

MEMBERS INFORMATION NOTE

Hitchin Town Hall: Notice of Addition to the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest

This information note advises Members about the decision of the Minister of Tourism and Heritage in respect of the application for the 'listing' of Hitchin Town Hall.

The Council received written notice from English Heritage on 15th October confirming that the Town Hall has been listed at Grade II. A copy of the letter and the list entry is attached to this note.

In England and Wales, listed buildings are classified in three grades:

- Grade I buildings are of exceptional interest, sometimes considered to be internationally important. Just 2.5% of listed buildings are Grade I.
- Grade II* buildings are particularly important buildings of more than special interest. 5.5% of listed buildings are Grade II*.
- Grade II buildings are nationally important and of special interest. 92% of all listed buildings are in this class.

Initial advice from the Council's Architectural Advisor for the project confirms that:

- The listing is applicable to the whole building and its fittings and the description is not intended to note all significant items. However:
- English Heritage understand the need to maintain buildings in viable use and do not expect listed building to be 'preserved in aspic'
- Both proposals for Hitchin Town Hall/Museum respect the principal areas of significance: the facade to Brand Street and the Lucas Room and, as a result:
- Both schemes could be justified via any formal assessment as part of a Listed Building consent application and:
- The indicative programme for refurbishment would need to be extended by approximately 12 weeks to accommodate this.

A report providing an analysis of the original and Hitchin Initiative proposals is currently being prepared for decision by Council 11th November and this will include consideration of this listing decision.

John Robinson
Strategic Director Customer Services
18.10.10