

St George's Guildhall Centre Advisory Group

Meeting Minutes

Date: 17 th March 2022	Location: Town Hall and via MS Teams (Hybrid meeting)
Time: 1pm – 3pm	Chair: Michael Baldwin

Attendees	Apologies
Michael Baldwin Cllr Graham Middleton Duncan Hall Jemma Curtis Tim FitzHigham Cllr Michael De Whalley Alison Croose Cllr Mrs Elizabeth Nockolds Ema Holman Kirsty Hill Amanda Arterton Lesley Bowers Wendy Fisher Andrew Jarvis Mark Fuller Sally Turff Adrian Parker Cllr Miss Lesley Bambridge Natalie Jode Ivor Rowlands Mary Muir Sharon Fox Angela Downing Harry Seaton	Nick Dodds Jenny Caynes Hetty Thornton David Eve Philip Bayfield Veronica Sekules Alan Taylor Peter Wilson

Minutes	Actions
1. Apologies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Received as above. 	
2. Minutes of last meeting – 3rd November 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The minutes referred to alterations proposed in the wording of the Terms of Reference. Amendments to be made and document distributed. ACTION: Amend the TOR 	JC
3. Presentation on proposed plans for the site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A presentation was shared with the group. A lot of work has been completed over the last few months and members of the Advisory Group have been involved. The ambition for the site has been on-going for a long time, but funding is now available to allow the project to commence. A slide on the Towns Fund outputs and outcomes was shared and explained by Jemma Curtis. Towns Fund monitor projects for 3 years from the date of completion. 	

St George's Guildhall Centre Advisory Group

Meeting Minutes

- It is hoped to secure funding through the National Lottery also.
- Governance structures are in place, this is a complex project with many partners and stakeholders. The borough council as the accountable body.
- There have been delays in appointing a Project Manager, the position has been advertised twice but no suitable person has been found.
- The Norfolk Museums Service and the National Trust are both involved in the project, and they have a wealth of experience in running projects like this one all reporting to the Project Board and various other internal and external boards.
- The Vision Manifesto was shared in November, and this has been translated into activities for the site and an activity plan has been developed which assisted in writing a business plan.
- An expression of interest was submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the project has been invited to submit a stage 1 application.
- Several areas of the site had been subject to their own reports, but these have been bought together to form an overall site wide holistic masterplan.
- The project costs are also being reviewed and cost inflation issues have been explored.
- Tim FitzHigham explained the project team were tasked with finding a business model that can be robust and sustainable without ongoing subsidy from the Council? The site previously was managed in a piece meal fashion and did not make a profit, this time the entire site from road to river has been the focus with all elements being drawn together.
- The ambition is to create a significant visitor and heritage attraction and cultural enterprise with a footfall of 40-90,000 visitors a year. The business plan has a large amount of money set aside each year for marketing.
- Advice has been taken from the Museum Service and National Trust along with other cultural enterprises and used that advice and applied it.
- There will still be free access to part of the site with paid tours during the day. The very highest level of interpretation will be available beyond the pay barrier.
- The Fermoy will always remain a free access gallery.
- The National Trust have a membership of over 40,000 households within a 1-hour drive from the site who can visit.
- Every area of the site will be dual purpose, by day and by night.
- It is hoped that 27 spaces will be created for creative enterprise in the White Barn and White Barn annexe the Riverside will continue to function as a restaurant by a third-party operator on a rental arrangement. Catering training will be offered through the new 'T-Level' scheme and the Shakespeare Barn is hopefully to become a hub for aspiring the young to get involved in the catering trades.
- Access to the site is altered bringing people into the south courtyard from Ferry Lane through the White Barn. Current access arrangements from King Street will remain and the old archway at 29 King Street is to be opened again as demonstrated on the presentation.

St George's Guildhall Centre Advisory Group

Meeting Minutes

- During the day it is hoped the heritage attraction will be a paid tour. The Red Barn and Fermoy will act as a start and finish for the tour. The tour will include projection, VR, interpretation boards on the walls to bring the site to life. The red barn will be a 45-seat lecture space which can be used in the evening for education.
- Volunteer guides will progress the tour down St Georges Passage.
- The Elizabethan, Jacobean, Charles the 1st and 2nd and the Georgian period will all be explored then moving onto Crofters where the English Civil War will be discussed including Crofters former use as a gunpowder store.
- In the evening Crofters will become a 70-seat comedy club.
- The Guildhall Theatre will get people talking. The entire history of English drama will be told from the earliest performance in 1445 up to the present day to emphasise that the Guildhall is still a working theatre.
- The backstage area will be an area where the transitory nature of drama will be told pre-1776.
- Three dressing rooms will be dressed, one as an Elizabethan retiring room, one Georgian dressing room and one as a 1950's/1960's dressing room which will tell the story of Lady Fermoy and the start of the King's Lynn Festival.
- The Fermoy gallery will then be entered with the portrait of Lady Fermoy hanging in the foyer.
- The heritage interpretation will start on the opposite side of the river with interpretation panels telling the story of the Guildhall.
- The importance of the courtyards within the centre will be highlighted in the Shakespeare Barn, and the focus of Armin, one of Shakespeare's comedians who was born in King's Lynn just one street away from the Guildhall, will be shown in the Old Warehouse.
- RIBA Stage 1 visuals were shared with the group.
- The Fermoy Gallery will remain largely untouched but will have some upgrades particularly to its security which may allow for larger exhibitions in the future.
- The White Barn will have a second floor added as a mezzanine and units will be created as 'maker spaces', the ground floor for front facing creative businesses.
- Crofters will become a 90-seat venue for comedy and music, it cannot be used for catering as cooked food cannot be served there.
- Proposed theatre layout visuals were shared, and it was shown as a flexible working space. An Elizabethan Theatre, a banqueting space, a rock venue, and a modern theatre.
- The Georgian balcony will be re-instated, and the flat floor seating will be easily removed if necessary.
- The development phase is November – 2023, the delivery phase in 2024 and the operational phase in 2026.
The Theatre will have 297 seats.
- The Alexander Penrose tablet will remain in the Guildhall and form part of the interpretation.
- A budget within the cost plan has been allowed for archaeology.

St George's Guildhall Centre Advisory Group

Meeting Minutes

- It is hoped that the theatre will still be functioning in 2023 and planned performances should be able to take place.
- The current area for storage, used by King's Lynn Players and KLODS is to be a creative maker space. It is hoped that offsite provision can be made for the storage of scenery and props, however it may be possible for one of the creative spaces in the White Barn to be utilised by these societies for the making of scenery and props.
- The report is only at RIBA stage 1 and there are 7 further stages to go through, the workshop space can be assessed at a later stage.
- The Orchestra Pit will remain, it will fulfil a dual purpose and will also act as access to wheelchair users to get onto the stage. The floor level will go both up for wheelchair users and down for an orchestra.
- Concern was raised regarding the White Barn being used for the creative 'maker-spaces'. The barn will have a steel structure inserted and a mezzanine floor, the outer structure will then be tied to this inserted steel works, it is a large capital cost, but a budget has been allocated to this work. One of the provisions of the Town's Fund was that a creative space was included.
- Deliveries will be required by those people occupying the creative hub and service vehicles entering the courtyard would not be welcome.
- Concerns were also raised over the ability to get a fire engine into the courtyard should there be a fire at the far end of the proposed development.
- The College of West Anglia already has a performing arts facility and therefore would not need another on this site, therefore the only option for the White Barn realistically is as a creative hub.
- The Shakespeare Barn should still be available for exhibiting artwork although the plans do not currently contain this level of detail.
- There will be catering in the Shakespeare Barn as well as at the Riverside rooms and the opportunity for outside catering in busier periods.
- Natalie Jode of Creative Arts East offered her congratulations and suggested an organisation who may be able to assist in capital fundraising strategy, The National Centre for Writing.
- Plenty of refreshments would be needed in the centre and queries were raised on how the 3rd party catering operator would assist in bringing in footfall and if they would fully understand their importance on the site.
- A restaurant is a good 3rd party endeavour and would provide a guaranteed and stable rental income.
- The current provision on site is not open for drinks before and after shows as there are not enough performances to ensure financial viability at present. It is hoped that this will improve on project completion.
- A 'meanwhile use' group will be formed involving the community groups, the 3rd party catering, marketing and will hopefully pull together a use for the site as the site should not be allowed to deteriorate further whilst the proposed works are undertaken.
- Vital that meanwhile use continues on site. Volunteers will be needed as part of the meanwhile use.

St George's Guildhall Centre Advisory Group

Meeting Minutes

- Tim reiterated the plan has a lot of detail still to determine, however joined up working with surrounding organisations could be considered.
- It is the aim that the site will be wheelchair accessible including the heritage experience.
- There is an allocation in the budget to improve the frontage on King Street. It is proposed that lighting will be used to enhance, and the footpath will be extended. Parking spaces on the opposite side of the road are likely to be lost. Artwork can be used to draw the eye to the building.
- It is hoped that there will be around 100 performances a year in Crofters with 200 a year in the main theatre, this should be the aim.
- Management of the site is yet to be determined. Suggestions have been made regarding 1 organisation running the entire site, but it is for the Borough Council to decide.
- The timing of 3pm from day to night-time use can be flexible. If the daytime use needs to extend an hour, it can do so. Likewise, if the evening use needs to start earlier, the time can be changed. Advice was sought on this matter and recommendations were made.
- The meanwhile use needs to be programmed for 2022/2023, however an exact date has not been determined for works to commence on site. Some alternative uses may be trialled along with continuing existing uses.
- Spaces which have not been used in a while need to be explored as part of the meanwhile use.
- It is not envisaged that there will be paid tour guides, it is hoped that the current volunteers will continue to run the tours. The National Trust have offered training for the volunteers. The information that is given to the public will need to be fact checked.
- The Towns Fund Business Case has not yet been completed, working to a Towns Fund deadline the focus and priority must be getting the Business Case signed off within those deadlines. A cabinet report on the future operation is being prepared for a meeting in April, the financial detail will be an appendix to this and will be made public.

4. Project Next Steps – Angela Downing

- Angela introduces herself as part of the National Trusts Fundraising Team.
- A large part of the site is owned by the National Trust and landlord consent will be required as the project moves forward.
- It is important to the National Trust to record the building and this project will give an opportunity to understand the building so that this can be shared with academics and visitors to the site.
- The focus will be to secure sources of funding.
- A quote from Alexander Penrose a Quaker man who was instrumental in the purchase of the building by the National Trust – In 1945 a large ancient shabby building used as a scenery store with warehouses and yards behind and standing a stone's throw for Lynn's Tuesday Market Place was up for sale. The roof leaked and spiders made their habitation

St George's Guildhall Centre Advisory Group

Meeting Minutes

where the drips could be avoided. Few realised that this dim and ruinous place was a Guildhall built over 5 centuries ago by the Guild of St George. The building has always been a story of survival over the centuries. The interior spaces and uses have morphed over time, fortunate have waxed and waned but there has always been an underlying sense of community use and a spirit of renewal.

- The National Trust wants to ensure the future of the site so that it has a sustainable future.

Meeting ends at 14:53

DRAFT