
Museums Service Improvement Plan

**Hitchin Area Committee
9th June 2009**

**John Robinson
Strategic Director Customer Services**



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Outline

- Current Service
- Museums Fundamental Service Review (FSR)
- Arts, Museums and Heritage Forum
- 'Proof of Concept' report: Hitchin Town Hall

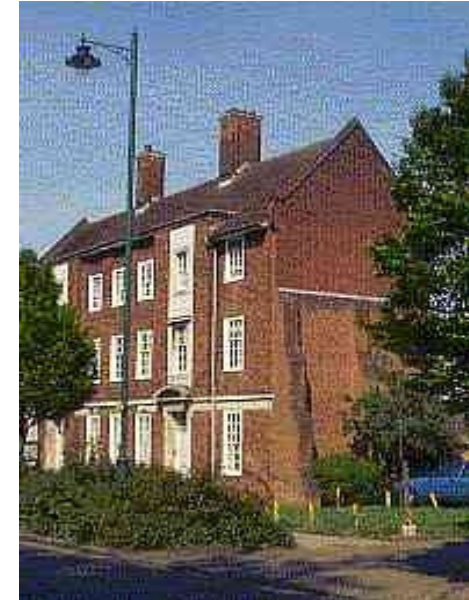


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Current Service

- Letchworth GC and Hitchin Museums
- Burymeads Resource Centre
- Supporting other museums
- Key findings from FSR
 - Limited visitor numbers
 - Limited facilities
 - High customer satisfaction
 - Dedicated staff



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Museums FSR

Agreed by Cabinet 23rd August 2005:

- Consult with Letchworth GC Heritage Foundation
- Liaise with stakeholders including Area Committees
- Cost detailed scheme: collections centre then museum
- Research external funding
- Establish business case



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Museums FSR...in English

- Invest in new storage and research facility in ideally in partnership with the not for profit and voluntary museums of the District
- Establish a new museum, gallery and community facility with the ability to act as a base for the service's work across the district
- Invest in new technology and work in partnership to digitise collection and extend access
- To invest in the schools loan service, and to extend the material supplied to cover more of the heritage and culture places and events of the district.
- ...and reduce controllable expenditure by c.30%



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Recent Decisions

- Cabinet 27th January 2009: Changed priority to construct Museum before 'Collections Centre'
- Scrutiny Committee 18th May 2009: Considers 'Proof of Concept' report
- Cabinet 19th May: Agrees to full feasibility study



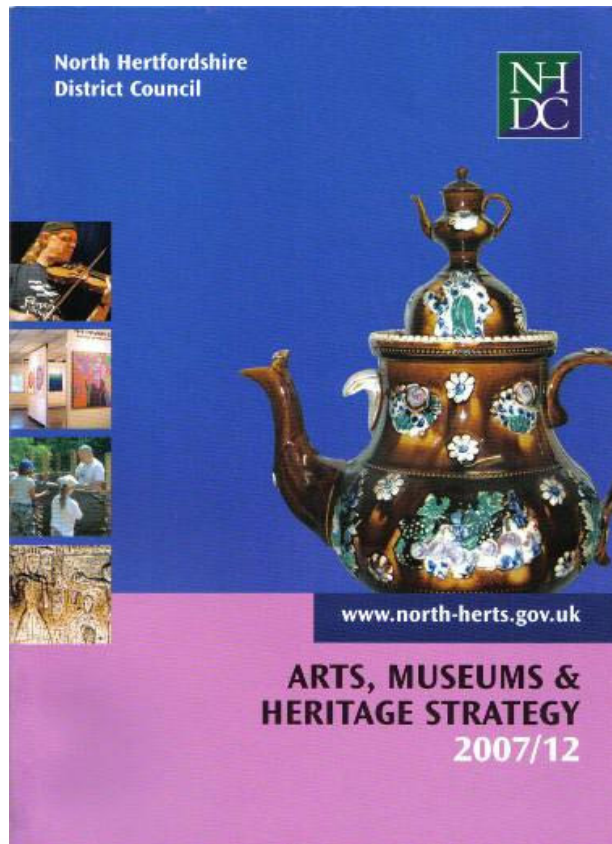
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Arts Museums & Heritage Strategy



- Covers NHDC & Partners Approach
- Incorporates Museums FSR Actions



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Arts, Museum and Heritage Forum (AMHF)

- Established January 2006
- Provides forum for key stakeholders
- Initial focus on Strategy Development & Collections Centre
- Need to establish Facilities Working Group



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‘Proof of Concept’ (Cragg) Report on Hitchin Town Hall

- To consider the shortcomings and aspirations of the existing museums
- To consider the current arrangements for display and limited storage of NHDC’s joint collections in Letchworth and Hitchin
- To consider the suitability of the former Hitchin Town Hall as a possible site for display of the collections, including siting, condition, capacity and other features of the building, and preparation of simple layout options.
- To consider whether existing (or alternative other) uses could continue to be accommodated
- To consider in broad terms how development of the building might be carried out, including the likely cost and timetable



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Existing Museums

- **Display** Space is at a premium: displays generally densely packed. The shapes and sizes of rooms are not ideal
- **Storage** Extremely limited and so intensely used as to make access difficult. Environmental control rudimentary although stable
- **Security** CCTV invigilation broadly acceptable given the type of exhibits; physical security of the buildings could be improved
- **Access/Visitor facilities** No lifts. No dedicated space for schools. Minimal public toilet facilities. Limited provision for researchers. No catering
- **Staff facilities** Cramped offices, poor storage



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Hitchin Town Hall

- Town Hall has the space for improved museum display and visitor facilities (1400m²)
- Like for like requires 670m²
- Median – 1305m² would allow improved display and access
- Optimum – 1875m², so would need to extend, at the rear, or by adding an upper floor/mezzanine in main hall



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Illustrative Functions - Ground Floor

- Reception & Shop
- Cloakrooms, WC
- Galleries
- Café
- Delivery area & workshop
- Some exhibit storage
- Occasional public/private hire



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Illustrative Functions – Other Floors

- Offices, meeting rooms
- Staff cloakroom, kitchen, toilet
- Education room
- Library, archive, study room
- Other storage areas
- Some galleries if good lift access (though would need critical mass to make this worthwhile for visitors)



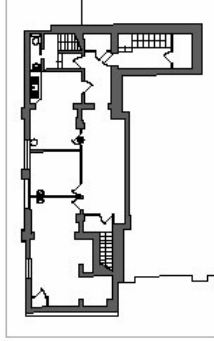
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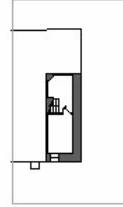
REAR BASEMENT



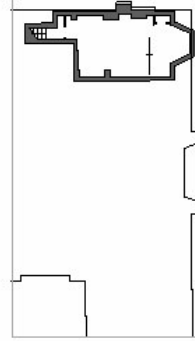
GROUND FLOOR PLAN



SIDE BASEMENT



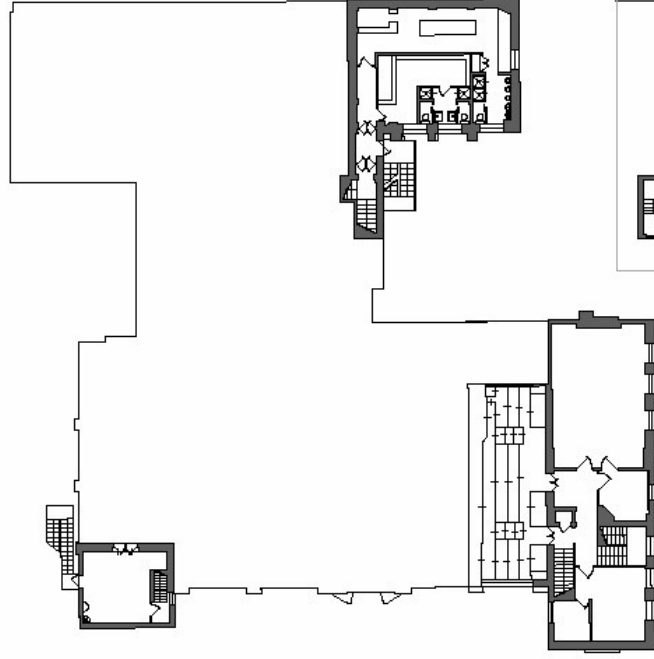
FRONT BASEMENT



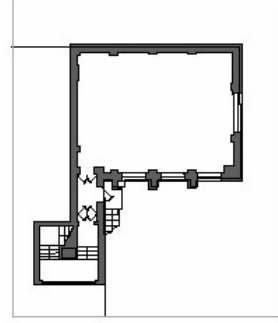
HITCHIN TOWN HALL
Existing plans
scale: 1:250 @ A3
date: april 2009
Drawing No: 210/sk01
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MANAGEMENT



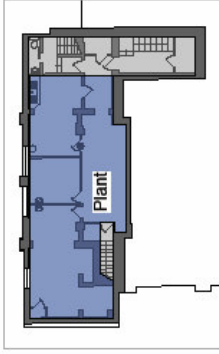
FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



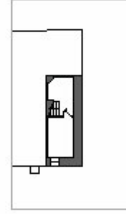
REAR BASEMENT



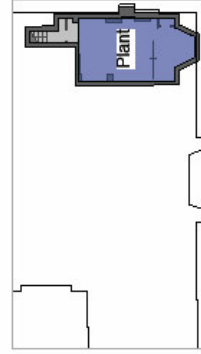
GROUND FLOOR PLAN



SIDE BASEMENT



FRONT BASEMENT



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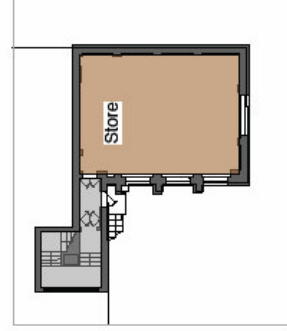
galleries
education, study
other public areas:
recept/cante/shop
staff areas:
offices/meeting/ancilli
workshop/storage
ancillary areas:
workshop/storage
cloaks, toilets etc
plant
circulation

HITCHIN TOWN HALL
Option 1 plans
scale: 1:250 @ A3
date: april 2009
Drawing No: 210/sk11
Cragg
0 5 10

FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



The floor plan shows a large red rectangular area labeled 'Galleries' in the center. To its right is a yellow area labeled 'Office suite'. Above the 'Galleries' is a blue rectangular area labeled 'Plant'. To the left of the 'Galleries' is a green area labeled 'Meeting'. To the right of the 'Galleries' is a brown area labeled 'Store'. A legend on the left indicates that grey areas represent 'Circulation'. A 'Lift' is located near the 'Office suite'.

HITCHIN TOWN HALL
Option 2 plans
scale: 1:250 @ A3
date: april 2009

 CRAAG

Drawing No: 210/sk12

Conclusions

- The Town Hall building could be adapted for museum use, with education and study space and other public facilities, as well as offices for the museum staff, and limited storage
- Provisional assessment of the project costs for the options given is around £2.35M and £2.6M respectively
- Suggested development programme indicates that completion would be possible by January 2012
- Use of the building as a museum could be combined with other uses, but large parties would not be easily accommodated on account of the space required and potential security implications
- If NHDC proceeds with the project, a consultant team should be appointed, commencing with a Project Manager
- NHDC should confirm the budget, programme and outline brief as the basis for the appointment of the consultant

Next Steps

Ref	Task description	Estimated Completion Date
1	Invite fee quotations from three architectural practices	20 th May 2009
2	Pre submission discussions each company	4 th June 2009
3	Submission of fee quotations	17 th June 2009
4	Appointment of consultant	24 th June 2009
5	Project commencement meeting	4 th July 2009
6	Progress meeting	19 th August 2009
7	Submission of draft report	30 th Sept 2009
8	Comments on draft report	14 th October 2009
9	Submission of final report	11 th Nov 2009



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Further information available at

http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/discover_nhdc/art_museums_and_heritage.htm

or from

Ros.allwood@north-herts.gov.uk

01462 435197



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