modelling suggests that significant annual revenue savings of c.£160k per annum could be achieved by implementing either project. The community proposal would greatly assist NHDC in achieving this or an even greater saving through shared operational costs.

Hitchin Town Hall	Draft Income and Expenditure									
	Year 1					Year 2				
	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Annual Total	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Annual Total
Income										
Hall lettings	16,500	16,500	16,500	16,500	66,000	16,500	16,500	16,500	16,500	66,000
Hall beverages GP	17,500	17,500	17,500	17,500	70,000	17,500	17,500	17,500	17,500	70,000
Bar beverages GP	6,250	6,250	6,250	6,250	25,000	6,250	6,250	6,250	6,250	25,000
Food GP	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	12,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	12,000
Total income	43,250	43,250	43,250	43,250	173,000	43,250	43,250	43,250	43,250	173,000
Expenditure										
Direct Staff Costs	21,750	21,750	21,750	21,750	87,000	21,750	21,750	21,750	21,750	87,000
Utilities	1,250	1,250	1,250	1,250	5,000	1,250	1,250	1,250	1,250	5,000
Repairs & Maintenance	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	6,000	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	6,000
Cleaning & cleaning supplies	1,750	1,750	1,750	1,750	7,000	1,750	1,750	1,750	1,750	7,000
Insurance	1,250	1,250	1,250	1,250	5,000	1,250	1,250	1,250	1,250	5,000
Equipment purchases & maintenance	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	4,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	4,000
Stationary, printing & advertising	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	12,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	12,000
Communications & computing	1,250	1,250	1,250	1,250	5,000	1,250	1,250	1,250	1,250	5,000
Refuse collection	750	750	750	750	3,000	750	750	750	750	3,000
Loan payments	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	36,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	36,000
Total expenditure	42,500	42,500	42,500	42,500	170,000	42,500	42,500	42,500	42,500	170,000
Net expenditure	(750)	(750)	(750)	(750)	(3000)	(750)	(750)	(750)	(750)	(3000)

Operational assumption made

Hitchin Initiative is presently a not for profit company limited by guarantee, if the community elements of the Town Hall Complex were to be operated by such an organization or Trust we would expect to not be liable to pay Business Rates at 100%.

Whilst the lease and arrangement for the use of part of the complex by the Council as their Museum is to be undertaken at nil cost to either party we have budgeted to make a contribution to operating costs thus resulting in enhanced savings to the Council's revenue forecast.

Income

Rooms available for hire are:

Lucas Room

Mountford Hall

Admin office – subject to further discussions with NHDC

Understage Area – subject to further discussions with NHDC

Income from Bar, Café and events catering– under negotiation with catering companies

The Council's cash flow shows minimal income from hall lettings, their assumption that the maximum utilisation of 80% realises £39,274.00 pa

Room hire at the current rental charges has been calculated below:-

Lucas Room hourly rate 2009/2010

Monday to Friday	£8.20	8:30am to 6pm
	£14.00	7am – 8:30am and 6pm – 11.30pm
Weekends	£14.00	8:30am to 6pm
	£18.65	7am – 8:30am and 6pm – 11.30pm

Mountford Hall hourly rate 2009/10

Monday to Friday	£14.00	8:30am to 6pm
	£23.35	7am – 8:30am and 6pm – 11.30pm
Weekends	£23.35	8:30am to 6pm
	£40.80	7am – 8:30am and 6pm – 11.30pm

-52 week a year operations

-7am to midnight- 17 hours of operation per day seven days per week

-Hire charges at standard rate (i.e. commercial rates and charitable rates net off)

Fees & Charges

Although the proposals will see significant investment and improvement in the quality of the facilities available to hirers, it is recognised that many of the community groups who use Hitchin Town Hall currently will not have sufficient finances to pay significantly higher hire charges. It is therefore not proposed to significantly increase hire charges based upon the refurbishment works.

We would investigate the possibility of two standard rates, one commercial and one community, whilst retaining sufficient flexibility to amend Hall hire charges in light of significant bar and catering requirements.

Staffing

The adoption of the Community Plan should result in significant savings to the Council in respect of staffing in that it removes the need for agency staff outside of Museum operating hours.

Opening Hours

There has been no allowance for additional staffing hours to cover the longer operating hours of the hall. With all Museums staff on this site there is a possibility of spreading the hours worked to cover some of the difference. However any additional income from use of the community facilities will be expected to cover the cost of the front of house staff required to support them.

	Hitchin Town Hall Community Space	Museums
Operating hours	Available 7am – 12am	10-am – 5pm
Opening days	7 days a week	5 days a week (closed Sunday and Wednesday)
Weeks open per year	52	52 – closed Bank Holidays

The operation of the Café/Bar

The community plan allows for refreshments to be served to functions within the Mountford Hall, Lucas Room and all other areas. The planned Café will accommodate 40+ covers, a viable number for such a business, allowing the café to be let as a franchise if desired. The community plan envisages an arrangement with outside caterers to provide event and corporate catering with the possibility of the day to day cafe operation let to a local operator. The bar operation and income would remain with the community body.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

See Council proposal