

# Budget and Plan for Guildford Museum approved by Council 7<sup>th</sup> Feb 2018

**Report by** Gavin Morgan 13<sup>th</sup> February 2018

## Introduction

On 7<sup>th</sup> February the Council approved a budget for further work on Guildford Museum and on repairs to 48 Quarry Street. Although initial funding was approved for the feasibility study in April 2016, more money is needed to complete the next phase of the project.

(This is my summary but if you want to see more information please go to the Appendix below).

Work on the building has been put back from Sept 2018 (in the original Action Plan) to Feb 2020 with an estimated opening in Spring 2021. Nevertheless, having recently met the officers and councillors involved in this project I am convinced they are determined to get this project moving. So I intend to greet this news with renewed hope and optimism but reserve our judgement until we see something delivered.

We all need to come together. People in the town whether historians or involved in the community in other ways have something to offer. At the same time the Council needs to be open to ideas. The Council through the Heritage Service will, of course, have the final say but we need to make sure it has the information needed to make proper decisions.

## A Project Manager

A number of excellent things come out of the budget bid. There is to be a project manager with museum experience as the Council recognises this to be a “specialist sector”.

## Aims of the project

We also get sight of the Council’s aims. These were in the April 2016 “Review of Guildford Museum – Second Report” but it is good to see them pulled out. The plan is to tell the story of Guildford and have “changing programmes”. I hope the changing programmes include exhibitions and we retain space for such events. The museum will “encourage learning” and be a venue and social centre. Again it is not clear whether this just means a place where people will come to or whether it will include facilities for interested groups to meet.

I would like to see the aims include increased commercial activities through lettings and events. Also I believe a major aim of any local museum is to foster a sense of identity and present an image of the town. The Council has indirectly talked about both so it would be good to include them in the aims. The “Your Stories” project explored what Guildford means to people so work has been started. There is also a great opportunity to use the museum as a show case for what the town represents. We know the Council is interested in displaying computer games and satellites.

## Challenges

There are two big challenges mentioned. The first is that the building project requires multiple building consents and we know that discussions are taking place with English Heritage over how the project will affect the Kings Chamber ruins backing onto the museum.

Another challenge is working out what will go in the museum and what services it will provide. There has been no funding for this work to date and without it the bid argues that ZMMA will not be able to complete the feasibility study.

The work that needs to be carried out was outlined in the SDA report and this is clearly going to be the blueprint that the Council uses so I suggest we re-read it. However, given the fact that the museum has no curator and no longer stages exhibitions that explore our history I think it will need support from people outside. The Specialists Group made a start but in my opinion its remit was too restricted. It needs to include all relevant museum staff as well as experts from the community. It should commission reports. The museum's partners also need to be involved in this development exercise. The Council has involved quite a large number of partners for such as a small site. It is keen to have a big Lewis Carroll exhibition (if not separate museum), include the Surrey Infantry Museum as well as archaeology, the story of Guildford and exhibits reflecting modern Guildford (satellites and games). There also needs to be room for a café.

The castle is not mentioned anywhere and I think this is the easiest and possibly the most cost effective way of getting more visitors to the site. I am working on a report on the potential of the castle and will be asking for help.

### **Timelines**

The report then outlines the timelines. The masterplan and strategic plan will be complete in March 2018. I am not sure what this will include but hopefully this will allow the museum's partners to work out their position.

The feasibility study will continue until January 2019. The interpretation and content will be worked on this year down to November and the exhibition design will take another year. Building work will take place in 2020 with the new museum opening in April 2021. It is impossible to work out a plan like this precisely so we should take these as ball park figures but if they are missed I hope we will at least see evidence of something happening.

### **Appendix**

I have copied out the relevant sections of the bid so you can see the information in more detail. The full report can also be read at [full Agenda Report Pack](#). It covers the Council's full budget so you need to go to the following pages

- See p93 for table summarising the capital expenditure
- See p157 for work being done on 48 Quarry Street (museum offices)
- See p184-187 for the Museum Project

### **Aims and Objectives**

We are told that the "aims and objectives agreed by the Executive" in the Review of Guildford Museum – Second Report are

- "Improve the museum offering"
- "Attract increased numbers of visitors to the museum"
- "Tell the story of Guildford, using a wider range of display and interpretation methods including interactive and digital technology"

- “Have “changing programmes to appeal to a broader audience”
- “Stimulate and encourage learning a bout our past”
- “Be a venue and social centre for residents and visitors to meet and look at art and exhibits that will add to their quality of life”

## Background

The bid for the museum work repeats a lot of the information in the Report of April 2016 but provides a useful summary of the benefits, assumptions and we also get a revised timeline.

The Council agrees with consultants Stuart Davies point that whilst Guildford is historically important enough to warrant a “good modern museum”. However due to “minimal investment... over many decades” it is now “tired and date”, offers “poor value for money” and , “falling visitors numbers”.

However, the Council has “made a clear commitment to modernise and improve the museum”. The feasibility study by ZMMA is now underway and looking into “options for creating access from the castle grounds and extending space for public galleries, activities and visitor facilities”.

## Exhibition Design

Exhibition design will also be undertaken by ZMMA but is at an early stage

## Plans for development of museum

The most interesting part of the bid was “Although the existing capital bid includes approved funding for professional architectural services, there is no provision, currently to take forward the planning and development of the new museum content and infrastructure. The wide range of activities required to shape the new museum was outlined in the SDA report and these are an essential and integral part of the current feasibility study. Without these the architect will be unable to complete the feasibility study to an appropriate standard and level of understanding, or produce realistic costings for the development project”.

“There is no provision after the finish of the ACE grant for further short term improvements or to continue to valuable community engagement work started through the Your Stories project

## Timelines

The report then outlines the timelines. The masterplan and strategic plan will be complete in March 2018. I am not sure what this will include but hopefully this will allow the museums partners to work out their position.

The feasibility study will continue until January 2019 confirming that it will take 2 years from start to finish. The interpretation and content will be worked on this year down to November and the exhibition design will take another year. Building work will take place in 2020 with the new museum opening in April 2021 assuming there are no delays. This is all in line with what I have heard on the grape vine over the last year but is way longer than the original plan.

Here is the full timeline list

- Complete stage 1 architectural report Mar 2017 - completed
- Complete wider context and significance report Jul 2017 - completed
- Produce strategic level museum masterplan and interpretation plan Mar 2018
- Complete architectural concept design Sep 2018
- Complete interpretation and activity plan Nov 2018

- Develop exhibition design through concept and detailed stage Dec 2019
- Complete and sign off full feasibility study Jan 2019
- Procurement of construction, fit out and museum design Dec 2019 - Jul 2020
- Development of architectural technical design Aug 2019 - Jul 2020
- Conservation of objects for display Jul 2019 - Oct 2020
- Implement construction Feb 2020 - Oct 2020
- Finalising of interpretation content Apr 2020
- Finalising of exhibition technical design for procurement Jul 2020
- Fit out Nov 2020 - Apr 2021

### **Constraints**

Some constraints are mentioned. The project relies on multiple building consents of which English Heritage is the most contentious because the plan is to build over the Henry II chamber. (This was in the original lottery bid). Staff will have to be relocated and there is no money for renting other accommodation and most important of all a decision will not be made until January 2019 (ie end of the feasibility study) as to whether the project will go ahead but lets assume.

There are also risks that Council priorities change, the cost of the project is too much or that building consent is not achieved.

### **Quarry Street**

There is a separate bid for repairs to 48 Quarry Street. Repairs to 48 Quarry Street have been postponed for years due to the lottery bid and museum review but are now becoming urgent. £250,000 has been put aside for this work over the next 2 years.