

## POLICY REVIEW & DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Type of Report: Open	Portfolio(s): Culture, Heritage and Health
Will be subject to a future Cabinet Report:	YES
Will be need to be recommended to Council:	YES
Author Name: Mark Fuller	<b>Consultations:</b> Chris Bamfield, Laura Hampshire, Lorraine Gore, Ray Harding, Matthew Henry, Ostap Paparega, Neil Gromett
Tel: 01553 616407	
Email: mark.fuller@west-norfolk.gov.uk	
OPEN	

### Regeneration and Development Panel

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> June 2016  
**Subject:** St Georges Guildhall Complex

**Summary:** This report outlines the emerging plans for the development of the former Arts Centre Complex and the proposed programme for submission of a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

**Recommendations:** Regeneration and Development Panel supports the emerging plans for the development and the submission of a Stage I Bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

1. Background
  - 1.1 In November 2015, the Panel (joint meeting) visited the Arts Centre complex and received a report on opportunities for the site. In general, the panel supported the outline proposals for improving use of the site provided this was done in an affordable and sustainable way. At its meeting in November the Panel was clear that Arts activity on the site should be financially sustainable.
  - 1.2 In December 2015 the Arts Trust determined that its financial position was unsustainable and that it would close. After discussions with the Council the agreement to operate Visual Arts service and the lease for the premises was terminated on 31 March 2016.
  - 1.3 Following the demise of the Arts Centre, further consideration has been given to options for use of the site and other potential partners.
2. Main Proposals

## 2.1 Guildhall

As previously discussed the intention is to return the space to its former flat floor by removing the existing fixed seating and sloping floor. The space will still be primarily used as an auditorium for performances but of reduced capacity with the flexible seating arrangements, complimenting the other established theatre offer in the town. The flat floor will allow multi-use of the space for a range of hiring's and events to maximise use. The changes described below will improve the links between the Guildhall and other parts of the complex.

2.2 A lift would be installed enabling wheelchair access to the auditorium and multi-use space, coupled with improvements to the other historic buildings in terms of both access and circulation. This would also provide an internal link between the main spaces.

2.3 Discussions have taken place with the College of West Anglia who are working with Anglia Ruskin University and the Crafts and Conservation Trust to establish a degree course in Heritage Construction Skills. The course would have a large practical element which would use the Shakespeare Barn or White Barn as a workshop area together with adjacent office space. A public viewing area would be provided to encourage the public to see work in progress. The College intend to start with an 'A' level based course before moving forward with a degree level qualification.

2.4 Other buildings will be used to create multi-purpose spaces that when not used for exhibition or learning space can be rented out for complimentary cultural uses. Outline proposals will be worked up further over the next three months prior to a submission for funding to the HLF.

2.5 The front of the complex requires improvement to enhance the setting of these buildings. Alterations to the highway and footpath will increase the presence and identity of the complex, initial discussions have been held with the Highways Authority regarding these. These improvements will include the enhancement of the courtyards within the complex.

2.6 The outcome from all works undertaken will be a sustainable, more flexible and varied space with a greater emphasis on public engagement, increased footfall and activity on the site creating a cultural and heritage hub.

2.7 The project will be supported by significantly enhanced interpretation of the site, including a complimentary activities programme. These elements will ensure a wider public engagement with the heritage of the buildings and raise awareness of the site.

## 3. Financial Implications

### 3.1 Capital Cost

3.1.1 The current broad capital estimate for works to the site is;

	£
Works to existing buildings	1,400,000
New build lift and link structure	550,000
Interpretation and Activities fees	300,000

3.1.2 An HLF grant application of £2million or less would be considered at regional level and at the moment this is the preferred course of action with a Borough Council contribution of circa £500,000 - £600,000. The current capital programme includes an estimate of £230,000 for reroofing of the Arts Centre, as recommended in the Quinquennial report, and stage lighting works.

3.1.3 Discussions are currently taking place to establish if additional funding can be identified.

### 3.2 Revenue

The net cost of the Arts Centre in the 2016/17 estimates is £115,920 excluding asset rental and support services charge. The aim of the project would be to reduce the site cost to a breakeven point.

### 4. Timescale

4.1 The significant timing issue is the introduction of Building Construction courses by COWA in August/September 2018. To achieve access to the White Barn by this date the current timetable is:

HLF Stage I Application	August 2016
Stage I Decision	December 2016
Stage II Application	June 2017
Stage II Decision	October 2017

4.2 However, should the COWA opt for the Shakespeare Barn this would enable the timescale to slip somewhat as this area requires less capital investment to accommodate the college. This will allow further time to develop the bid.

4.3 It will be important to ensure a strong application is submitted to the HLF and additional time would be beneficial to achieve this. If necessary temporary arrangements can be made to accommodate the COWA if they chose to occupy the White Barn.

## 5. Site Operation

- 5.1 The management arrangements for operation of the site will be developed during the application process. As covered in the Financial Implications a key driver for the Council will be a sustainable revenue budget. This could involve;
- COWA leasing their chosen space and managing its operation.
  - Alive Management Ltd operating bars/hiring.
  - Alive Leisure Trust providing arts/exhibition or another third party Trust or private sector operation.
  - Sub-letting of elements of the site to commercial operators or voluntary organisations.

## 6. Heritage Lottery Fund

- 6.1 A general enquiry form has been submitted to the HLF outlining the main elements of the scheme as contained in this report.
- 6.2 As part of the development of the bid there will be a requirement for stakeholder engagement and consultation.

## 7. Outline Plan

- 7.1 Plans will be presented at the Panel Meeting to illustrate the proposed project.