

CONFIDENTIAL

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Bullet Points of Meeting for North Hertfordshire Museum/ Hitchin Town Hall – Design Review

Held on: Thursday 27th June 2013 at 2:30pm am

Location: John Robinson's Office - District Council Offices

Circulation: Those present, File, Vaughan Watson

Present

Name	Organisation	Initials
John Robinson	North Hertfordshire District Council	NHDC
Cllr Hunter	North Hertfordshire District Council	NHDC
Cllr Cowley	North Hertfordshire District Council	NHDC
Steve Crowley	North Hertfordshire District Council	NHDC
Ros Allwood	North Hertfordshire District Council	NHDC
Keith Gayner	North Hertfordshire District Council	NHDC
Sharon Nahal	North Hertfordshire District Council	NHDC
David Leal-Bennett	Hitchin Town Hall Ltd	HTHL
Brent Smith	Hitchin Town Hall Ltd	HTHL
Neal Charlton	Buttress Fuller Alsop Williams	BFAW

1. Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies received from Vaughan Watson

2. Notes of the Last Meeting (6th June 2013)

- 2.1 JR reviewed the action points from the meeting held on 6th June 2013.

Paragraph 2.3 additional design meeting. At today's meeting opportunity to consider main entrance sketch options incorporating 15 Brand Street.

Paragraph 2.4 actioned.

Paragraph 3.3 retractable stage. NC progressing but reported a complication arising due to the existing ventilation system. Cost of retractable stage still estimated £25k. NC stated planning consent will be required.

Paragraph 4.0 kitchen design/layout. BS confirmed HTH Ltd would stick with the detail already provided.

Paragraph 6.0 provision of capped off waste pipe Mountford Hall Balcony. NC actioned.

Paragraph 8.1 typing error. Minutes to be corrected to read '15 Brand Street'.

3. Museum Entrance

- 3.1 JR drew attention to the four plans circulated, two with alternative options, one illustrating 14 Brand Street and one 15 Brand Street.
- 3.2 Prior to inviting NC to provide a design update JR referred to comments raised by BS referred to circulated copies of the document headed The Town Hall – Comments on BFAW Options 01 & 02A 26/06/13 for consideration. It was noted that NHDC did not have any objections to Hitchin Town Hall Ltd commissioning the exhibition designers for cafe designs.
- 3.3 DLB enquired whether BFAW have detailed drawings relating to sketch options 01 and 02A. NC confirmed detailed drawings are available.
- 3.4 BS referred to the escape route dimensions in sketch option 1 and asked why had the passage width increased to 1800mm compared to the original drawings which show 1200mm. NC stated the width of the escape route passage has to be wider than the door and consideration had to be given to the loss of level access. NC stated he was consulting with NHDC's Building Control team to achieve an acceptable design solution. NC confirmed we would not be permitted to use the main entrance doors as a means of escape due to the stepped approach. We are looking at ways of using alternative escape routes.
- 3.5 NC stated the initial layout of the two sketch options 01 and 02A is to help finalise the final scheme. Both options were not anticipated to be a problem with regards to Planning.
- 3.6 Cllr H referred to negative feedback he had received with regards to the ramp / stepped design. Cllr C reported receiving unfavourable comments from the public with regards to the ramp. JR important to consider the visual impact versus access ability.
- 3.7 BS stated the proposed ramp and the external steps are not user friendly and the starting position of the ramp from Grammar School Walk is unfriendly and compromises the front elevation of the building.
- 3.8 BS referred back to the HTH Ltd re-development planning application drawing and the fact the scheme does not include steps to the museum or a ramp. The drawing shows a paved piazza with pavement ramped towards the building at a gradient of 1:20 reducing the number of steps required. NC agreed that a change in the gradient would be possible. BS stated he would much rather see the pavement and fewer steps. NC agreed to examine.
- 3.9 BS asked why the materials on the partition side wall been inverted. HTH Ltd design had stone base with brickwork above. NC the materials had been inverted to achieve a balance. NC agreed to change the design back to a stone base with brickwork above.
- 3.10 BS stated he was very pleased with the appointment of Mather & Co Ltd the Museum Exhibition Design team. BS asked whether it would be possible for HTH Ltd to approach Mather & Co Ltd to help develop a design proposal for the café and seating area which compliments the museum design. JR confirmed that he was happy to arrange contact with Mather & Co as part of the agreed project liaison arrangements.

- 3.11 BS requested roof line detailing on the two schemes to gain a better understanding of the design concept. NC to action.
- 3.12 BS confirmed his preference with regards to the location of the reception area as detailed in the HTH Ltd drawings although JR expressed some concern at this. NC stated the plans are still indicative. BS recommended looking at a number of 'reception area' examples before making a final decision.
- 3.13 RA updated the team on her findings with regards to research into the benefits / disbenefits of platform lifts versus ramps. RA having made contact with the Disabled Living Foundation, English Heritage (easy access to buildings), Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery Fund concluded that platform lifts were unpopular amongst disabled and non ambulant people and others with mobility problems. The reasons include:
- Do not offer the same freedom coming in and out as ramps;
 - Do not offer the same amount of dignity;
 - Platform lifts draw attention to the user;
 - Ramps give more flexibility and choice;
 - In an emergency ramps provide a quicker exit route in an emergency;
 - Some platform lifts require continuous pressure on the operating button which some people may find difficult;
 - Timings waiting for people to assist.
- 3.14 BS reported that his understanding of platform lifts was quite different to that reported by RA and that disabled people would use the platform lift specified and costed in the scheme.
- 3.15 NC stated that the main entrance to Hitchin Town Hall require handrails from a H & S aspect; current steps do not comply with access ability standards.
- 3.15 BS stated that he had looked into the design and accessibility requirements and concurred that you do not need to have external steps and a ramp with a ramped gradient towards the building.
- 3.16 JR suggested the possibility of a two tier patio in connection with Option 02A providing the width of the ramp could accommodate seating and chairs. NC to examine.
- 3.17 BS asked NC if it would be possible to opt for a 1:20 slope towards the building. NC confirmed it would be possible. NC agreed to examine BS proposal.
- 3.18 Also key driver is access and option 02A seems to offer the best solution but need to expand on the ramp option suggested by BS.
- 3.19 JR advised that he would consider taking independent advice from an Access Design specialist to minimise the risk to the Project.
- 3.20 DLB asked if independent advice had been sought on the two options presented (01 & 02A 26/06/13). JR stated that they had not. DLB responded that using the same risk argument, that they should also have had independent advice. As such DLB failed to agree stating it was an unnecessary action to take, would waste money and cost time given NC and

BS already have the expertise. JR explained that it would never the less be considered.

- 3.21 BS stated the external steps and ramp would require Conservation Area Consent and would expect the Conservation Officer to oppose the proposed Changes which compromise the existing building.

4. Matters to Refer to Project Board

- 4.1 NC to draw up the intended scheme based on sketch option 02A and the alternative ramp option suggested by BS. Depending on programme considerations this may need to be determined prior to the next scheduled meeting of Project Board.
- 4.2 Appointment of and access design consultant to ensure compliance with the requirements of planning, building regulation legislation and the Equality Act.
- 4.3 Cllr C to remain on the North Herts Museum & Community Facility Project Board as an ex-officio member.

Close of Meeting.

Minutes Taken By: Keith Gayner

Title: Parks and Open Spaces Officer – Contracts and Major Projects

Signed:

