

Executive Report

Ward affected: Holy Trinity

Report of Director of Environment

Author: James Whiteman

Tel: 01483 444701

Email: james.whiteman@guildford.gov.uk

Lead Councillor responsible: Geoff Davis

Tel: 07836 501544

Email: geoff.davis@guildford.gov.uk

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## **Review of Guildford Museum- Second report**

### **Executive Summary**

This is the second report relating to the review of Guildford Museum. The first report was considered by the Executive on 24 November 2015.

Guildford Museum is based at Quarry Street, Guildford. The site provides public displays and storage of collections owned by the Council and also the Surrey Archaeological Society (SAS) together with offices for the Council's Heritage team. The buildings in Quarry Street are of significant historical interest but suffer from poor access and visibility. As stated in the previous report, there has been little investment in the Museum for over 25 years and this has left it looking very tired and outdated. Visitor numbers are also low and costs are considered to represent poor value for money. Three failed Heritage Lottery Fund bids have also meant that there has been no additional funding available to address these issues.

The Museum working Group (MWG) has been looking at all aspects of the Museum and its future. The MWG has also visited other museums to learn from their experiences and approaches. Stuart Davies Associates (SDA), museum consultants, have also been carrying out work to inform the review, speaking to stakeholders, partners, public and staff and collating information about other museums. A report outlining their findings and recommendations has been produced and is attached in Appendix 1 and discussed within this report. Their report confirms that our museum offering falls short of current expectations of the type of offering and experience a modern museum should provide. SDA also confirm that Guildford is large enough and historically important enough to warrant a good modern museum and that we have a number of stories that should be told in a refreshed and exciting way.

Alongside the work of SDA, we have also looked for any available sites in the town centre that might be appropriate for a new museum. Searches have confirmed that there are no suitable alternative properties identified for our museum use. The cost of a new build has also been ruled out due to very high costs. As a result, we have also looked at the current site to assess its suitability as the continued and future home of

Guildford Museum. An architect has produced some exciting draft plans that suggest an attractive, high quality new build extension to the current site. This would allow for expansive, modern display space along with a café, modern and appropriate access, toilets and an entrance facing into the Castle Grounds. It is suggested that this Council should invest its capital (£2.264 million currently in provisional) into the new extension project. Clearly, this is at very early stages and appropriate feasibility studies and costings will need to be carried out, alongside working with a number of relevant groups and organisations including Historic England and the Council's own conservation team. To progress this further, we would need scheduled monument consent for alterations to the Kings Chamber, a new build on the historic site and any structural alterations to Castle Arch House. We may also need to involve an archaeological unit to work with us throughout the project. It would also be necessary to seek external funding to adapt and refresh the existing buildings.

It is clear that to achieve the desired improvements to the museum, there will need to be a great deal of planning to ensure that we get this right. Incorporating the views of the public and partners will be vitally important. A development group will need to be assembled with appropriate individuals and representatives from relevant organisations. A funding strategy and related group will also need to be created to ensure we identify and secure appropriate external funding and grants.

There is potential to deliver a really exciting and modern museum for Guildford.

Discussions with the SAS are ongoing.

### **Recommendation to Executive**

- (1) That a feasibility and costing report be commissioned for the proposed new build extension to the current Museum buildings and that the vision of developing an updated and exciting museum offering at that site be approved.
- (2) That the sum of £240,000 be transferred from the provisional capital programme (ED18(p) Museum and Castle Development scheme to the approved capital programme to carry out the work referred to in paragraph (1) above.
- (3) That the Director of Environment be authorised:
  - (i) to establish a Development Group, consisting of internal representatives and external partners, to assist in the delivery of improvements to the Museum; and
  - (ii) to develop a fundraising strategy and related fundraising committee with a view to identifying and securing external grants and funding for improvements to the Museum
- (4) That the Museum Working Group be requested to review and make recommendations on the future of the Victorian Schoolroom, including the possible sale of 39½ Castle Street should the Schoolroom be discontinued.
- (5) That the Action Plan in Appendix 3 to this report be approved and that the Museum Working Group be requested to continue its work to deliver the Action

Plan.

Reason(s) for Recommendation:

To fully review the museum offering for Guildford with a view to improving the service and making it more cost effective.

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The report provides an update of the review of Guildford Museum. It highlights the continued work of the MWG, the current status of discussions with the SAS, it outlines the findings of Stuart Davies Associates (SDA), museum consultants, and provides proposed actions for the future.
- 1.2 The Executive is asked to agree to the revised Action Plan for the continuation of the review and implementing the proposed improvements to the museum.

**2. Strategic Priorities**

- 2.1 The review aims to improve the museum offering for Guildford. This fits in the Our Economy theme within the Corporate Plan and links to the Council's Tourism Strategy. The new offering will tell the story of Guildford, using a wider range of display and interpretation methods, including interactive and digital technology (with appropriate budgets), with changing programmes to appeal to a broader audience. This will attract increased numbers of visitors to the museum, to the town and borough.
- 2.2 The refreshed museum will also stimulate and encourage learning about our past. It will also be a location and social centre for residents and visitors to meet and look at art and exhibits. This will add to the quality of life for residents and visitors and fits within the theme of Our Society within the Corporate Plan.
- 2.3 The development of the museum would also meet the target under Our Borough within the Corporate Plan that states:

*"To produce proposals for the development of a new cultural and educational centre in the town centre taking into account the future of Guildford Museum".*

**3. Background**

- 3.1 Guildford Museum is an accredited museum (under the Government's Museum Accreditation Scheme) based at Quarry Street, Guildford, in five buildings on the historic Castle estate. The Museum also uses 39 ½ Castle Street, situated around the corner, as a base for the Victorian Schoolroom, its formal schools' offer.
- 3.2 The Museum is managed by our Heritage Team, who also manage the Castle, Undercroft, Wanborough Barns, the Guildhall and Guildford House.
- 3.3 As stated in the first report in November 2015, there has been minimal investment in displays and facilities over the years and the museum is looking

tired and dated. Visitor numbers have declined from 17,689 in 2006-07 to a current figure of around 12,986 visitors for 2015-16. It is felt that the entrance from Quarry Street also affects visitor numbers. Attempts have been made to address the situation through bids to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in 1997, 2013 and 2015. Unfortunately, all of these bids were rejected which has left the Council with a museum providing poor value for money and attracting limited interest from residents and visitors.

- 3.4 The SAS currently occupy rooms in the Museum and make their collections available to the Council and the Council provides curatorship for this entire collection, held at the Museum and at Woking Road Depot. The SAS pay £400 per annum for this arrangement with no additional rent for the space at Woking Road Depot. In return, the Council has full access to the SAS's collections, related information and records for exhibition and public use. Prior to the MWG being set up a Notice under Section 25 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 was served on the SAS to terminate its occupation of the Museum on 29 January 2016. It is proposed that the space vacated by the SAS will be utilised by the Council, as proposed in the report to the Executive, 24 November 2015. An update on this situation is provided in 4.13 of this report.
- 3.5 The situation with falling visitor numbers, tired exhibits and poor value for money could not continue. The former Leader of the Council, Lead Member Councillor Geoff Davis and the Current Leader of the Council have all stated a clear commitment to modernise and improve the museum offering. As a result, the MWG has been looking at how this can be achieved.

#### **4. The Review of Guildford Museum**

##### The Museum Working Group (MWG)

- 4.1 The MWG includes the following Councillors and Officers:

- Councillor Geoff Davis (Chairman)
- Councillor Caroline Reeves
- Councillor Tony Phillips
- Councillor David Reeve
- Councillor Angela Gunning
- Councillor David Elms (From October 2015)
- Councillor Mike Parsons (From October 2015)
- James Whiteman (Director of Environment)
- Jill Draper (Heritage Manager)
- Eileen Fleming (Legal)
- Carolyn Patterson (Communications)
- Emma Parry (Accounts)
- Mark Appleton (Assets)
- Lucy Richards (HR)
- Jenifer Davis (Web)

- 4.2 The Terms of Reference for the MWG are in Appendix 2.

- 4.3 Since the report in November 2015, the MWG has continued looking in detail at the work of the Museum. The MWG has also visited other museums, that have benefited from recent investment, to see how they operate and have implemented improvements at their sites. The group has now visited the museums at Maidstone, Poole and Salisbury. These visits have shown the primary importance of quality displays and interpretation in showcasing collections and engaging visitors. They have also revealed the potential for new build to complement historic buildings and provide the high profile entrance, visitor facilities, access and income generating spaces required to increase use and sustainability. We also spoke with relevant managers at these sites about the work they have been undertaking and the issues they faced in delivering improvement. Stuart Davies Associates (SDA) also provided relevant comparisons in their report.

#### Report from Stuart Davies Associates

- 4.4 The report from SDA, 'An Approach to Museum Development - Guildford Museum Review', is in Appendix 1.
- 4.5 The main issues highlighted in the report are shown below:
- The SDA team reviewed the original Council HLF bids; consulted key individuals and organisations; visited all of our relevant sites; visited other relevant locations (including The Lightbox in Woking); met with our staff and facilitated a staff workshop; met with Friends of Guildford Museum, met with Gavin Morgan from the Heritage Forum; they carried out 'vox pop' surveys with a small sample of people in the town centre; they reviewed the museum's on line presence and social network activity.
  - SDA looked at our current museum offering. A modern museum should be a stimulating and satisfying experience for visitors, with appropriate use of communications and modern visitor facilities. It should have displays based on strong stories and lively and attractive programmes of events and activities. It should also have high use and high footfall and should contribute to the wider aspirations of Guildford in terms of economy, society and culture. It should also have highly effective branding and marketing and provide value for money. They feel our current museum offering falls short of those expectations and requirements.
  - SDA also confirm that their discussions have revealed that whilst, for some, there is an appreciation of the artefacts, the museum is seen to be static and unchanging and tired. It offers poor access, has poor signage and is not family friendly. It is little known and needs more activities and a café and better toilets. There is also little provision for people with sensory disabilities, such as those who are deaf or visually impaired. It also has disappointing exhibits like the model railway. SDA state that people want a museum that seeks to attract, is more dynamic, offers a variety of approaches to interpretation, changing exhibitions and activities.

- SDA discuss the current buildings and whilst they acknowledge there is history there to be explored, the issues of access cannot be easily addressed. The areas of accessible museum to the public is also modest and again they highlight the need for a café and better toilets.
- SDA ask the question ‘is there a need for a museum in Guildford?’ They state the short answer is “yes”. They feel Guildford is large enough and historically important enough to deserve and benefit from a good modern museum.
- They state that a museum should be a central attraction for the local tourism offer. They emphasise the need to be clear about what sort of museum Guildford needs, what it can provide and what stories it can tell. They state very clearly that it is important to engage with people at the start of the project with an effective communications plan. We must plan carefully for the development of the museum and understand the level of commitment, budget and workload required to do this. It is also important to involve the right people from the start.
- Even whilst making long-term plans, SDA recommend that the Council starts refreshing the current museum offering now. This would include better signage (especially in the Castle Grounds and the Castle Street area), telling the public about our new journey of improvement, test interpretative ideas and approaches now, collect stories and recruit volunteers. This may all require further funding and needs further work to confirm.
- In terms of space required for a new offering, they list criteria such as a reception area, principal display galleries, galleries for changing exhibitions, learning and activity facilities, café, shop and toilets, supporting conservation/workshop on site, storage facilities, meeting rooms and office accommodation.
- In terms of size, under ‘How big and how much’ in their report, SDA set out suggested requirements. New build (3,000 m<sup>2</sup>) is estimated at about £8-12 million depending on building size, location and fit out. The challenges of finding an appropriate new building to move into, or a site to build a new museum on, are highlighted, as are the potential positive opportunities for staying at and developing the current site. Certainly, SDA feel that the museum does not currently take full advantage of the proximity to the Castle Grounds and feel a new entrance from the Castle Grounds would assist. This would also provide the opportunity to utilise interpretative plans and experiences including the Museum, Castle and Castle Grounds and treating the built environment as a key exhibit.
- SDA discuss the current collections under ‘Content and Themes’. It is noted that there are particular collections of note which are rarely seen e.g. extensive textile collections in store. SDA feel we should look to allow people to see ‘behind the scenes’ work through online access, you Tube etc. Open days and volunteer opportunities should also be provided. From their

various discussions, they state that the majority view, in terms of developing museum content, is 'to tell the story of Guildford and the surrounding area in the context of the county' i.e. the focus would be on the town and its hinterland.

- SDA also comment that our collections are notably weak post 1914 and that we need to address this.
- In terms of telling stories about our past, SDA suggest that we should embrace the interpretation of the castle. They feel the new build extension option on an historic site will create a visitors environment that mirrors a growing, changing town with a long rich history, which continues with recent and extensive contemporary developments. Some of these relate to new industries, research and educational establishments in Guildford.
- SDA also feel our current museum offering lacks 'people in displays'. There is a wealth of people (in addition to Gertrude Jekyll and Lewis Carroll) including the inventor of the slide-rule designers of micro-satellite technology, the court artist John Russell, celebrated guitarists and plane designers.
- The importance of partnerships is also examined. It is important the Heritage team and the work they do is not isolated from the rest of the Council. A number of external relationships (including the Friends of Guildford Museum and the SAS) and approaches are covered.
- SDA also cover business planning and income generation. The development of catering, donations on site and seeking grants are all seen as vital to the museum's development.
- Finally, a need to look at our staffing structure, skills, capacity and knowledge is also highlighted for the future development of the Museum.

4.6 It should be noted that this report from SDA was completed in very difficult circumstances for them. Stuart Davies himself became critically ill just before Christmas and is still very poorly. Nigel Nixon from the team has had to pick up this project and complete the report. We are very grateful for all of the hard work that has gone into this.

#### Looking for new sites for the museum

4.7 The MWG wanted to look at the possibilities for seeking an existing building in the town centre that could be purchased and turned into our new museum site. A commercial property agent was employed to assist with the search, and a number of sites were explored, but we were unable to locate an appropriate site. In terms of a new build in a town location, the costings from SDA were felt to be too expensive and so this option was discounted.

### Staying at the current site

- 4.8 ZMMA architects have produced draft plans for the current site. The architect has taken a view that the Council would be advised to use its £2.264 million capital (currently provisional) on a new build extension rather than trying to just adapt the current historic buildings. Their view is that the Council will achieve better results and value for money adopting this approach whilst then seeking funding for step by step developments and improvements for specific projects on the current older buildings.
- 4.9 As a result, ZMMA have produced plans for an extension new build that provides an additional 399m<sup>2</sup> of usable space. There would be a lift, a cafe and appropriate toilets in this building with access to the older buildings for further displays and exhibits and the opportunity to look at the older buildings as exhibits themselves. They have provided some initial narrative to their draft vision and say that their proposal “focuses on using the build budget entirely on new facilities to create a new entrance building at the western edge of the Castle site that cascades down to the Museum site’s courtyard garden. It also includes using the adjacent castle ruins to form an exciting, tall temporary exhibitions gallery with a new roof structure.

The new, sloping building with its sweeping, contemporary roof slope, will include stairs and lift to bring visitors invitingly down to the Museum courtyard garden level. Here the new structure will provide an open-plan interior with daylight and both height and space to enable suspended objects, free-flowing displays and, importantly, a café area.

Having brought visitors to the Museum courtyard level, a simple link will connect the new spaces to the main display floor of the Castle Arch building, enabling those existing museum display rooms to be easily accessible to all visitors. These galleries, and the important 1911 space, would be the key publicly-accessible parts of the existing buildings, although refurbishment improvements to these would be subject to a further, future phase of expenditure. In the meantime, simple maintenance and revenue-cost based upgrading could be progressively achieved.”

- 4.10 The location of the new build extension would dictate that this would have to be a building built to the highest standards that is sympathetic and respects the older buildings and heritage requirements.
- 4.11 This new extension, whilst providing an exciting and fresh location for our exhibits and telling our local stories, would also potentially allow us to provide attractive gallery spaces suitable for hiring out for corporate hospitality and other functions. It has the potential to become a key cultural and social location in the town centre.
- 4.12 It should be noted that these plans just confirm there is potential to stay and extend in the current site. There is clearly a lot of work to do including a full feasibility study and a detailed costings exercise.

### The Surrey Archaeological Society (SAS)

- 4.13 The statutory deadline in the Section 25 Notice was extended to 29 April 2016. This was to allow for further negotiations. The situation is on-going. As stated in the November 2015 report, we do not want to see the collections split up. We do value the contribution of the SAS and would like to see their involvement in the future offering. It is felt, however, that they should contribute realistically towards any services they receive.

### Victorian Schoolroom

- 4.14 One area that the MWG has not yet reviewed is the Victorian Schoolroom, housed in 39 ½ Castle Street. This formal taught, living history session continues to attract the primary schools' audience, serving around 2,500 pupils a year and drawing visits to the Castle grounds and museum. The new build extension and refreshed approach will increase the appeal of the site to schools. Another Council building in the vicinity of the Castle could provide an opportunity to sell 39 ½ Castle Street, better integrate the on-site offer and put the proceeds of that sale towards the new build extension. This clearly needs careful consideration and will be included within the review.

### Timetable and Action Plan for Phase 2 for the review of Guildford Museum

- 4.15 It can be seen that whilst there has been good progress so far, there is still a great deal of work to be carried out to further progress this review. The Action Plan in Appendix 3 sets out the next steps.

## **5. Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 5.1 A screening EIA has been completed and it has confirmed that a full EIA is not required. We will, however, review and update the EIA as the project progresses.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 The costs of running the current museum offering were covered in the report 24 November 2016 but an updated spreadsheet showing a breakdown on the Museum 'parent' group is shown in Appendix 4.
- 6.2 The plans for the proposed extension to the current site are estimated to be around £2.5 million and fees will likely add another 10 per cent on top of this. There is currently £2.264 million in the provisional capital fund for the failed Heart of Heritage project (The HLF bid). A full feasibility study is required to look at the proposal in more detail along with a full costings exercise.
- 6.3 It will also be necessary to look at external funding opportunities and seek grants or contributions from relevant partners. This is needed if we are to then look at phased and planned improvements to the current buildings once the new build extension has been built. An appropriate fundraising strategy and panel will need to be formed to ensure we do this in an effective and structured way.

- 6.4 In relation to the HLF, the Managing Director and Director of Environment met with them on 18 March 2016. It was confirmed that it would take a minimum of two years to put a new bid together before any building can actually take place. There is no guarantee of success after all of that further work. It is therefore suggested that we proceed with our new build suggestion and seek specific funding for each incremental improvement on the older buildings.
- 6.5 The potential sale of 39 ½ Castle Street would also provide further funding to the project. An up to date valuation is being arranged.

## **7. Legal Implications**

- 7.1 As this review continues, specific legal advice will be requested when required to ensure that all future proposals are implemented in accordance with the Council's procedures and statutory requirements. Generally, the points below need to be considered.
- 7.2 The general power of competence set out in the Localism Act 2011 (section 1), which empowers this Council to do anything an individual may generally do apart from that which is specifically prohibited by existing legislation. Any decision taken in exercise of the general power of competence, as with any other power, can be challenged under judicial review on the grounds of illegality, irrationality or procedural impropriety.
- 7.3 The Local Government (Contracts) Act 1997 section provides that statutory provisions conferring or imposing a function on a Council confers powers on the Council to enter into a contract with another person for the provision or making available of assets or services or both (whether or not together with goods) for the purposes of or in connection with the discharge of the function by the Council.
- 7.4 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (section 17) imposes a duty on the Council to consider in all its decision making the requirements to reduce crime and disorder.
- 7.5 The Human Rights Act 1998 requires not only that the Council shall not infringe the convention rights but also (by inference) the Council is required to promote the convention rights in its decision-making.
- 7.6 The public sector equality duty, as set out in the Equality Act 2010 (section 149) requires this Council when exercising its functions to have "due regard" to the need to:
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation,
  - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, and
  - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant 'protected characteristic' and persons who do not share it. The 'protected characteristics' are age, disability, race (including ethnic or national origins, colour and nationality), religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity

and gender reassignment. Marriage and civil partnership are also a protected characteristic for the purposes of the duty to eliminate discrimination.

## **8. Human Resource Implications**

- 8.1 There are no Human Resource implications at this stage. Staff Side has been informed of the review and have been invited to attend staff briefings. If there are any subsequent changes to staffing arrangements and conditions then this will be carried with full consultation with our staff in accordance with our policies and procedures.

## **9. Summary of Options**

- 9.1 This Council's intention to provide a new improved museum offering was expressed in the 24 November 2015 report.
- 9.2 The MWG has looked at options for alternative sites and also considered building a new museum. It has not been possible to identify an appropriate existing building for museum use and costs of building a new Museum have been identified as too high.
- 9.3 The MWG has therefore looked at the current site. Architects have proposed an exciting new build extension with an entrance from the Castle Grounds that would enable the Council to provide a modern museum for Guildford, and help develop the approach of a 'Heritage Quarter' in that part of Guildford.

## **10. Borough, Economy and Infrastructure Executive Advisory Board, 4 April 2016**

- 10.1 The detailed comments of the Borough, Economy and Infrastructure Executive Advisory Board will be presented to the Executive at its meeting.

## **11. Conclusion**

- 11.1 The SDA report has confirmed that:
- our current museum offering does not meet modern expectations
  - it has a low profile, with poor signage, low visitor numbers and feels tired, static and unchanging
  - Guildford should have a museum. We are large enough and historically important enough to deserve and have a modern museum
  - we have a wealth of good stories to tell and good collections but we do need to look at updating our collection post 1914 in order to tell the modern story of Guildford
  - our newly refreshed museum would be a central attraction for the local tourism offer
  - partnerships are important and we must work closely with partners and interested parties to improve the museum (e.g. Friends of Guildford Museum and the SAS)

- we must understand the level of commitment and finance required to change and improve and we must plan accordingly. We must look to attract grants and explore income opportunities.
- 11.2 The MWG has looked at options for moving the Museum to another site in the town centre but an appropriate existing building could not be identified. The costs of building a new building are also too high to be considered. The draft plans produced by ZMMA architects have shown that there is real potential to build a new extension on the back of the existing historic buildings. This could provide an exciting and modern exhibition space, with an entrance from the Castle Grounds, with modern facilities (café and toilets and good access) that would help turn our Museum into a major tourist and visitor destination.
- 11.3 There is still a great deal of work to do to. A full feasibility study and costing exercise need to be carried out to determine the exact costs of the scheme. It is also acknowledged that even with the £2.264 million we are still short of the estimated £2.5 million for the new build extension. We also require further funding for updating the existing historic buildings. We will need to plan incremental change and improvements and have a structured and directed approach to gaining external funding.
- 11.4 There is a real opportunity to transform our tired and outdated Museum into a modern museum offering. With the right levels of funding, drive and commitment, consultation and planning then this can be achieved.

## **12. Background Papers**

[Review of Guildford Museum, Executive report, 24 November 2015](#)

## **13. Appendices**

Appendix 1 – An Approach to Museum Development – Guildford Museum Review, Stuart Davies Associates

Appendix 2 – Terms of Reference for the Museum Working Group

Appendix 3 – Action Plan

Appendix 4 – Financial information, Museum ‘parent’ group.