

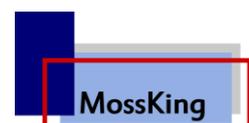
Lowestoft Town Hall



Business Plan

June 2021

Version 3.0





LOWESTOFT TOWN HALL

Initial ideas sketch view - Mariner's Street



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Economic Background

Lowestoft, on the Suffolk coast, is the UK's most easterly town. With a rich maritime history, the town grew over the centuries to a peak prosperity in the 19th and early 20th centuries, with many industries and a flourishing tourism economy. However, with the demise of many of its core industries and changes in tourist preferences, the town now suffers significant and deep-rooted deprivation.

Lowestoft's population is 73,815 in just under 30,000 households. In the most densely populated area of the town centre, ten neighbourhoods are in the 10% most deprived nationally, with a further eight neighbourhoods in the second most deprived decile. This accounts for over 26,000 residents, almost 35% of the overall population of the town.

Children are particularly affected, with 20% living in households on absolute or relative low income. In keeping with many coastal communities, Lowestoft has an above average older population, with 30% of residents aged 60+. Deprivation also affects health: 21% of adults have health issues that affect their activity, diminishing their participation in society, limiting their job opportunities, and contributing to wellbeing issues.

Despite 68% of adults being economically active, 16% receive Universal Credit, reflecting to some extent the low-skilled and temporary nature of employment opportunities in the town. Business confidence in the town centre is also low, with retail vacancy rates on the High Street at 22%, pre-pandemic. COVID-19 will undoubtedly have worsened the economic outlook for many SMEs and coupled with the pre-existing fragility of the local economy, gives great cause for concern.

Over recent years, both East Suffolk Council and Lowestoft Town Council have invested heavily in developing detailed plans to tackle these huge issues facing the town. East Suffolk Council's Town Investment Plan provides a clear and deliverable plan for the future of the town; this has resulted in their securing £24.9m of Towns Fund investment in Lowestoft.

The Proposed Project

The Grade II listed Lowestoft Town Hall has been vacant since 2015 and is now in a poor and deteriorating condition. Standing on the High Street, in the heart of the North Lowestoft Conservation Area and Historic England's Heritage Action Zone (HAZ), the building has been owned by Lowestoft Town Council since its inception in April 2017.

Action to address the physical condition of the Town Hall is urgently needed, but beyond that, there is an opportunity to use this important landmark to make a significant cultural, community and economic contribution to Lowestoft, improving the lives of people living in its vicinity, and transforming the image of the heart of the old town.

One of the core elements of the Town Investment Plan, the proposed project is to restore and extend the Town Hall to become an inclusive centre for the community and visitors. Facilities will include a heritage hub, tourist information centre and exhibition space, alongside a café, attracting visitors and locals alike. The restored Chamber, with its notable stained glass windows, will be used for civil ceremonies, as well as by Lowestoft Town Council and the Registrars, who will become anchor tenants.

A co-working hub will build a vibrant community of small businesses and start-ups, and meeting spaces will be available to support other local businesses and community groups. The function hall and messy space will create further opportunities for local people to meet and to learn. Outside, a new garden will provide a green space open to all, improving the biodiversity of the town centre.

An extensive programme of activities, running from the earliest stage of the project, will be targeted at harder-to-reach audiences, including young people and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Working with partners will maximise engagement with local people, as well as residents within the wider town and its hinterland. Tourists and visitors from farther afield will be engaged by the interpretation offer within the heritage hub and separate exhibition space.

Lowestoft Town Council will retain ownership of the building, and oversight of the business, but a new team will be created to manage the Town Hall once operational, reporting to the Town Clerk. As well as management and administrative employment opportunities, an apprenticeship and several traineeships and placements will be created for local people to learn transferrable skills.

The café will be leased to an experienced partner, to ensure that the commercial potential is realised, but with service level agreements in place that safeguard the needs of local people and the community.

Consultation has shown overwhelming support for the proposal from the residents of Lowestoft, with almost 99% supporting it being brought back into use for the community.

Financials

The capital project, based on costed drawings from Hudson Architects, is projected to cost £6.7m. This total includes £0.77m of contingency and inflation provisions.

As part of the Towns Fund investment in Lowestoft, £2m has been allocated for the Town Hall. The remainder of the funding is planned to be covered by a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), several other smaller funders, and by Lowestoft Town Council. An application to the NLHF has been submitted, and other funding applications are in progress.

Lowestoft Town Council has agreed in principle to a Public Works Loan Board loan, subject to public support and the necessary approvals. The cost of the loan should be covered annually by the precept, from savings made elsewhere and from money already ring-fenced for capital works. Further details will be published as the project progresses and the funding requirement becomes clearer.

Operationally, the Town Hall is forecast to return a small profit in year 2, with cumulative profits of just over £100k by year 4, when residual grant funding will end. £60k is budgeted annually for maintenance and renewals, with a minimum of £30k of that to be transferred to a long-term maintenance reserve. so that there are sufficient funds to maintain the building and renew interpretation without impacting the precept.

Timetable

If a Stage 1 bid is approved by the NLHF in September 2021, the Town Hall is expected to open in early summer 2025.

Impact

The project will be transformational for Lowestoft. The local economy will be boosted, through the creation of jobs and training opportunities, the major increase of footfall brought to the High Street, and the support for businesses both directly and indirectly.

The damage that deprivation causes will be addressed, with improved social cohesion and wellbeing and a stronger sense of community and civic pride. Harder-to-reach groups will feel more engaged and will have stronger links to the town and its heritage.

Outcomes, and the detailed outputs that support them, are documented in Section 10.

Risks

The main risks to the proposal are financial, both for the capital project and the ongoing business. However, extensive contingency provision is built into the capital cost plan, and there are sound mitigation options against financial pressures, for the business. These are detailed in section 11.

The risk of residents failing to use and benefit from the Town Hall is relatively low, but extensive evaluation has been included in the plans to ensure that the impact – positive and negative – is being measured and responded to appropriately.

Project-related risks are in line with those seen in most restorations of listed buildings; they will have impacts in terms of time and cost. Contingency (time and money) is built into the plans, to mitigate the risks, and an experienced project team will help to manage down risks further.

Conclusions

Lowestoft Town Hall needs urgent action to save this landmark building. Lowestoft as a town needs support to build a better future for its residents, to tackle the damage of long-term deprivation, to stimulate economic regeneration, and to restore pride to the town.

In consultation, residents have been clear about what they want to see from the Town Hall: a building that is restored to its former glory, that celebrates its history and that of the Town, that makes a positive contribution to the community, and is vibrant, welcoming and accessible to all.

This project is positioned to achieve all of these things, and the timing is right.

1. INTRODUCTION

Note that this version of the business plan, v3.0, has been edited to remove commercially sensitive details that could adversely affected competitive tenders. However, further details will be issued in regular updates as the project progresses.

This business plan has been prepared for Lowestoft Town Council by MossKing Associates Limited, with additional detailed input from both Hudson Architects and Andrew Morton Associates (Quantity Surveyors). The document, which has been developed to support a funding bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), describes a sustainable plan for the future use of Lowestoft Town Hall, a grade II listed building set on the old High Street, in the heart of the North Lowestoft Conservation Area.

The Town Hall, which has been vacant since 2015, has been in the ownership of Lowestoft Town Council since 2017. The condition of the building is poor, and deteriorating, despite some repair work having been undertaken.

In 2019, Historic England commissioned a feasibility study into potential uses for the building, as part of their work to support the Heritage Action Zone in which the Town Hall sits. This study concluded that the optimum use for the Town Hall would be as a mixed use community, creative and commercial building.

The Town Hall is the major investment element in the Historic Quarter suite of projects in the Town Investment Plan, developed by East Suffolk Council's Economic Development & Regeneration Team. In 2021, East Suffolk Council secured a total of £24.9m Towns Fund money with £2m earmarked as a contribution to the Town Hall.

2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Lowestoft Town Council

Formed on 1 April 2017, Lowestoft Town Council is the 13th largest local council in England. Lowestoft is the second largest town in Suffolk, divided into eight wards, each with their own distinctive histories, open spaces and parks, and communities. Operated by a small team of five trained professionals and 20 decision-making councillors, the Council manages a significant portfolio of assets and services. It also works with partners on projects to further the interests of local people, business and visitors to this unique town - the most easterly in the UK. Being the most easterly settlement, Lowestoft is the first place to see the sunrise in the United Kingdom and is home to the most easterly site, Ness Point.

As a local authority, the Council has a broad public remit with extensive powers. It raises a precept from the taxpayer which helps it to provide services and act as a guardian of public assets in the town. Among its current portfolio is a theatre (including contributing to the theatre service), parks, allotments, open spaces and play areas, and buildings including museums and the Town Hall.

The Council has a precept income of £1,765,245. Having been in existence for just over four years, the Council faces considerable challenges in managing its large asset portfolio, some of which are aged and dilapidated.

The five staff are the Town Clerk (and Responsible Financial Officer) who reports direct to Full Council, the Deputy Clerk, the Committee Clerk, the Administration and Finance Officer and the Events and Communications Officer.

The Council is fortunate that it has support from 'Friends of' groups in some of its major parks and its councillors also undertake a great deal of practical work. Lowestoft also benefits from having many local heritage experts and enthusiasts who are generous with their time and knowledge.

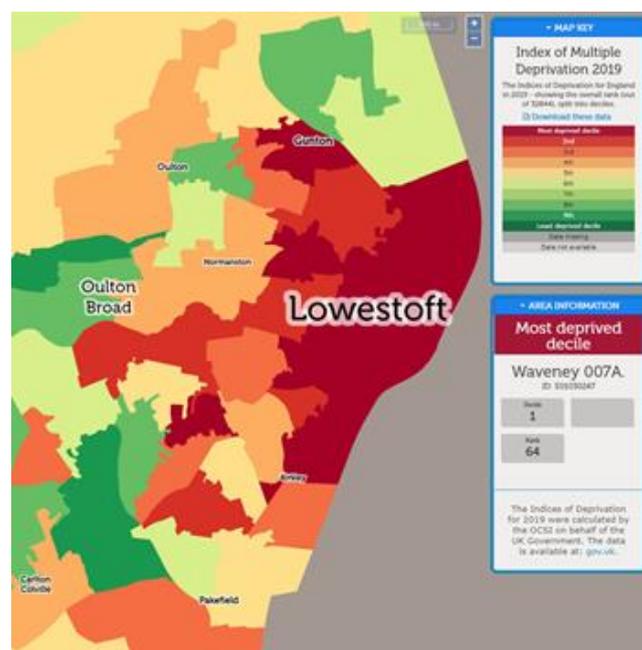
The Council inherited the Town Hall in April 2017. From the earliest opportunity, the Council has worked with partners to prioritise needed repairs and to progress further assessment of the condition of the building and how to develop its heritage and community potential.

The enormity of the financial undertaking to turn this building around is not within the Council's capacity, particularly as the Council raises its money direct from the local taxpayer in an area with serious economic challenges. The options are extremely limited, with the risk that the building will further deteriorate, becoming an increasing liability and an unacceptable financial burden placed on local people through the tax system.

Working with partners and accessing funded expertise is important, given the limited capacity of the Council's small body of employed staff. LTC's statutory governance arrangements cannot be changed and have been established to provide appropriate safeguards. Developing in-house expertise is always welcomed but with a project of this size, the Council requires additional expertise of partners and specialist contractors.

Economic Backdrop - Demographics and Deprivation

Lowestoft, the UK's most easterly town, is located on the Suffolk coast, within East Suffolk district council's authority. With a rich maritime history, the town grew over the centuries on the back of its fishing industry and was developed as a popular tourist destination in the mid C19th with the arrival of a railway connection to London - and the rest of England - bringing visitors to enjoy its long sandy beaches and esplanade. The construction of a new harbour enabled the Port of Lowestoft to ultimately grow to almost 30 hectares, dealing with both commodities and fish. During this period, the population of the town expanded almost fourfold, to 36,000, by the end of the nineteenth century.



Today, the town has a population of 73,815¹, in just over 29,500 households. Over the last 35 years, Lowestoft's traditional industries, such as fishing and manufacturing, have declined.² As a result, deep-

¹ ONS 2019/ East Suffolk Council, *Lowestoft Town Investment Plan* (November 2020)

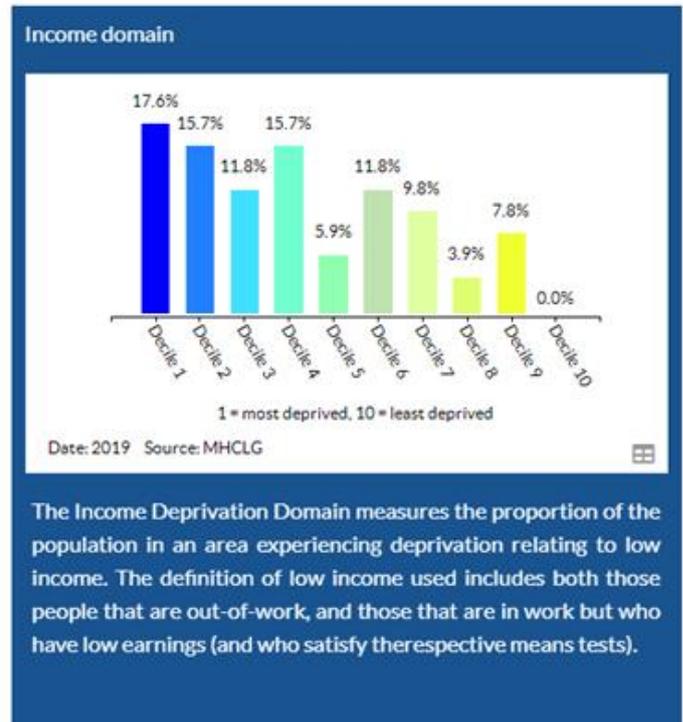
² It should be noted that many of the traditional industries employed large numbers of low paid workers, and therefore deprivation is not recent. However, the loss of these industries has exacerbated the problem and in many areas, deprivation is worsening.

rooted deprivation applies across a significant area of the town, as evidenced on the map to the right, with areas in dark red lying within the most deprived decile nationally, and in lighter red, the 2nd most deprived decile in the country.³

Two of the most densely populated wards, Harbour and Kirkley, in the town centre, account for 26,060 (35%) of the overall population of the town, with ten neighbourhoods falling within the 10% most deprived nationally, and a further 8 neighbourhoods in the bottom 20% most deprived.

Poverty affects children in particular across all Lowestoft, with 20% living in households on absolute or relative low income.⁴ Although 68% of adults are classed as economically active⁵ and only 6% are unemployed, almost 16% of adults receive Universal Credit, reflecting in part the low-skilled and temporary employment opportunities in the town. This is evidenced in the income domain of the town (right) which shows the dominance of low income across the town as a whole.

As with many coastal communities, almost a third of the population is aged 60+ (30%) against a national average of 22.5%; 33% of households have single occupants. The health of Lowestoft residents is lower than the national average, with 21% of adults stating their activity is limited a little or a lot by their health. Poor health not only limits economic activity, but also diminishes participation in society, leading to wellbeing issues such as social isolation, depression and anxiety.⁶



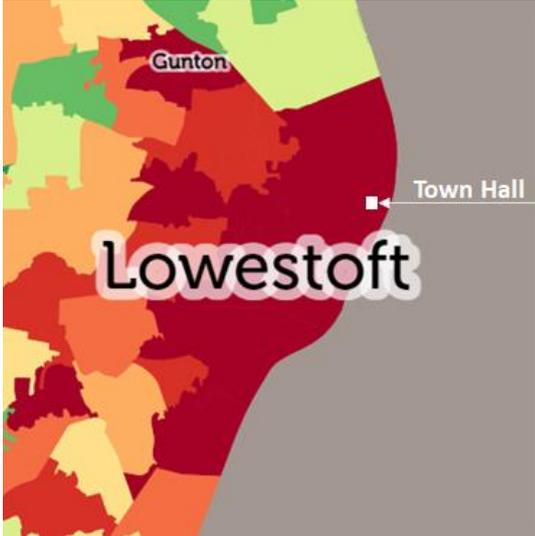
³ Consumer Research Data Centre/ONS Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2019

⁴ HM Revenue and Customs - Personal Tax Credits: Children in low-income families, local measure 2016.

⁵ ONS Census 2011/DCLG update 2019.

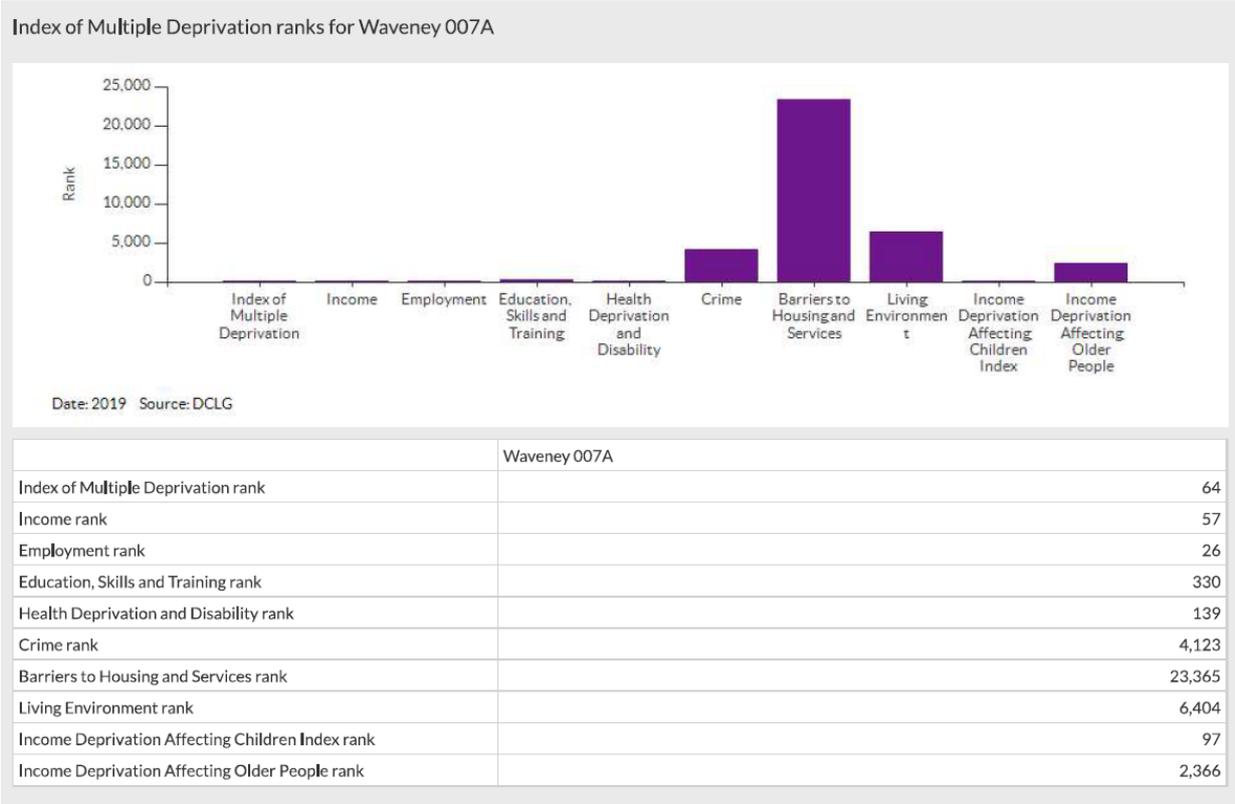
⁶ Fryers et al. (2005) in World Health Organisation and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (2014) *Social Determinants of Mental Health*

It is sometimes noted that Lowestoft’s socio-economic challenges can be masked within the data of Suffolk as a whole, which has some areas of significant affluence. However, within Lowestoft itself, the suburban areas and Lowestoft’s ‘hinterland’ of villages can have a similar masking effect on the issues within the town centre.



To understand the specific challenges of those areas of Lowestoft in the bottom two deciles nationally, we have focused on one: that in which the Town Hall sits (LSOA Waveney 007A), which is ranked 64th most deprived nationally (out of almost 33,000 LSOAs). This position has worsened since 2015, when the area ranked 148th.⁷

Looking at each of the domains on the chart below⁸, we can see that the ranking is driven by low levels of education and skills, poor health and poor employment opportunities. No less than 26% of children in this LSOA live in households in absolute low income, and 35% in relative low income, hence this area is 97th worst in the country for income deprivation affecting children. Indeed, it could be argued that this area’s overall IMD ranking is propped up by the ‘Barriers to Housing and Services’ domain, where Lowestoft performs extremely well because of the efforts of both district and local councils in providing essential services and access to affordable housing.



⁷ Note that LSOA 007A is not the lowest ranked in Lowestoft: in Kirkley Ward, to the south of the river, one LSOA is ranked 26th most deprived.

⁸ Suffolk Insight/ONS estimate 2019.

Economic Backdrop – Strengths and Opportunities

Lowestoft has a rich history, from its earliest human occupation almost 700,000 years ago, to its more recent maritime past. Much of the built heritage from the late medieval period onwards remains, around the High Street in particular,⁹ and although the beach village where the fishing industry was based is now lost, many of the Scores - narrow paths leading up the cliffs to the High Street – still exist and are being restored.

There are nine museums around the town, including the East Anglian Transport Museum, the Maritime Museum and Lowestoft Museum, which has an internationally recognised collection of Lowestoft Porcelain. Our community consultation (further details follow below) found that almost 70% had visited at least one of these museums in 2019, although lack of information about them was one of the most cited barriers. Local people are interested in their heritage – Heritage Open Days in Lowestoft rank in the top 10 in the country (for comparably-sized towns) for attendance.

The natural environment around Lowestoft is a major asset, and includes long sandy beaches with Blue Flag status, extensive sand dunes including the Geological Conservation Review site at Corton Cliffs, which is of national importance, and Suffolk Wildlife Trust’s SSSI reserve at Carlton Marshes.

Tourism was one of the key catalysts for the growth of Lowestoft in the nineteenth century, and despite the decline in longer-stay holidays over the last two decades, remains an important industry, and one with potential to grow significantly. The visitor economy’s contribution to the town is valued at £60m.¹⁰ The South Beach area has two piers, pavilions, seafront gardens and beach huts; a Seafront Vision, led by Hemingway Design, is regenerating this area to transform it into a year-round destination; its first major implementation is the restoration of the East Point Pavilion, funded through the Towns Fund. On the north side of town, a £1.4m investment to develop Ness Point Park as a visitor destination at the most easterly point in the UK has just been completed.

Lowestoft has had an important industrial economy since the late 18th century, covering diverse industries such as porcelain, brush making, food processing and the import/export business around the port, as well as the fishing industry itself. In the last two decades, Lowestoft has established itself at the heart of the clean energy industry, supporting offshore wind in particular, and is well-placed, with its port infrastructure, to benefit from future growth of this industry. It is estimated that the annual value of support opportunities to this industry will be worth £1.3bn to the town by 2030, and that by 2040 there could be up to £60bn of capital investment.¹¹

The High Street in Context

A 2019 study by People and Places identified that a moderately high proportion of businesses in the town centre are shops – 58% in the High Street, compared to 50% nationally, and 96% of these businesses are independently-owned, with the remaining 4% regional businesses, not national chains.¹² The same study found that no offices in the old High Street, against 4% national average.¹³ Vacancy

⁹ 68 listed buildings are sited in and around the North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone, 60% of the town’s total

¹⁰ *Town Investment Plan, 2020*

¹¹ *Town Investment Plan, 2020*

¹² People & Places, *Lowestoft: The Heart of Our Town* (December 2019)

¹³ A recent review suggests there may be one office on the High Street

rates in the High Street, pre-pandemic, were at 22%, double the national average for towns of comparable sizes (11%). Footfall recorded by People & Places shows that it is significantly lower in the High Street, averaging between 10-15% of that seen on London Road, the main shopping street to the south.

Business confidence levels were also researched by People & Places. 38% of High Street businesses had seen a decline in turnover in the previous year (29% nationally), and 35% expected this to continue in the coming year (against 20% nationally).

This overall fragility is a major risk for the High Street, with high levels of vacant properties, low business confidence and low footfall. Without intervention it would be reasonable to expect the vacancy rate to increase as businesses close.

In mitigation, People and Places also found that residents were willing to come to the High Street, mostly travelling on foot (70% - suggesting that they are very local to the High Street) and that 63% of respondents visit at least once a week. However, just 17% stay longer than one hour in the High Street, suggesting that most visits are for a specific purpose/destination, although 43% claimed their purpose was leisure. And of course, in terms of absolute numbers, use of the High Street is still very low, with an average of 276 people per hour,¹⁴ compared with 2,211 in the main shopping street.

COVID-19

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is significantly worse for people living in deprived areas, with almost twice the numbers of deaths than in the most affluent areas¹⁵.

However, it is not just in the death rate that Lowestoft's deprived areas have suffered. Large numbers of residents rely on seasonal and temporary employment, most of which has not existed in the last year, and in many cases zero-hours contracts were terminated by employers, rather than furloughing staff. Financially, although wealthier households have increased their savings during the pandemic, the last year has been a struggle for those on low incomes, and for many residents, levels of household debt will have increased.¹⁶

With 33% of Lowestoft households having single occupants, the social isolation of COVID-19 has had a major impact on the town. Lowestoft had the highest number of referrals to an initiative 'Home But Not Alone Community Hub', run by County and District councils in Suffolk, supporting vulnerable people from the impact of COVID-19 due to isolation. 70% of the East Suffolk referrals came from Lowestoft alone, although the town represents just 30% of the district's population overall.

'Economic deprivation predicts chronic ill-health; those who are vulnerable to the negative socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 are likely to have their health, social and economic outcomes adversely impacted.'

HM Government: 'Analysis of the health, economic and social effects of COVID-19 and the approach to tiering', November 2020

¹⁴ Note that this data included a Saturday, whereas normally a mid-week market day is used. This may have boosted the figures.

¹⁵ Nuffield Trust/ONS report, *Deaths involving COVID-19 by local area and socioeconomic deprivation: deaths occurring between 1 March and 31 July 2020* (released 28 August 2020)

¹⁶ Citizens Advice, *Excess debts - who has fallen behind on their household bills due to coronavirus?* (September 2020)

As we come out of lockdown, the economic impact on Lowestoft will become clearer. Almost £15m has been paid out in mandatory and discretionary grants to local businesses. Given the fragility of businesses in the High Street in particular, with turnover having been in decline in previous years, it is highly likely that some of these will not reopen, especially if residents are slow to return to town due to fear and/or habituated isolation.

Community Consultation

In late 2020/early 2021, a survey was conducted across Lowestoft asking residents about their preferences for the future of the Town Hall¹⁷, and about their interest in, and engagement with, heritage.¹⁸ The findings have been used to inform the plans for the Town Hall and to develop the audience analysis for the Activity Plan. Getting behind the data and understanding what different segments of the population want to see is critical for building an inclusive strategy.

A total of 999 responses were received, giving us a 95% confidence level with a margin of ± 3 . The survey was then followed up with separate consultations with key individuals and groups, including organisations working with harder-to-reach people in the town, to help understand community needs better.

Postcode data was collected, providing insight into the views of people in their demographic context, for example, those closest to the Town Hall in some of the most deprived areas. Over half the respondents came from the NR32 postcode area, which includes the Town Hall itself. These are the 'locals', the people who *should* use it more frequently than others, provided barriers to their access are removed.

In line with the overall demographics of Lowestoft, 26% of respondents came from households on absolute or relative low income, and 9.7% from those with a disability.¹⁹ For the NR32 postcode 10.6% had a disability (62% of all disabled people) and 31% were from households with absolute or low income. Notably, 21% of those on low income also said they had a disability – for an inclusive building, it will be essential to ensure that both physical and financial barriers to access are removed.

Similarly, the age representation of respondents accords with the general demographics, with 28.6% over the age of 65. We can therefore have confidence that the responses and opinions within the survey accurately represent Lowestoft residents as a whole, and importantly, when we filter results for the harder-to-reach groups, and for local people, represent their views too. This information is key to tackling inequalities in the town and ensuring that the building is inclusive and welcoming to all.

Overall, more than 99% of those surveyed wished to see the Town Hall retained for the town and used for community benefit. Over 65% of residents were in favour of the Council moving into the Town Hall, although younger people (18-34) were marginally opposed to the idea. The top uses for the building included a café and a heritage hub – this applied across most segments, although for disabled people

¹⁷ A 2018 survey, conducted by Lowestoft Town Council was used as a baseline input for the survey.

¹⁸ Of the 999 responses, 955 were online and 44 on paper. 88% of respondents completed the entire survey. In addition to responding to fixed questions, a further 1,069 free format comments were given.

¹⁹ 'Disability' was not defined in the survey. Respondents were simply asked if they considered themselves disabled. A person is usually considered to have a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effects on their ability to do normal daily activities. This is the core definition of disability in the Equality Act 2010.

there was a stronger response for these services than other segments, and for people aged 18-34 there was a lower interest in a heritage hub than for other groups.

Community facilities, particularly those where people can meet and participate in activities such as arts and crafting, or traditional 'community hall' functions were the most popular, and yet again, disabled people were more likely to use these than any other group. However, people on relative low incomes had no greater interest than other segments, with the exception of the use of spaces for creative activities, where their demand was higher. This could be linked to the relative low income of the creative sector as a whole, although the data does not provide this insight. Clearly, opportunities exist to engage with lower income groupings through creative activities.

Wellbeing and support services garnered a moderate level of interest, and again this was higher in local people (NR32) than others, and from both older single people and those with a disability.

In the individual comments sections, where over 1,000 responses were provided, there was overwhelming support for redeveloping the Town Hall as an asset within the town, but particularly one which provided opportunities for the community.

In terms of interaction with local heritage, encouragingly 87% of those surveyed completed these optional questions. Top topics of interest across the whole included fishing and the beach village, the Town Hall and the High Street, and family and buildings history. However, younger people rated these lower, with witches and the supernatural, and the World Wars coming out top. There were no differences with regard to income or disability, although men were more likely than women to have an interest in naval and industrial history.

Only 6% of all respondents said they had no interest in heritage; this number rises when segmented by age, with 12% of Midults (18 – 34 year-olds) having no interest and 50% of them having visited no local heritage museums/venues in the last year.

The full analysis of the survey is available at Appendix F.

Economic Regeneration in Action

Both East Suffolk Council and Lowestoft Town Council are focused on developing new ways to address the chronic deprivation of the last several decades. East Suffolk Council has recently secured £24.9m from the Towns Fund²⁰ towards several programmes of economic development projects within a Town Investment Plan, one of which is the 'heritage quarter', including the Town Hall.

Lowestoft is one of just seven towns in the country which has two Heritage Action Zones, one to the south of the river and one – North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone – covering the medieval High Street and the 'Scores' and including the Town Hall. Heritage Action Zones, delivered by Historic England, are part of a government scheme, *'to breathe new life into old places that are rich in heritage and full of promise – unlocking their potential and making them more attractive to residents, businesses, tourists and investors.'*

²⁰ The Towns Fund is the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government's £3.6bn fund to drive long term economic and productivity growth through investment in connectivity, land use, economic assets including cultural assets, skills and enterprise infrastructure. Programme delivery is expected to begin from April 2022.

East Suffolk Council Economic Development Team has undertaken an extensive programme of research and planning to understand the challenges in Lowestoft and to create a clear plan for the future. This includes a Place Making strategy including development of a Place Board and plan, a full Town Masterplan, a Cultural Strategy, and the creation of a number of partnerships to ensure 'joined up' delivery, culminating in a Town Investment Plan, published in late 2020.

There are five key themes in the Town Investment Plan:

- Employment, enterprise and skills
- Transforming our town centre; retail and leisure
- Celebrating our culture and heritage
- Living your life in Lowestoft
- Collaboration and connecting.

The Town Hall is a core element in this vision, and its owners, Lowestoft Town Council, are fully engaged in developing its future both as a key destination in its own right, and as a contributor to economic regeneration for the wider area.

3. THE NEED

Action to address the physical condition of the Town Hall is urgently needed, but beyond that, there is an opportunity to use this important landmark to make a significant cultural, community and economic contribution to Lowestoft, improving the lives of people living in its vicinity, and transforming the image of the heart of the old town.

Located within one of the most deprived areas in Lowestoft, the Town Hall can not only deliver a range of facilities and activities for local people, to tackle the inequalities arising from deprivation, but also can foster a stronger community and drive economic regeneration.

In consultation, residents have been clear about what they want to see from the Town Hall: a building that is restored to its former glory, that celebrates its history and that of the Town, that makes a positive contribution to the community, and is vibrant, welcoming and accessible to all.

4. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

A range of options for the Town Hall has been considered in recent years, most notably in work conducted by Colliers International in October 2019, commissioned by Historic England.²¹ In this feasibility study, a number of different uses were analysed in detail, including residential, conversion to hotel accommodation, workshops, commercial including retail/ offices and community uses. Different design options were considered by architects Thomas Ford & Partners, looking at the viability, in construction terms, of the different uses, whilst Colliers analysed the economic and business impact of each.

²¹ The full Colliers' report can be seen here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/content/docs/research/options-for-lowestoft-town-hall-and-adjacent-sites/>

The key conclusion of that feasibility study was that a mixed commercial/community use was the most sustainable of all options. It is this proposal that has been taken forward into this current project and developed in more detail, particularly by identifying community needs through consultation.

As part of the current project, both a standard refurbishment and demolition and rebuild on the site have also been considered.

Refurbishment of the existing building within its current footprint would cost approximately 70% of the capital costs of the preferred option. However, it would not be possible to create both a heritage hub space and a large hall, meaning that either community use (and revenue generating commercial activities) or heritage activities would have to be excluded. Neither is acceptable in terms of social inclusion, or economic regeneration, both of which are key aims of the project. Without the full revenue generating opportunities, the Town Hall would not be sustainable long-term.

Demolition was examined as an option in view of the improved environmental sustainability of a purpose-built new building compared to a converted old one. Lowestoft Town Council has a zero carbon 2030 target, and the environmental impact of their assets is key to this target. However, demolition is unlikely to receive consent from the LPA, and in any event the construction costs of a new build onsite are likely to be higher than restoration and extension of the existing building. Reuse of an existing building, especially if it can achieve excellent levels of energy performance and utilises renewable energy and sustainable and/or recycled local materials wherever possible, was considered a sound, low-impact strategy.

The final option considered was to deliver the proposed functions from an alternative building in town, thus achieving similar benefits, but without the costs of restoring a historic building. However, unusually for a town of its size, Lowestoft is lacking in large buildings that could deliver outcomes on the scale required to address deprivation and foster community pride. There is no alternative to the Town Hall for a project with this ambition, and this potential to transform.

5. THE PROPOSAL

It is proposed that the Town Hall should be refurbished and extended to become a multi-function heritage and community space, with elements of commercial activity that contribute to its ongoing financial sustainability and support economic regeneration of the area.

Town Hall – Current

The Town Hall is a Grade II listed landmark²² and the most prominent building on the High Street. Built in the 1850s, it was remodelled in the late C19th and extended in the early C20th.²³ It is of a striking Italianate design, contrasting in scale against its setting in the medieval High Street. The Town Hall

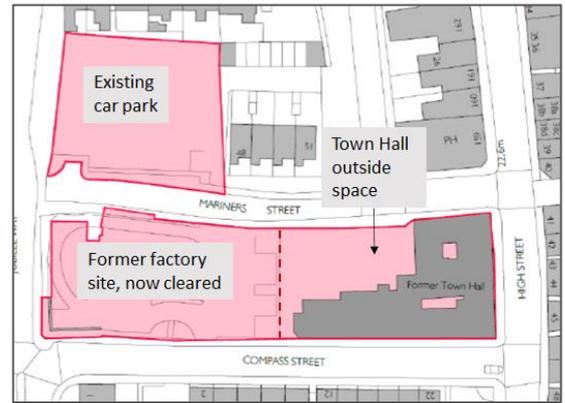


²² For details of the listing, and a brief history of the building: <http://bit.ly/LTHListing>

²³ For a comprehensive analysis of the building, its history, and its significance, please refer to the Conservation Statement, 2021.

is clearly a civic building, but relatively modest in size compared to others of the period; its prominent tall bell tower is visible around the town.

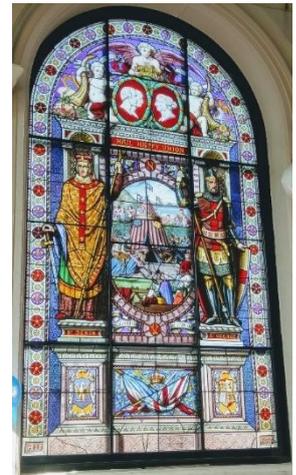
The Town Hall faces onto the High Street, bordered to the north by Mariners Street and to the south by Compass Street. The rear of the site backs onto Jubilee Way (A47), which forms a busy and intrusive dual carriageway dividing the Old Town from adjoining residential areas.



Overall, the gross internal space is c 1,410m² over two main floors, but in the years since it was built it has been subdivided and altered, in some cases rather awkwardly, into a dense network of small rooms, corridors and dividing doors. Key retained features include the Chamber with its notable stained-glass windows²⁴, the civic stairs and entrance to the Chamber, the civic offices on the ground floor with their engraved windows and encaustic tiled corridors, and the clock tower.

Appendix B shows the current layouts of the ground and first floors.

Owned by Lowestoft Town Council since April 2017, it has been vacant and boarded up since 2015, when its former owners, Waveney District Council (now abolished and replaced by East Suffolk Council), moved out. Emergency repairs were undertaken in 2019, following a condition survey by Purcell. It remains in a poor and deteriorating condition and is a drain on the financial resources of the Town Council without any visible benefit, at present, to the town or its residents.



There are areas of decay throughout the building, largely caused though water ingress from slipped roof tiles and failed roof coverings. Issues with external masonry include open mortar joints, loose and spalling brickwork and copings, some caused by water from failed rainwater goods. In addition, there is evidence of cracking and delamination of stonework, whilst rendered panels are also cracked, blistered, and are failing. Internally there are cracked ceilings and blistered plasterwork as well as significant fungal growth and evidence of dry rot. At least 67 original windows need repair.

Externally, there is land within the curtilage of the Town Hall that is currently unused; to the west is a former factory site belonging to East Suffolk Council.

Town Hall – Proposed Designs

Hudson Architects has developed designs to meet the requirements brief built from community consultations and our other research. The intention is to create a building that is open to all, and instantly welcoming from the High Street. To achieve this, the main front section of the building will become a heritage hub, with adjacent gallery/exhibition space, to create a compelling and innovative

²⁴ The main stained glass window (above), commissioned by Sir Samuel Morton Peto for the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1851, designed by John Thomas and manufactured by the renowned firm of Ballantine & Allen, celebrates the political alliance and friendly rivalry between Britain and France. Its history and significance is documented in *Stained Glass at the International Exhibitions 1851 – 1860*, by Jasmine M Allen, curator of the national Stained Glass Museum in Ely.

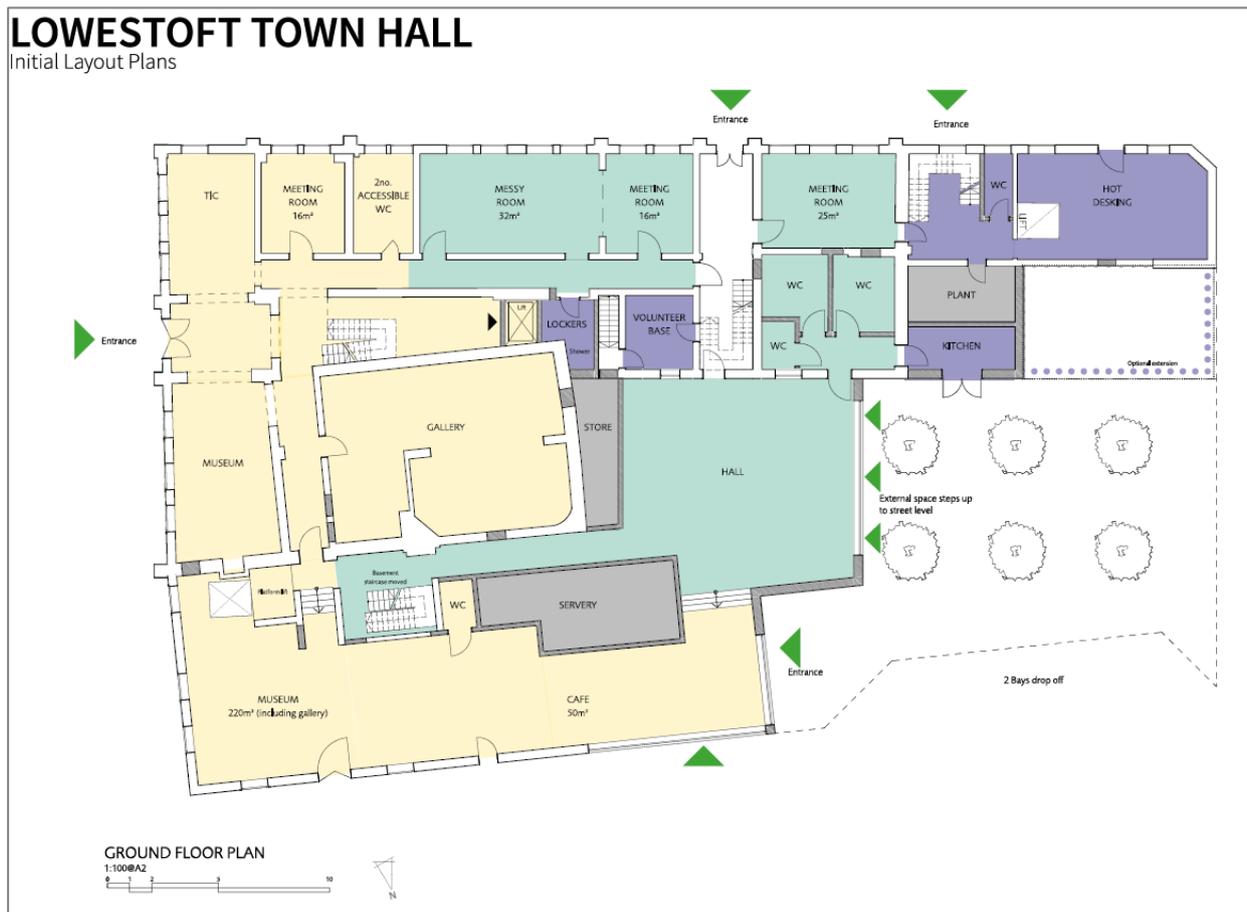
heritage hub delivering a changing programme of exhibitions and events, to attract both local people and tourists.

Beside the heritage hub and gallery space will be a tourist information service and shop, whilst flowing on from the heritage hub will be a café, with both indoor and outdoor seating. This will be formed on the Mariner Street side, retaining the original elevation but sensitively improving and extending the later elevation, which, although listed, does not sit well with the adjacent original fabric.

On the south side of the ground floor are meeting rooms for hire, and a messy space with linked meeting room, to be used for creative and arts activities, both community and commercial. This same space will be used by youth groups, some led (eg Young Carers) and some self-led.

To the rear is a co-working space, with hot desking, to support start-up and small businesses in the town, as well as local people 'hybrid working' as a result of changed working practices post-COVID.

Finally, as a new build within the courtyard to the rear of the building, there is a multi-function hall with capacity for 60 – 80 seated. This will support not only the many community activities identified through our consultations, but also commercial, including use for wedding receptions and parties. A separate kitchen is attached to the hall, for use by external caterers where required. The hall is a key contributor to the financial viability of the building but also delivers something very much in demand from local people: somewhere accessible to meet, socialise, exercise and learn.

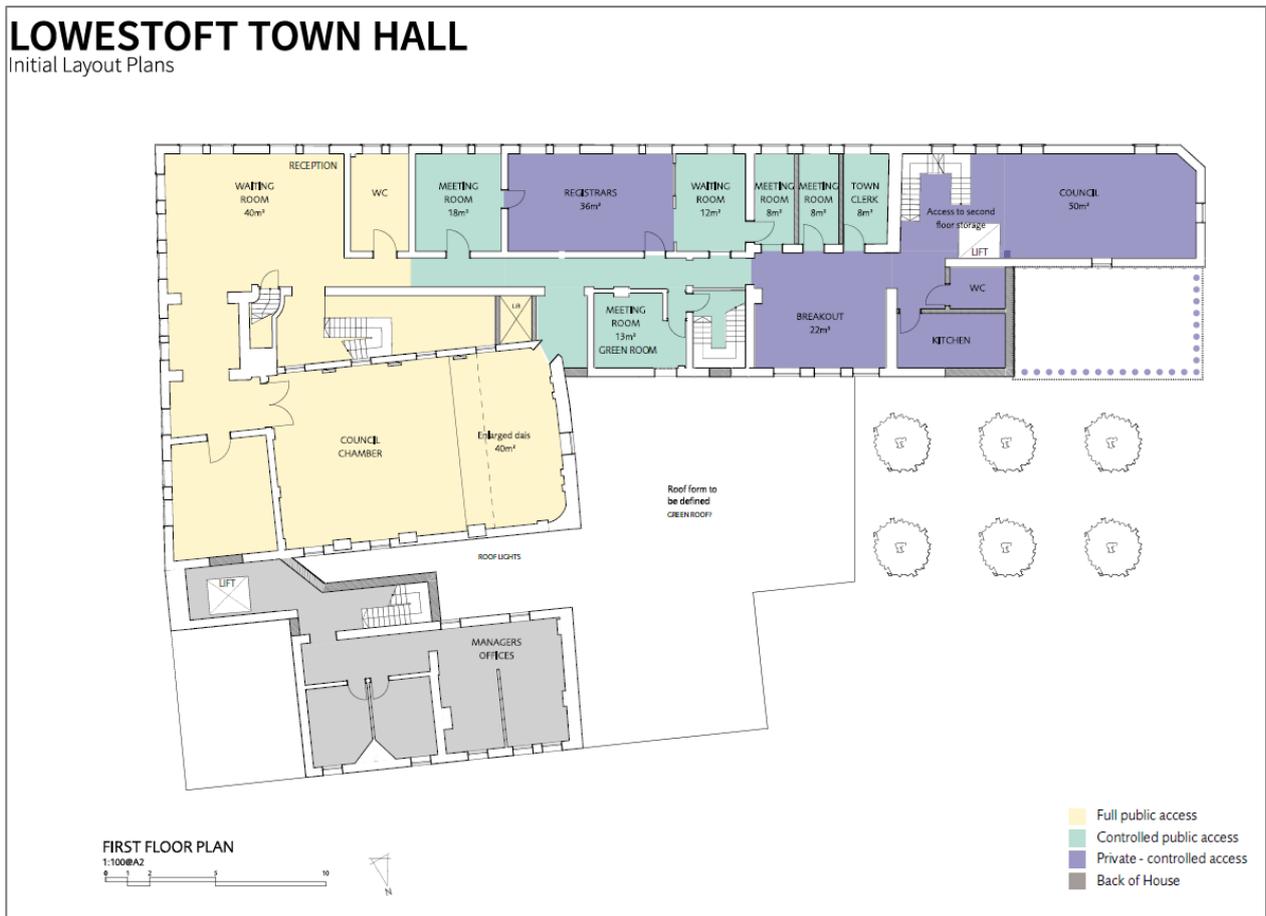


New stairs lead from the front entrance to the first floor, where the main Chamber is located. This is the most important historic feature of the building with its stained glass windows, panelling and mouldings. Most of the work here will be to restore its historic fabric, introducing services in a sensitive manner – it

is proposed to extend the dais (which is an integral part of the room) for this purpose. The Chamber will be used for council meetings and will be available to hire for other larger meetings and events. It will also be licensed for civil ceremonies.

On the south side, along the Compass Street elevation, both the Registrars and Town Council will be accommodated. These two anchor tenants were seen to be key occupants by the public and will draw significant footfall to the area five days a week. The Registrars presence²⁵ will also encourage people to use the Chamber for larger civil ceremonies. By placing the Council and Registrars in adjacent areas, some sharing of facilities is possible, and also ensures that the administrative functions of the building are not prominent to the general public. This is an important design consideration to ensure some harder-to-reach groups feel comfortable in the building.

The building will be fully accessible throughout, with the exception of the clock tower. There are different levels across the site, and platform lifts and ramps have been introduced to enable free flow of all around the building. A degree of zoning, as indicated in the colour schemes, will be introduced so that, for example, children using the messy space can be properly safeguarded.



²⁵ Note that the Registrars’ presence in the building is not confirmed at this stage, although discussions have taken place about their requirements etc. However, it is hoped that an agreement can be reached, and for the purposes of this business case, it is assumed they are in the building.

Outside, to the rear of the building, will be a landscaped garden, open for all to enjoy. Direct access to the garden will be available from the hall and the co-working hub, as well as from the café, where outdoor seating will be provided.

There is no parking onsite, but it is anticipated that East Suffolk Council will develop the adjacent site as a landscaped car park; the existing Mariner Street car park will also be retained. A drop off inlet has been included in the layout, although it would be preferable to redesignate the bottom cul-de-sac portion of Mariner Street so that it is no longer a highway and incorporate drop off spaces here instead. Blue badge parking will be requested here and in Compass Street.



Town Hall – Sustainability and Environmental Impact

Having declared itself as a Climate Emergency local authority, Lowestoft Town Council has published its Sustainability Strategy, which encompasses many of the ideals outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Of these, the most relevant to the Town Hall Project is Goal 11 - Make Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable. This Goal accommodates the three pillars of Sustainability – Social, Economic and Environmental.

The Town Hall is a public asset that must work for everybody. Besides its public function as a civic centre and council chamber, the building must be as accessible as possible to residents and visitors alike in order to address the three Social aspects of the Council's Sustainability Strategy – Community Support; Mental and Physical Health; and Equality and Diversity.

The Economic objective is that the refurbished Town Hall must become self-financing, and not be a burden on the local ratepayers. This is particularly important because the Town Hall is, like the Marina Theatre, regarded as belonging to the whole urban area that incorporates four parish councils – Carlton Colville, Lowestoft, Oulton and Oulton Broad. It would not be fair that any subsidy should be borne by Lowestoft Town Council alone.

The ruling Environmental factor is durability. The Town Hall refurbishment will be a one-off project that must stand the test of time. As such, the choice of structural materials and outfitting systems must aim primarily upwards for the highest, practical standard, and not downwards to the cheapest price. The BREEAM "Sustainable Refurbishment of Heritage Buildings" provides sound technical guidance based on similar projects from all around the United Kingdom. The BREEAM "Refurbishment and Fit-Out Standard" enables the assessment of the environmental impact caused during the works, eg using timber with a 'green' provenance.

The ambition is to achieve BREEAM Very Good rating for the Lowestoft Town Hall project, in line with Lowestoft Town Council's 2030 zero carbon target. The building will have its baseline energy use

assessed, including a detailed review of the potential for the building fabric to be thermally upgraded. It is anticipated that the improvements in the building's thermal performance will be achieved by re-servicing the building using a zoned approach with automatic sensor controls; by targeting high levels of thermal performance within the new areas of the build and the existing roof voids; by the installation of low energy fixtures and fittings.

Energy generation potential will be explored, and the early modelling will investigate the installation of PV panels to the south-facing pitches of the Compass St & Council Chamber roofs. An area on site has been identified for an air source heat pump as a complementary measure.

The project will significantly improve the biodiversity of the site. Planted with nectar-rich species and native trees from bio-secure UK stock, the garden will make a positive contribution to wildlife in the area, particularly insects and birds. The roof of the hall will be planted with sedum, which again will provide new habitats, as well as providing a softer outlook from upstairs windows. The building is very central and conveniently located for the town – research has already shown a high level of pedestrian access to the town. We are campaigning for a better bus service and will encourage cycling to work with secure cycle storage and showers provided in the building.

Town Hall Facilities – Target Markets

The Town Hall has a wide range of facilities and the target markets differ somewhat for each of them.

Hot-desk/co-working space is intended to build a community of small business start-ups and entrepreneurs, attracted by flexible, well-priced modern facilities used by like-minded people. Users will predominantly come from the Lowestoft area, and are likely to (mostly) be younger adults, either starting their own businesses or as hybrid workers of larger organisations. The co-working space is pitched as the entry point to the property rental market. For new small businesses office space represents a significant commitment and risk, partly due to the minimum sizes available, but particularly due to inflexible lease lengths, terms and conditions, combined with the on costs (business rates etc). The intention is that users of this space will have opportunities to grow their businesses through collaboration with others, and to learn from people in the group. Both ad hoc day use and longer-term memberships with extended opening hours will be available, with access to printing, meeting/huddle spaces, Zoom room etc. This group should also be regular users of the café.

Café: local residents, mostly from the NR32 area around the Town Hall are anticipated to be regular users of the café, which, although it will not be a community café, will still offer good value options for all, in a part of town poorly served by cafés. The café will attract visitors/tourists and those people who are coming to the Town Hall for other reasons, such as visiting the Registrars, or attending events, when the café will provide a licensed bar. Finally, the café will also provide catering for private bookings and will form an important part of the 'package' offer, particularly for weddings. For this reason, it will need to offer a modern menu, appealing to younger people, as well as traditional café staples.

The age of café users should be wide-ranging, from young families to the elderly, and, with correct pricing, should have a wide appeal to different socio-economic backgrounds; it is unlikely to be a major attractor for the youth market, however, except indirectly via the messy space (see below).

Function Hall: local residents are likely to use the hall more frequently than those from farther afield. Community events and clubs, from slimming/fitness to jumble sales, will have a tighter catchment area

than entertainment events, such as ticketed performances, tea dances etc, which should draw footfall from across the town. There are no obvious barriers to access here and people of all ages, income brackets etc are likely to attend at least occasionally, attracted by the variety of entertainment (in the widest sense). A further use for the Hall is for fairs and sales, which will attract people from further afield, especially if a reputation can be built of

The Hall's secondary function is as a location for private parties and receptions. The catchment for users is much wider, reaching beyond the town's boundaries into the 'hinterland'. For weddings, people should be drawn from somewhat further afield than this, given the ability to have both a civil ceremony and reception in the one location. Pricing and marketing of this will be key: there is a strongly competitive wedding market in both Suffolk and Norfolk at the upper range, with a wealth of country houses and barns offering exclusive weekend packages. The market locally is weaker, with a small number of hotels and community halls mostly offering wedding receptions, although there are some with licences for ceremonies. For the Town Hall, the target market should be at the low to mid-range, offering good quality, attractive facilities 'under one roof'.

Chamber: aside from its use for Council meetings, the Chamber can be used for civil ceremonies and for larger meetings. This latter could include talks, heritage group meetings and even small conferences (in conjunction with the Hall, which would be needed as breakout/refreshment space for delegates). There are therefore several target markets, including local people (both to organise talks/group meetings and to attend them) and local businesses/authorities. It is likely that the majority of individuals seeking to use the Chamber or attend activities in that space will be older.

For civil ceremonies, the Chamber can be let alone or in conjunction with the Function Hall. The wedding package market has been discussed briefly above; for use for ceremonies only, the lead into this market will frequently come via the Registrars, in that the Chamber is effectively an upgrade from a standard meeting room in the building. Geographically, people using the Chamber for a civil ceremony will come from Lowestoft and beyond, towards Beccles and inland from there, and will find the venue through wedding websites or the council's list. Although run by Suffolk County Council, residents in Norfolk could also be attracted.

The average age of marriage in the UK is now 35 – 38. Although the overall number of marriages/civil ceremonies continues to decline, this is a vibrant market – just 22% of opposite sex marriages have a religious element, and just 0.6% for same sex ceremonies²⁶.

Messy Space: the messy space has two functions, firstly as the name suggests as a space where arts & crafts activities can take place. The community survey showed strong demand for such a facility across the community, who would like to participate in creative workshops, and from commercial artists who wish to lead such events. Such workshops, if priced correctly, or indeed fully subsidised on occasion, will attract some of the hardest-to-reach individuals; indeed, makers' workshops elsewhere have proved highly successful in engaging people with learning difficulties and those who find socialising challenging.

Children and parents will be attracted to family events where they can participate in creative workshops together; with the significant population of 'Facebook Families' in the immediate vicinity, reasonably priced events should be popular.

²⁶ Office for National Statistics 2017

Geographically, the majority of regular users will again come from the local NR32 area, although children and families may come from the wider town for events during school holidays.

The second target market for the messy space is young people. In the recent consultation, most residents said they felt that whilst there were ample facilities for young children in the area, teens were less well served. The messy space would be used for both events led by youth services organisations, and also for youth-led activities, both during the week and over some weekends. The messy space is separate from the public access areas, enabling safeguarding – and noise.

Young people using the messy space are likely to be aged between 11 and 17, dependent on the type of activities. It will be important to work with partners²⁷ to access young people, who otherwise are less likely to be attracted to events in a relatively formal building.

Town Hall Heritage Hub and Exhibitions – Audiences

The detailed proposals for the heritage hub and gallery space, along with the full audience analysis, are covered in the separate Audience & Activity Plan.

Audience analysis has revealed that there are significant differences in the levels of cultural engagement across the different areas of Lowestoft and its surroundings. Three distinct groupings have been identified, which broadly matches those expected to be general users of the building, namely 'Locals' (blue on the map), 'Residents'(yellow) and 'Hinterland' (green).

When taken together, the cultural engagement profile, based on Audience Agency Spectrum data, is as shown in the chart below. The Audience Agency is funded by the Arts Council England, to lead on supporting cultural, heritage and arts organisations to gain a deeper understanding of current and potential audiences.²⁸



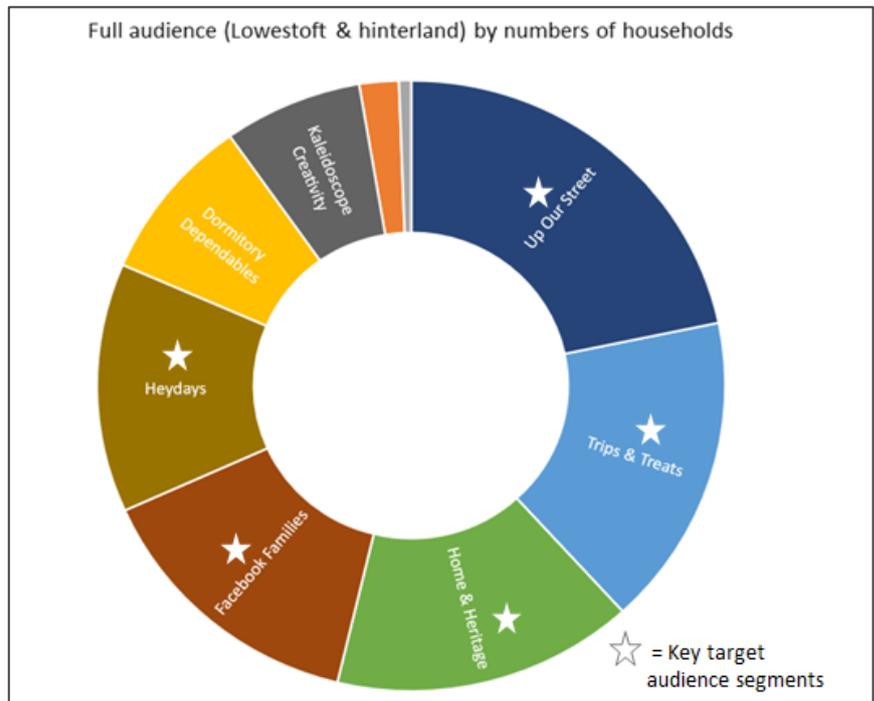
²⁷ Organisations such as the Lowestoft Local Cultural Education Partnership and Access Community Trust, who already have proven track records working with young people in the town and have been consultees on this project.

²⁸ The Audience Agency uses MOSAIC socio-economic data, audience information from multiple venues and an annual Taking Part survey, it identifies the differences between attendance, participation and engagement as well as behaviours, attitudes and preferences at arts, museums and heritage locations across England. It is designed to allow users to estimate the size of potential audiences then profile and target them at postcode level.

As can be seen here, the target audiences for activities in the heritage hub across all Lowestoft and its surrounding hinterland fall into five groupings: 'Home & Heritage', 'Trips & Treats', 'Up Our Street', 'Heydays' and 'Facebook Families'. The last three groups on this list are in the bottom four hardest-to-engage/ lowest levels of participation of all segments. 'Home & Heritage' and 'Trips & Treats' are mid-ranked in terms of engagement. Note that there is no representation in the top segment, and just 1% in the second top.

However, profiling audiences in the 'Locals' grouping, ie those immediately adjacent to the Town Hall, there is a different picture, with 'Facebook Families' dominating, alongside 'Heydays', and a new grouping 'Kaleidoscope Creativity'.

These are the bottom three engagement groups, with the main barriers to participation being financial and health-related, combined with a feeling that arts and heritage are 'not for them'. Given that the Local catchment – of almost 7,000 households - contains some of the most deprived areas in the country, lower engagement is not surprising.



Engagement with 'Locals' is therefore a specific and separate target and will require special effort. It is absolutely *not* a case of 'build it and they will come'. Inclusive engagement will entail working with partners in many cases, alongside careful programming, incorporating subsidised or free activities. These have been built into the Activity Plan, and the cost of subsidy is included in the financial model for the Town Hall, covered by the commercial income from general uses.

Town Hall Heritage Hub and Exhibitions – Activities

The Activity Plan contains an Action Grid detailing a wide range of inclusive activities designed to attract maximum participation, especially from three target groups:

- young people
- people from lower socio-economic backgrounds
- disabled people or those with long term health conditions.

Disabled people and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds are strongly represented in the Local and Residents groupings, with young people being spread more evenly across the three areas. As noted above, our three key audience groups are all linked to low socio-economic backgrounds, and for 'Heydays' in particular, disability or long term health conditions dominate. This is borne out by our survey data too with 62% of all disabled people living in these postcodes.

Activities are split over the different stages of the project, with extensive early engagement during the development stage, before the capital project begins, then further engagement during the delivery project, some of which will lead into live running. The development stage activities will help to build the capacity of this new venture and are particularly important because of the challenges of engaging with key local audiences. Piloting different activities, and going out to the community, will a) enable the identification of those activities and approaches that are most successful and b) allow time to work with partners to build up audiences. Evaluation at the end of the stage will identify what was successful and what could have been done differently, so the learning can be built into plans for the next stage.

Early activities in the development stage include *Town Hall Take Overs*, where parts of the building are free to use for pop up events; the aim is to get early engagement and buy in from the community that 'this is our building'.

Running from development through to live, *Your Lowestoft Stories* will take a 'stories boat' filled with props and out to different locations around town – streets, beach, community groups, schools – capturing local voices and creating video poems of people's stories. These will be used as part of the interpretation once open, and copies of the oral histories will be deposited at Suffolk Archives.

During the development stage, two part-time marketing placements will be implemented in partnership with East Suffolk College. These roles will be to develop a marketing plan for the project and for the activities during the delivery stage, then to begin the delivery of the plan, engaging in particular with their peers.

In the delivery stage, prior to work commencing onsite, a Time Team-style community archaeology project, *Dig Lowestoft*, in the land inside the curtilage of the Town Hall will engage with younger people and families. Later on, a key project will be *All Day and All of the Night* working with 16-18 year olds researching the local live music scene of the 60s, 70s and 80s including the Kinks and the Rolling Stones, and the related local fashion trends, eg the Dockside Dandies. This will culminate in the inaugural exhibition, a Town Hall Take Over featuring a recreated retro record shop with listening booths, disc cutting and fashion, where not only music but oral histories can be heard.

A core element of the Activity Plan is the long term employment of a Heritage Engagement Coordinator, to work with other museums and the community to co-curate exhibitions, as well as to deliver new and engaging activity. The Heritage Engagement Coordinator will also supervise the development of two Heritage Trainees, one for collections management and one for community engagement.

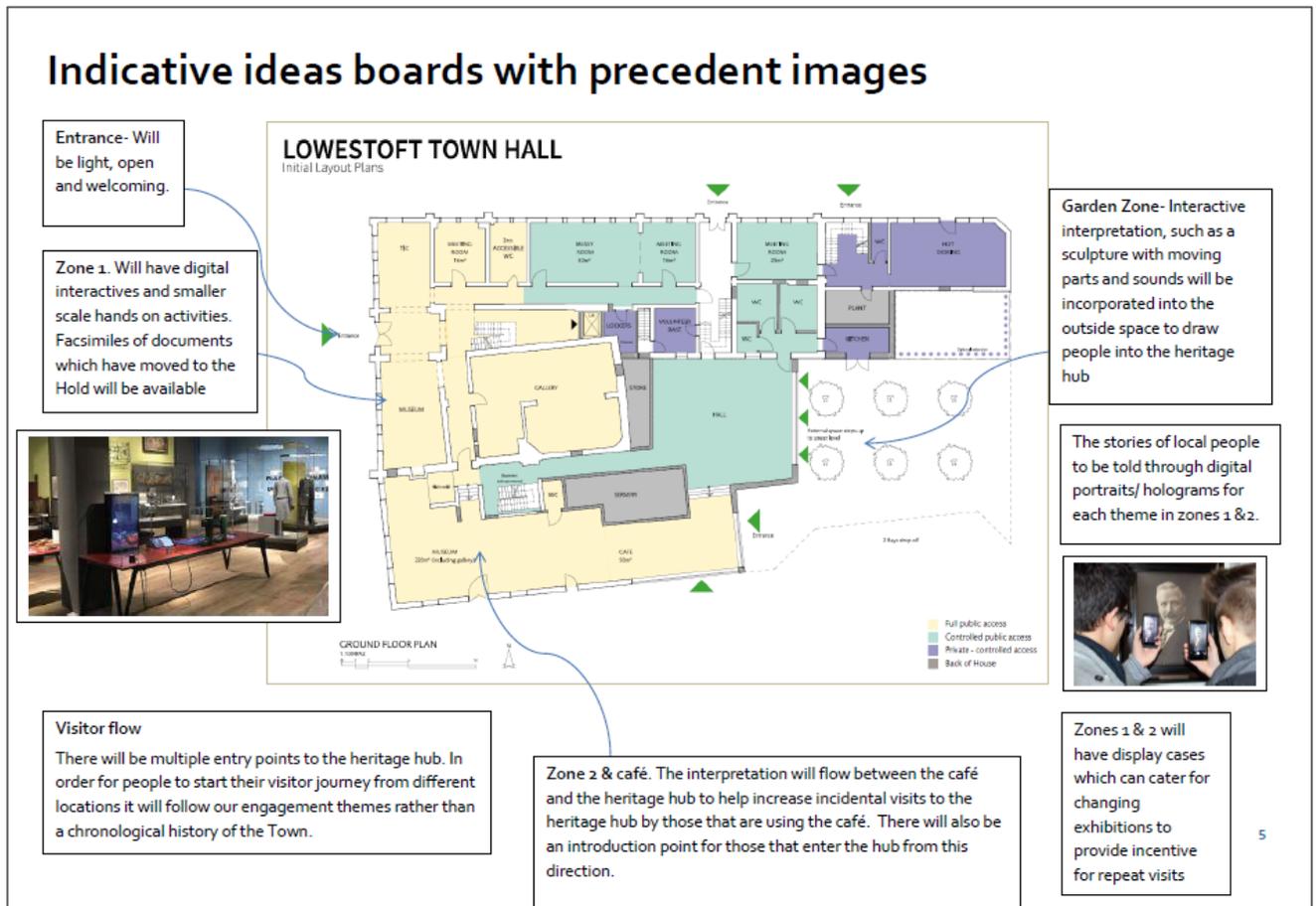
Town Hall Heritage Hub - Interpretation

The heritage hub within the Town Hall is the first thing visitors will discover as they enter the building from the main High Street. The heritage hub will enable the overarching themes of Lowestoft's history to be told in one building, open year round, with innovative interpretation and displays, incorporating local people's stories.

Collaboration with local museums with outreach projects will signpost people to find out more detail at the relevant museums in the Town, and the heritage hub's location adjacent to the tourist information centre will facilitate the sharing of information and promotion of other heritage sites and events in the town.

The intention is that this will address one of the major issues for local people identified in our research – that they do not have information about the different museums in town – as well as provide a more coherent offer for visitors, especially those that arrive in the low season when the local museums, run by volunteers, are closed. In the high season, the Town Hall will drive footfall to the other museums.

To engage with the widest possible audience, and in particular harder to reach groups, the interpretation will be interactive, involving film/moving images, sound and hands-on exhibits. The diagram below shows the aspirations for the interpretation on offer within the building.



6. GOVERNANCE AND LEGACY MANAGEMENT

Governance Options

There are two options for the future governance for the Town Hall. The first is direct management by Lowestoft Town Council, and the second is to manage it via a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)²⁹.

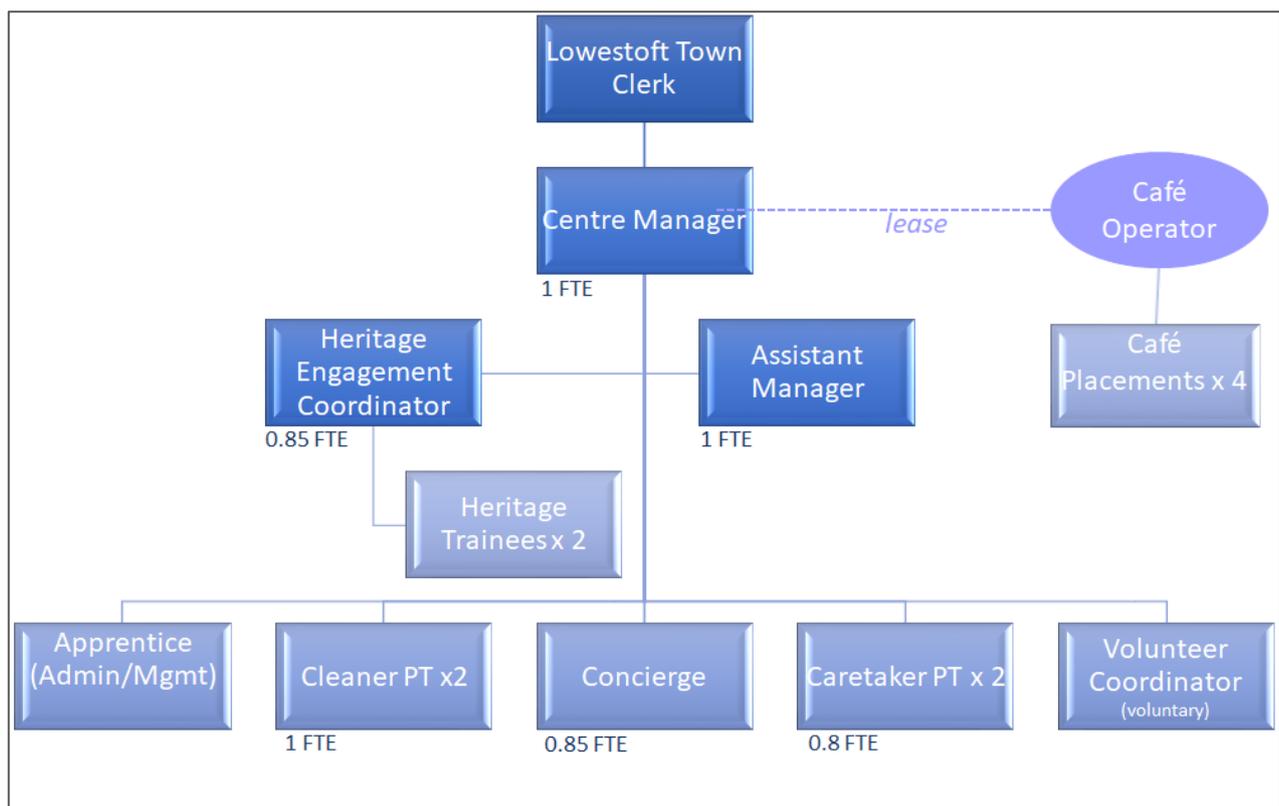
Direct Management: Lowestoft Town Council would take direct responsibility for the Town Hall. The Town Clerk would have a Centre Manager reporting to them, who in turn would take full control of running the Town Hall day-to-day and managing staff. This has the benefit of simplicity and would

²⁹ A CIO is preferable to a Trust as it offers a level of protection for its trustees, given the scale and complexity of the Town Hall operation

ensure that Lowestoft Town Council retained control over its largest asset. However, one downside is that it represents an additional and significant responsibility to the role of the Town Clerk.

CIO Management: In this model, after the completion of the capital project, Lowestoft Town Council would continue to own and maintain the building, but would lease to a specially formed CIO, which would pay profit-related rent back to the Council. The CIO could have trustees representing the community and the Council on it, which could help ensure that the Town Hall continued to meet the needs of the community. A CIO would also be eligible to apply for grant funding not accessible to a local authority. However, there could be VAT implications relating to the capital project and the future lease arrangements, so advice would be needed. Similarly, where major grants are concerned, it could be complicated to switch recipients during the lifetime of the grant. Further, the specific relationship between the CIO and the Council in terms of profit-related rental would need to be examined in terms of charitable law. Finally, relinquishing control of an asset that ultimately is underwritten by the Council is a risk the Council may be unwilling to take.

It is recommended that governance options are examined in detail in the development stage of the project, with appropriate advice taken. For the purposes of this business plan, it is assumed that the first option, direct management, is followed.



Operational Management

The operational management of the Town Hall in this model assumes that Lowestoft Town Council directly manages the Town Hall, employing a full time Centre Manager and assistant manager to oversee all aspects of running the business.

The second assumption is that the café is leased to a third party, on a service level agreement and a profit-related lease. Details of this are in the following section.

The Town Hall management team would be responsible for managing all staff, promoting the Town Hall, taking bookings and invoicing accordingly, organising events, liaising with the public, and ensuring that the operation runs smoothly in all respects. Liaison with the café lessee would also form a core part of the role, ensuring that the service levels agreed are being maintained. Some of the general administration, such as payroll, would be carried out within the existing Council infrastructure. Bookkeeping would be outsourced to a professional visiting weekly.

A business admin or management apprenticeship, linked to East Coast College, would be created to provide opportunities for local young people, reporting to the Centre Manager.

A full time Heritage Engagement Coordinator would be responsible for running and managing the heritage hub and gallery, organising exhibitions liaising with other museums and co-curation groups in the community, organising activities and managing outreach into the community. The remainder of the staff for the Town Hall cover cleaning, caretaking and concierge duties. Cleaning will require almost full time cover once the Town Hall is fully operational. However, this is likely to be split into at least two part time roles, as will caretaking.

Finally, a volunteer coordinator would be appointed to look after the large volunteer workforce required to support the Town Hall, which covers roles such as heritage hub support, tourist information and meet/greet, as well as supporting specific activities.

Café Management

Three models were considered for the running of the café:

- A community café partner
- Run directly by the Town Council, appointing their own staff etc
- Leased to a café operator

A community café would be attractive in that it would provide excellent work opportunities for local disadvantaged people and therefore fit well with the objectives of the project in terms of inclusion. In discussion with an experienced local operator, however, it was clear that there would be no capacity to contribute any significant rental or profits to the Town Hall. This income is critical to enabling the Town Hall to offer subsidies and free events, and to offer differential (lower) pricing to community groups for use of facilities.

Running the café directly would be feasible, although it would have the disbenefit of extending the role of existing staff (and the Town Hall management team), potentially into areas in which they have no expertise. A successful café would return a higher income to the Town Hall if run directly, as there is no profit share with an external operator, but it would also mean that there would be considerably more work in bookkeeping, VAT returns and general overheads. Overall, the risk is somewhat higher than working with an experienced partner.

It is proposed instead that the café be leased to an experienced commercial operator, who would manage all aspects of its operation including staffing, day to day café customers and catering for events.

The café itself will be fitted out as part of the capital project, but any leased equipment, all utilities, cleaning etc will be the café operator's responsibility.

To ensure that the café runs in a way to suit the Town Hall's objectives, a service level agreement would form part of the lease arrangement. This should cover not only minimum hours of operation but also pricing scales³⁰ and other measures to ensure the café is inclusive and affordable for all.

A condition of the lease would include a requirement to support café work placements (4 placements per year, each entailing an 18-hour week) for local young people aged 18-20 who are struggling to get into work. The Town Hall would fund the placement cost, but the café operator would have to provide the quality training and experience necessary to ensure the placement is of value to each individual. Placement staff would acquire a level 2 Food Hygiene qualification, and would gain experience in customer service, barista work and general café food preparation. Ensuring this lease condition is implemented would go some way to addressing the downside of not working with a community café operator.

The annual lease should be partly-profit related, based on turnover from daily operations, catering and bars, as well as café events, but with a floor/minimum rate in the early years. The terms of the lease would allow termination of the contract should the performance be consistently below par, either in service levels or in income.³¹

Aside from running the café day to day, and catering for events/bookings, the café operator would be permitted to run other café events, although the income from these would count towards the lease payment.

Project Structure

The capital project will be delivered in two stages (as required by NLHF): a development stage and a delivery stage. Continuity across the stages is preferable as it should lead to a faster implementation overall by avoiding the need to procure twice.

For the development stage, a project team will be created, reporting to a Project Board, and in turn to Lowestoft Town Council.

A Project Board was originally established in September 2020 to progress the Town Hall project towards an NLHF submission. Throughout the development phase, the Project Board will continue to meet on a monthly basis to monitor the governance requirements of the grant, and to oversee overall project progress to ensure the project is delivered in accordance with its stated ambitions. The Board will also provide advice on where enhancements can be made to the project and will participate in the evaluation of the project.

The Project Board will comprise of the Town Mayor (Chairperson); Deputy Mayor; the Town Council's HAZ and Place Board representatives and the Chairs of its Finance and Governance Committee, Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee, and Events and Communications Sub Committee; and the Town Clerk. Additional stakeholders on the Board will include East Suffolk Council's Culture and Heritage Programme Manager and Funding Manager and Historic England's, Historic Places Advisor.

³⁰ Pricing scales are not intended to hamper profitable operation, but rather to set some price points for affordability for those on lower income.

³¹ The income targets will require detailed consideration, since the café operator is somewhat dependent on the Town Hall management team to drive catering bookings to the café. At the same time, the operator is also in competition with external caterers for some business.

Sub-groups may be convened to address specific areas requiring expertise and other Officers and Councillors may attend meetings on specific agenda items where expertise and guidance is needed.

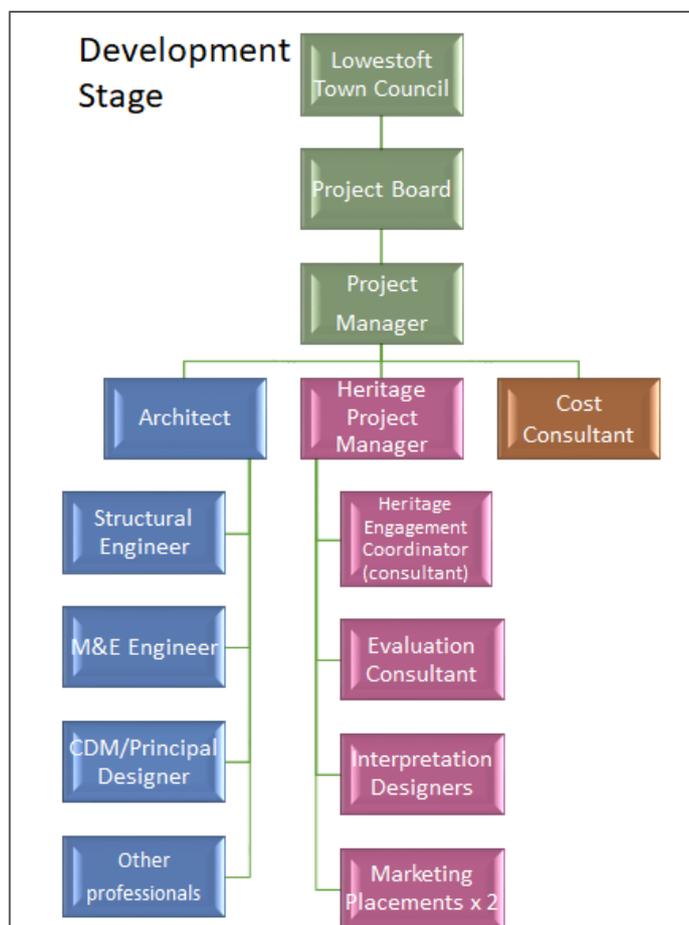
The Project Board will delegate each management stage and day-to-day control to a Project Manager.

The following professionals will be procured; a break clause between stages would be included in the contracts, with the option, but not the commitment, to continue through to delivery stage.

- An experienced Project Manager to oversee all aspects of definition and design work during the development stage, procurement of consultants, and any necessary funding submissions etc.
- A Heritage Project Manager to lead the delivery of activities in the development stage, oversee the interpretation design activity, and to refine the Audience and Activity Plan for the delivery stage.

The Heritage Project Manager would also oversee the work of two Marketing Placements (from a local college) to develop and deliver a marketing plan for activities, specifically targeted at young people.

- A consultant Heritage Engagement Coordinator to run the trial engagement activities during the development stage, as a consultant. In the delivery stage, this role would become a permanent staff position, continuing after grant funding ends, thus embedding knowledge within the organisation.



- Evaluation consultant(s) to assess the impact of activities in the development stage, to inform the detailed planning for the delivery stage and beyond.
- Interpretation Designers to develop the outline designs for the heritage hub's interpretation and to document the interpretation plan.
- A Design Team, led by an architect, to take designs to RIBA 3 for the development stage, then through to completion. The design team would include structural engineer, mechanical & electrical engineers and any other professionals deemed necessary by the team lead (ie architect).
- A Cost Consultant (QS), procured separately, in order to segregate design decisions from costs control. The cost consultant may also take on contract administration during the construction project (or procured separately/managed by the architect).
- Principal Designer (CDM) to plan and manage health and safety.

Additional services required, such as condition and site investigations and specialist surveys (potentially including ecology, acoustics, energy, asbestos and environmental assessments), would be procured according to the Council’s standard procedures.

The delivery stage project structure would be much the same as development, with the team leading capital work through construction to completion.

The Heritage Project Manager would oversee the appointment of two Conservation Skills training placements, where individuals would gain a Level 1 qualification in construction trades, with opportunities for hands-on experience on the Town Hall project itself. This would be built into the contract with the main construction contractor.

On the activity side, the Heritage Engagement Coordinator would transition into a staff position, to deliver the programme detailed in the Activity Plan. This would require a separate recruitment process.

The conversion of the Heritage Engagement Coordinator role into a permanent staff role is an important part of ensuring that there is continuity from project into live running, so that skills developed can be retained, and the momentum behind the Action Plan is maintained. Two further

Marketing Placements would continue the work to market the Town Hall and its Activity Plan, particularly to younger and harder-to-reach audiences.

Evaluation will remain a core component of the project, with evaluation consultant(s) continuing to provide ongoing monitoring, evaluation and review, so that lessons learned can be channelled into future activities. For further details, please see Section 12.

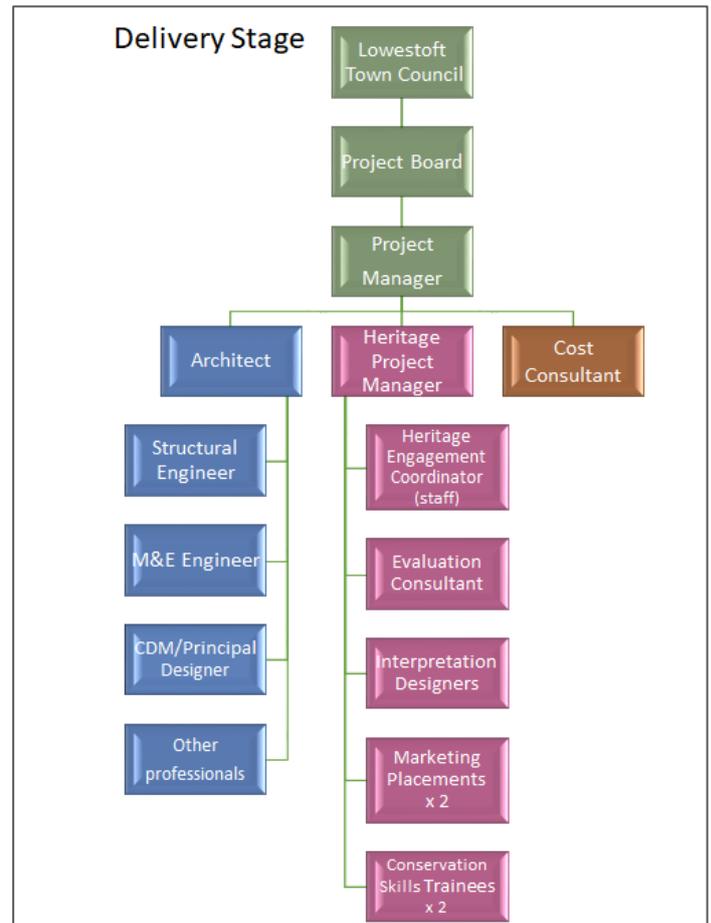
7. FINANCIALS – CAPITAL PROJECT

Costs

The total cost of the project, which includes both the development stage and delivery stage, plus three years of activity costs during live running, are **£6.662m**. This is an increase over previous cost models in response to recommendations by the Quantity Surveyor for additional contingency provisions given the condition of the building, along with almost £0.25m of additional inflation allowances, to take the construction costs forward to a start date in 2024.

VAT is excluded from the cost calculations, as it should be reclaimable on the project.

Live running costs within the project budget cover a Heritage Engagement Coordinator, Heritage Traineeships (x6) and activity costs, including professional fees, evaluation and equipment and



materials. These costs would be grant funded for the first three years, then, with the exception of the traineeships, continued permanently, supported by the income from the commercial activities of the Town Hall. The future of the traineeships should be considered during the third year of live running, to assess the feasibility of funding these from operational income.³²

Funding

Project funding has three principal potential sources: The Towns Fund, Lowestoft Town Council and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. A grant from the Towns Fund is already secured, at £2m, part of the Historic Quarter change programme. This represents 29% of project costs.

Lowestoft Town Council would contribute to the project, funded via a Public Works Loans Board loan over 30 years. LTC has confirmed that it will seek this loan to fill the funding 'gap', subject to the necessary approvals and public support. The cost of servicing the loan should not exceed £120k pa, as this can be covered within the precept and from capital works allocations currently.

A grant request has been submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund; a decision on this is due at the end of September 2021. The project team, during the development stage project, will continue to seek further funding, including from New Anglia LEP, and other smaller funders. A further project development grant should also be sought from the Architectural Heritage Fund, which has funded the development of the Stage 1 bid to NLHF. Historic England has agreed to fund the development of a Conservation Management Plan for the building.

8. FINANCIALS – OPERATIONAL

Income and Expenditure Calculations

There are several sources of income for the Town Hall. These include:

- room hire income (from businesses, parties, weddings and community bookings)
- events income (ticket income, fees from stallholders at sales etc)
- rental income (from longer term 'residents' and hot-desking clients)
- café lease from the café operator
- merchandise and art sales commissions
- grants, donations and sponsorships

Income is calculated initially using an eight-week plan, which maps out potential use of the building daily, and analyses income from the various bookings, multiplying them up to 48 weeks, allowing some contingency and downtime in the overall forecasts.

The plan considers different periods of the year, such as school holidays, Christmas seasons etc, and also recognises constraints in use of the building, such as concurrent, adjacent activities that may not be compatible. By creating a visual plan, there is the opportunity to test the credibility of the projections,

³² The option to continue with at least one heritage traineeship should be considered during the latter stages of the delivery stage project, in live running. Surpluses from operations could sustain the heritage engagement role, which will have ongoing activity to support; the collections management role will potentially be dominated by maintenance and be of lesser value to a trainee.

which can be hard to discern from a spreadsheet list alone. A sample of the eight week plan is here. The full plan and a key to the use codes is at Appendix E.

Room	Week 4																				
	school holiday																				
	Monday			Tuesday			Wednesday			Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday		
	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve
Council Chamber		BBX				LTC						EV		CC							
Green Room (14sqm)																		EV			EV
Function Hall		PPF	ComBB			ComBB			ComBB					PP		Lcomm					PP
Messy Space (32sqm)	WSC		WSC			Y			Y	HA			Y		HA	HA			HA	HA	
Meeting Rm (16sqm)							LTC					Comm									
Meeting Rm (25sqm)	Comm			BB	BB		subBB			LTC			BB	BB							
Gallery	Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex		
	Funeral in function hall; Knit & natter; Children's creative workshop, messy space am; Community exhibition in gallery for two weeks. Large business meeting in Chamber			LTC committee (eve)			Youth group in evening; LTC committee; Weekly ballroom dancing class in hall.			LTC committee meeting in meeting room. Event in Council chamber - eg talk by local expert, historian, celebrity, forensic scientist, beekeeper...! Community heritage activity messy space			Midweek civil ceremony; Youth all day/evening activity in messy room. Private party function hall .			LCEP/similar conference in main hall; Comedy event in main hall; Heritage activity for families in messy room			Clairvoyant event in Hall (green room used by performer); heritage activity for families in Messy space. Private party afternoon		

Expenditure assessments are based on market data or comparable sites elsewhere, and relate to the level of activity, year on year. Staff costs are based on market rates, with a 10% uplift to cover on-costs such as workplace pension, employers' NI etc.

VAT is included within the costings on both 'sides' of the income and expenditure analysis. VAT *may* potentially be applicable to the supply of rooms for hire, for example, but specialist advice will be required, as this is a complex area of VAT regulations. Where VAT does have to be charged, it can be offset with VAT on supplies, although many areas of expenditure either have low rates of VAT (eg utilities) or VAT is not applicable, such as on staff costs. This means that there is a potential decrease on net profit of ~ £12k in year 3. This will be explored during the development stage.

The eight-week plan also enables the calculation of footfall, by using average attendance per event, and multiplying up for the year. Footfall estimates are show in Appendix D.

Summary Income/Expenditure Sheet

The following sheet summarises the forecast income and expenditure for the first four years of operation. It is based on Year 3 predictions, worked up from the eight-week plan, which are then scaled back for years 1 and 2 (45% and 70% respectively). Café income is reduced further in year 1, to 35% to reflect the likely slower uptake of the café, and the longer lead in period for bookings such as weddings, with catering. Costs are also reduced for the earlier years, but to a limited degree – the majority of costs are fixed, or relatively so.

LOWESTOFT TOWN HALL - OPERATIONAL FINANCIALS YR 1 - 4								NLHF funding ends	
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4					
	£	£	£	£					
Income									
Room hire	49,589	89,649	128,070	137,675					
Events - ticket sales & fees	16,180	23,369	31,995	34,395					
Rental Income	102,738	115,300	130,375	134,144					
Merchandise	5,873	9,135	13,050	14,029					
Miscellaneous incl grants	97,111	110,900	119,040	53,452					
Total Income		271,490	348,352	422,530					373,695
Expenditure									
Staff & volunteers	168,400	174,085	189,206	164,672					
Other costs incl activity	34,897	33,527	29,917	33,310					
Overheads	119,384	121,003	122,041	123,793					
Total Expenditure		322,680	328,615	341,164					321,775
NET POSITION		£ (51,191)	£ 19,737	£ 81,366					£ 51,919
Cumulative position		£ (51,191)	£ (31,453)	£ 49,912					£ 101,832
Annual contribution to maintenance re	£ 42,000	£ 36,000	£ 30,000	£ 30,000					
Cumulative reserve	£ 42,000	£ 78,000	£ 108,000	£ 138,000					

Contributions to Reserves

The management and maintenance of this large heritage building will be significant; furthermore, the interpretation installation will require updating and renewal at some point in the future.³³ Detailed plans should be drawn up in the development stage project, once designs are more detailed.

Within the operational financials there is an allocation annually - the residual balance from the operational maintenance and consumables budget, set at £60k pa - to a maintenance reserve. In the early years of operation, maintenance will be relatively low, given the new condition of much of the building, so allocations will be higher (projected at £42k in year 1 reducing to £30k by year 4 onwards). This will enable a reserve to be built for larger maintenance and repairs: by year 4 there should be a £138k surplus to support maintenance.

As the operation of the building stabilises beyond year 4, it could be possible to increase the level of contribution, or indeed to transfer some surpluses to a general reserve to support the business in future.

9. FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

Business Viability

As can be seen from the operational financials, there is a net positive position from Year 2, with Year 3 of operation forecast to return a profit of £81.4k. However, it should be noted that within this figure is over £70k of grant income. This covers the operational costs of activities, including a coordinator to lead

³³ Interpretation designers will provide guarantees on their physical components, but there is likely to be a need for renewal for technology-based exhibits when they become outdated. Similarly, some items that are used by children/young people may have a shorter life expectancy than other exhibits. The interpretation plan should identify the likely timescales for renewal/replacement so that budgetary provisions can be made.

activities, two traineeships, professional fees and materials. Therefore, it is effectively in year 4, when that funding ceases, that a true picture of the financial performance can be seen.

In year 4, there is a forecast net profit of £51.9k. This arises partly from the termination of the heritage traineeship roles (although the Heritage Engagement Coordinator role is retained, and activities continue at previous years' levels) but also from improved performance in general. Note that the opportunity to continue one of the heritage traineeships should be investigated during the live running of the project (see organisational details in Section 6).

To improve the cumulative position, and cover the shortfall in year 1, the contribution to maintenance reserves could be eliminated or reduced; however, it would be prudent to retain it, to ensure that ongoing maintenance of the building and interpretation can be supported through the income generated, rather than from the precept. Instead, Lowestoft Town Council should support the business financially until cumulative profit arises by midway through year 3.

Sensitivity Analysis

Sensitivity analysis shows that the business will make a positive return in Year 3 of operation (when the grant still exists) where either income falls short by 10% or costs increase by the same margin. In both cases, once the distortion of the grant is eliminated in Year 4, a profit is returned (£14.5k in an income decrease scenario, £19.7k on a cost increase scenario).

This means that margins are tight – a 10% shift on either side is not unlikely - although it must be borne in mind that income is projected over a 48-week period, ie effectively there is around 8% contingency in the figures, whereas the majority of costs are based on a full year.³⁴ However, there are several mitigations that could be actioned, such as the reduction in early years of the contribution to maintenance reserves, although this could place a future burden on the Council. Other mitigations are discussed in the Risk Assessment that follows in Section 11.

This sensitivity analysis is somewhat simplistic in its ±10% modelling; in practice, it is much more likely that the business could experience a significant shortfall in one particular area, for example, the wedding market, than across the board. It will be essential that clear management accounts are produced monthly, showing performance against budget, with remediation taken as quickly as possible, whether that is in cost cutting, additional marketing or other measures.

Clearly financial performance can exceed projections, as well as fall short of them. The operational business will begin mid-way through 2025 at the earliest – that is, in four years' time. There is ample opportunity for significant market changes in the intervening years, especially in a post-COVID world. A 10% increase in income, with costs remaining large static, would deliver a smaller loss in year 1 (-£24k), with a move into profit (£54.5k) from year 2 onwards. By end of year 4 of operation, in this scenario, a cumulative surplus of £243k would arise.

This variance illustrates the dynamic nature of modelling costs and income on a new, untested business. It is essential, therefore, and particularly because of the current economic climate and the entry into the post-COVID era, that the business case is revisited during the development phase and once more in the delivery phase, to ensure that it, and the plans for the Town Hall, remain on track and realistic.

³⁴ The exception to this is where costs are derived as a percentage of income, eg merchandise sales.

10. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Outcomes

The impact of the new Town Hall should be significant. It should transform the lives of local people and businesses and enhance the reputation of the town as a whole.

Outcomes – the benefits that the project is seeking to achieve – are supported by outputs, which are measurable. The table below provides a list of outputs, with details of when they should be delivered, and how they will be monitored. This will feed into the evaluation process (see Section 12 below). Outputs are grouped to the outcomes specified by the NLHF within their funding guidance.

Outcome	Output/ Indicator	Target Measure	By When	Monitoring Approach /Evidence/ Baseline where applicable
The local economy will be boosted	Direct FTEs created	5.5 FTE	1 during delivery stage; 4.25 at start of live operations; 5.5 by end of Yr 3 of operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Payroll data from Town Council identifying new appointments
	Indirect FTEs (café)	5 FTE	3 FTE at start of live operations 5 FTE at end of year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Payroll registrations from café operator
	Safeguarded number of FTEs	20	20 safeguarded jobs by year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual check of NOMIS (ONS) data – use as base data. Safeguarded jobs should be in the businesses surrounding the town hall.
	Construction jobs FTE	18	End of main contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review & confirmation with main contractor
	Private businesses supported - direct	45	10 by end of yr 1 of live operations 45 by end of yr 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register of businesses using hot desking facility on a regular basis (ie members or regular booking at least once a week)
	New businesses started	5	5 by end of yr 3 of live operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register of businesses using hot desking facility – indicator if new business
	Footfall increase on the High Street	60,000	20,000 by year 1 of operations 40,000 by year 2 of operations 60,000 by year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Footfall counts on High Street Business confidence reports (People & Places) Baseline: People and Places 2019, repeat 2022 (post Covid). See footfall forecasts in appendices
	Increased tourist numbers on High Street	20,000 pa on High Street 10% increase other museums	10,000 by end yr 1 live 20,000 pa end yr 3 live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitors to the heritage hub/TIC, measured by sample clicker counts Enquiries at TIC (register) Increased visitors at local museums (their counts)

Outcome	Output/ Indicator	Target Measure	By When	Monitoring Approach /Evidence/ Baseline where applicable
	Increased visitors at other museums			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline: existing other museum entry figures
	New floorspace created	365m ²	Start of year 1 of live operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation of new business space (Council, Registrars, Hotdesking)
	Individuals Supported	45		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported via the co-working hub
	Private businesses supported - indirectly	20 supplier contracts set up 10 local businesses report improved performance 20 local businesses more confident	20 suppliers end yr 2 of live running 5 businesses end yr 2, growing to 10 end yr 3 20, end yr 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline n/a Supplier contracts set up/evidence of regular payments to key suppliers (incl café). Local businesses increase in turnover compared to prior (baseline to be taken 2021) Measure this from People & Places baseline, Local businesses report increases in confidence
	More shops occupied on High Street	Reduction in vacancy rates	10% reduction Yr 1 live running 20% reduction year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline: Pre-COVID 22% vacancy rate on HS (repeat 2022) Count of vacant shops
People will have developed skills People will have developed skills	Apprenticeship in place	1	Yr 1 of live running, for 2 years?	Apprentice started, payroll evidence plus East Coast College registration confirmation
	Job Placements (hospitality/ catering)	12	4 in yr 1 of live operations, repeated yrs 2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Café operator confirmation. Payroll Feedback from job placements' exit interviews
	Heritage Traineeships (1 x collections mgmt.; 1 x engagement)	6	2 each in yr 1- 3 of live running	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Payroll data from Town Council Review of trainees' project portfolio/diaries to identify skills acquired Self-assessment of each project's value.
	Conservation skills traineeships	2	2 x 10-week placements during delivery stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation from main contractor Level 1 construction skills certificates issued
	Volunteers trained	70 people (>250 volunteering opportunities)	20 during development 50 delivery and yrs 1 -3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteers trained in heritage hub support, collections management, activity support etc Volunteer attendance records (excludes skilled volunteers)

Outcome	Output/ Indicator	Target Measure	By When	Monitoring Approach /Evidence/ Baseline where applicable
	Brownfield land developed	0.13ha	Start of year 1 of live operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building and land ready for occupation • Gardens planted
	Increased local pride/positivity	% age increase in positive feedback		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local people report they feel more positive about their area • Baseline: Thinking Place research [is this local enough] • Baseline: local survey (ask the right questions!)
Local area will be a better place to live, work or visit	Young people participating in activities	3,500	300 (11-18) in development stage; 600 delivery stage; 600 yr 1 live operations 800 yr 2 operations 1200 yr 3 live operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people registered per activity • Data from community engagement partners & our records • Feedback from events (collected by evaluator assessments) •
A wider range of people will be engaged in heritage	People from lower socio-economic groups participating in activities	1,150	100 in development stage; 200 delivery stage; 200 yr 1 live ops; 300 yr2 live ops; 350 yr 3 live ops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People registered per activity • Sample evaluation surveys Data from community engagement partners' records
	Under 25s and over 65s participating in larger intergenerational projects – social cohesion	50	30 in year 1 live 20 in year 2 live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register of people participating in each intergenerational project (1 major annually) • Data from community engagement partner
	People say they their wellbeing has improved as a result of participating in activities	60	20 pa first 3 years of live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess via evaluation survey/changed attitudes & focus groups •
Wellbeing – people will have greater wellbeing	An energy efficient building has been delivered	BREEAM very good rating awarded	Completion of construction project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate issued Baseline will be established in energy assessment during development stage

Outcome	Output/ Indicator	Target Measure	By When	Monitoring Approach /Evidence/ Baseline where applicable
A positive environmental impact has been made	New greenspace created	320sqm	End of construction project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New green roof installed • New garden and planting installed • Baseline = zero currently
	Passive Design	Natural lighting & ventilation	Design Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BREAMM 'Very Good' rating
	Active Design	High-efficiency electrical & mechanical systems	Design Approval Cost plans; End of construction project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BREAMM 'Very Good' rating • Confirmation from architect /QS & main contractor's QS
	Renewable Energy	Solar panels; heat pumps		
	'Green' materials and finishes	Environmentally responsible suppliers		
	Landscaping	Sedum roof Native garden plants and shrubs	Cost plans; End of construction project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sedum roof in place • Native garden plants and shrubs, sourced from bio-secure certificated nurseries (receipt evidence)
	Water management	Pervious surfaces where applicable	Cost plans; End of construction project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation from architect /QS & main contractor's QS
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

11. BUSINESS & PROJECT RISKS

The following matrix provides details of the most likely risks to arise, along with their impact, and describes the controls or mitigations that would be in place to minimise each risk arising, plus the actions that would be taken in the event that they did.

Risks will be managed throughout the project by the project manager, alongside issue management, and reported to the Project Board. At each stage of the project, each risk must be allocated to a named owner, who will be responsible for monitoring and managing that risk.

All risks will be 'traffic-lighted' and reported monthly – or more frequently, if problems begin to arise. A risk will move to amber if there is an issue or issues that are making it more likely that the risk will materialise, and it will then be monitored weekly. A red risk requires a specific meeting, and immediate action as defined in the control/action plan.

Any risk with a medium or high impact, that moves to amber, will also be reported to the Council.

The project manager will also review all risks regularly to ensure that they are comprehensive, with any new risks added, that their probability and impact scores remain accurate, and that the mitigations are still relevant and actionable.

Risks below are split into three sections: development stage; delivery stage; live operations (ie business risks). In each section, the risks are ordered in terms of overall probability/impact score, with the highest first.

Development Project Risks

RISK	PROB.	IMPACT	EXISTING CONTROLS/ACTION REQUIRED
PROJECT RISKS – DEVELOPMENT STAGE			
External funding for the project is not secured	M	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lowestoft Town Council has agreed to underwrite a shortfall in grant funding, which will mitigate against a smaller funder declining to award. - For the larger funders, specifically NLHF (being the major unsecured funder), failure to secure a grant would terminate the project, and the Town Hall would be mothballed or sold, if a buyer could be found.
Capital project costs come back higher than budgeted	M	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Costs for the capital works will be calculated by QS. Option to revise designs/reduce specification - Interpretation costs will be estimated by designers; option to revise designs/reduce specifications - Option to increase capital budget with funding support from Lowestoft Town Council.
A shortage of key skills or staff	L	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Majority of team running development stage are external consultants, reporting through a project manager to the Board. - Project Board/Council will appoint based on tender responses, which should identify suitably experienced/qualified staff - Where a key member of the team is lost, either the contracting organisation will be required to replace them or their role will be readvertised; risk is that this causes delay/disconnect.
Lower level of engagement in activities than anticipated	L	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risk will be mitigated by working with proven community partners who have existing, active relationships with the harder to reach target groups. - Participants will be leading on activities and determining the final output - Review activity plan to identify where it can be amended to achieve greater engagement. - Review with partners/check their ongoing evaluation
Consultation/ engagement – key stakeholders/ community not supportive	L	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good communication has created widespread support. This will be continued. - Key stakeholders represented on project board. - Partnership agreements in principle, which will help access community and reduce risk - Further consultation events in plan - Activity plan in development stage aims to pull in community

Delivery Project Risks

RISK	PROB.	IMPACT	EXISTING CONTROLS/ACTION REQUIRED
PROJECT RISKS – DELIVERY STAGE			
Delays to decision making result in programme delays and contractual issues	M	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the current proposed operating model, Lowestoft Town Council has ultimate responsibility for the programme. However, there are strict procedures in place for decision making within councils that have potential to delay the project which would cost - If delays to decision making impact on the main contractor's ability to deliver the project on time, significant contractual issues could arise. - If the current operating model continues, it will be essential to implement delegated powers to the Project Board and in turn to the project manager, to prevent delays to the project. - A similarly streamlined approach will be required for timely settlement of invoices within the contractual period.
Construction project takes longer than planned	M	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experienced project manager, design team and QS on board to identify issues early and resolve them - Change control to be tightly managed/all drawings to be construction-ready, and signed off by client, at tender. - Construction contract will be on a fixed period with penalties. - Delays to project most likely due to site issues (see below) or changes to requirements (which should be mitigated by full client signoff before tender).
Site issues, eg archaeology, contaminated land, asbestos	M	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contingency in capital budget to cover these; if increased likelihood emerges during development, specific allocations will be made in capital plan. - Most key surveys to be undertaken in development stage, reducing the risk (bar archaeology). - Major impact would be a delay to the project, with archaeology having the highest time delay, but medium risk. - If archaeological, little can be done bar negotiate the time allocated for investigation and use as further community engagement exercise
VAT becomes liable on some/all of the project	L	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further advice will be sought in development to confirm the expectation that zero VAT will be payable - In the <u>highly</u> unlikely event that some VAT is incurred, the Council would have to fund the gap
A shortage of key skills or staff	L	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Majority of team running delivery stage are external consultants, reporting through a project manager to the Board.

RISK	PROB.	IMPACT	EXISTING CONTROLS/ACTION REQUIRED
PROJECT RISKS – DELIVERY STAGE			
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project Board/Council will appoint based on tender responses, which should identify suitably experienced/qualified staff - Staff appointment at this stage is heritage engagement coordinator; if unable to appoint staff, would continue with consultancy until suitable candidate emerges. - Where a key member of the team is lost, either the contracting organisation will be required to replace them or their role will be readvertised; risk is that this causes delay/disconnect.
Tenders come back higher than budget	L	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A value engineering exercise will be undertaken with the lowest tender looking at ways to source cheaper alternative materials, sub-contractors etc. This will cause a delay to the start of the project. - There is a significant contingency budget allocated to the capital works elements part of which is to cover some of this risk.
Capital costs overrun the budget	L	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Costs developed by QS, reviewed by architect and by experienced capital project manager so risk reduced - £0.55m contingency on capital budget, plus specific contingencies for high cost individual risks (see below) - QS will have tight control of costs, and report monthly, so early warnings will be given. This will enable decisions to be taken on changing scope or reducing spend on certain items. - Option to seek further financial support from funders

Business (Operational) Risks

The following risks relate to the live running of the new Town Hall, ie operational/business risks. Risks in this section would be managed by the Centre Manager along with the Town Clerk. Specific details of the operational governance structure will be considered in a review in the development phase of the project.

RISK	PROB.	IMPACT	EXISTING CONTROLS/ACTION REQUIRED
OPERATIONAL RISKS			
Operating income is lower than anticipated	M	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would arise through lower uptake of services, changes in the market reducing price for certain key income generators (eg weddings), or lower footfall in general. Could also arise from poor choice of café operator - Some costs are volume related, so impact of lower income would be mitigated to an extent/costs could be saved. - If issues with café operator, lease to be terminated and replaced/taken inhouse.

RISK	PROB.	IMPACT	EXISTING CONTROLS/ACTION REQUIRED
OPERATIONAL RISKS			
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marketing/promo required to address footfall issue - Council support for cashflow would enable a longer period to be tolerated - Alternative uses for some parts of building to be sought – eg longer term office rental
Demand for key income generators is lower than predicted, or demand has changed/gone by the time project goes live	L	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Predictions via 8 week plan are generally modest and achievable hence low risk. - Reasonable spread of income generators (parties, weddings, hot desking, room hire, café etc) reduces risk - Alternative uses for designated spaces would be sought, eg designer/makers occupy hot desk area - Reassess pricing to ensure this is not a barrier/offer better incentives to regular bookers. - Reduced income would need to be offset by reduced costs (some are variable linked to activity anyway) - See Financial Analysis section for details of impacts and break-evens.
Registrars do not move into the building	M	L/M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Registrars' use of the building will drive income related to civil ceremonies and receptions. Absence of registrars would reduce this. - Remains a medium probability as Registrars have several options, and the timing is difficult (registrars will need temporary facilities until TH opens, so could decide on alternative for long term rather than move twice) - Impact mitigated somewhat through café operator sharing the 'hit' from catering related income. - Additional marketing of wedding facilities to offset natural market arising from Registrars' presence. - Space allocated to Registrars could generate more income if rented out separately at market rates, eg as managed workspace or further hot desking.
Management responsibility for LTC is not adequate	L	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the current governance model, LTC take overall management responsibility for the Town Hall. Running a commercial organisation with t/o scheduled to reach £400k by year 3 is not necessarily within a Town Clerk's expertise/skill set and is not within their job description. - A governance review in development stage will assess the issues and recommend appropriate interventions, eg training (or a different governance model or supplemental support for the current structure through committees etc). - Hiring of an experienced venue manager and assistant manager will reduce the impact.

RISK	PROB.	IMPACT	EXISTING CONTROLS/ACTION REQUIRED
OPERATIONAL RISKS			
Failure to secure suitable café operator	M	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Probability is medium because this is a new venture with no track record. Profit-related lease shares risk with operator, so would still be attractive. - Town Council could run café directly, ie hire experienced team to run on their behalf. - Would add complexity to centre manager role and so would need centre manager job re-evaluated. - Would also increase income (in time) as no profit share with third party (although some costs would also need to come inhouse or would increase, eg bookkeeping). Not preferred option but remains doable.
Harder to reach groups do not engage as intended (lower levels, some groups absent)	L	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategy for activity-related engagement with harder-to-reach groups is sound, involving partnership working in most cases, with experienced partners who already have relationships/customer base. - Risk more likely to arise re casual use of Town Hall. - Engage with partners/stakeholders to understand causes. - Introduce more attractive pricing/offers/subsidies if barriers are financial - Review programming of events, groups to increase interest - If barrier = 'not for likes of us' work with partners to stage free events/give-aways to get people to enter building
Operating costs are higher than projected	L	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extensive work gone into operating cost assessments. Risk areas include utilities (no baseline for new building), business rates and level of staffing required to support fully functioning business. - Would need to review charging structure in light of higher operating costs. - Negotiate business rates with ESC/seek discretionary hardship relief? - Reduce levels of subsidy and/or seek sponsors to support subsidies/free events.

12. MONITORING & EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation will become core parts of the operation of the Town Hall. They are key to ensuring that the investment, both of time and money, is delivering the intended outcomes – and if it is not, to be able to amend plans to bring things back on track.

Baseline Data

As a result of the extensive development work for this project and that undertaken by East Suffolk Council's Economic Development team, there is a good library of baseline measures against which to

measure progress against outputs. Some of these are purely economic, some socio-economic and some are attitudinal, but all provide useful pre-COVID benchmarks.³⁵

During the development stage of the project, work will be undertaken to repeat some of this work (for example, People & Places' business/town centre research, for the High Street). Additional online and on-street survey work to establish post-COVID benchmarks of levels of activity will also be undertaken. It is likely that this will show a significant shift from pre-COVID benchmarks.

Monitoring & Measurement

Early in the development stage, a project evaluator will be appointed to devise evaluation tools to assess the overall impact of the project against social outcomes. This will involve setting up systems not only for activities run and managed in the Town Hall, but also linking into the recording systems operated by key partners, especially those who already have baseline data arising from their existing relationships. This approach will leverage the value to be gained from evaluation by importing data from partners.

Independent assessment during the delivery stage project will also confirm what has been achieved, identifying successes as well as any difficulties faced, or where delivery has not been achieved in line with expectations. A key deliverable of evaluation should be to look at ways to sustain involvement post-delivery with existing and new participants, and community groups.

Data to be collected will include:

- visitor numbers, footfall indicators in the High Street (counts), business confidence ratings, shop vacancies
- attendance numbers for activities, ticket sales, registrations, counts at events
- audience feedback and evaluations
- measures of community and visitor cultural engagement, pride of place and wellbeing.

Evaluation Mechanisms

Building on previous learning from the NLHF evaluation of *Making Waves Together* and inspired by the Community Wellbeing Evidence Programme, a wellbeing study³⁶ should be undertaken alongside economic impact assessments.

As noted, evaluation will be defined by an appointed independent evaluator, based around several different mechanisms, including:

- Quantitative assessment (simple measurement) – this works well for factual and evident demographic data but is less effective when looking at 'hidden' information, such as the socio-economic background of participants in an event, or indeed, qualitative assessment.
- Qualitative assessment through interviews, sampling and focus groups, led by a professional evaluator (for which there is budget in each stage of the Activity Plan and in the overall project

³⁵ These include the research for reports such as People & Places' *Lowestoft: the Heart of our Town*; Lowestoft Town Investment Plan; *Celebrating culture on the Edge of New Dawn*, Lowestoft's Cultural Strategy; *Making Waves Together* Evaluation Report; *Thinking Places' Lowestoft Story*.

³⁶ The possibility of running a research project, like the Sunderland Heritage Action Zone wellbeing study, commissioned by Historic England, with ERS Consultants, should be explored.

budget, as well as in those of partner organisations). This will enable a better understating of how people have engaged, what benefits they feel they have gained, and where things could be better.

- Surveys, both online and on street – to understand people’s attitudes, experiences and aspirations, on a wider scale. The project has an excellent track record of engagement in surveys, and this will help scale up responses and measure across the wider population. A key aspect of such surveys is the necessity to engage with people who do *not* use the Town Hall or participate in its activities.
- People & Places research – this will be further repeated after live running, for business confidence and data about the High Street.
- Post implementation review – this will be undertaken at the end of the project, to understand which elements were successful and which were less so, culminating in a ‘lessons learned’ summary for informing future major projects.

Review and Action

In the development stage, where a range of pilot activities will be run³⁷ (some flowing through into delivery and live) specific evaluation will be undertaken by the independent project evaluator, to understand what works and what does not, in terms of engaging with the hardest-to-reach groups. The lessons learnt will be used to improve the engagement offer in the delivery stage.

Input will also be received during both development and delivery from project partners, which will be incorporated into assessments.

In delivery, and subsequently in live running, the project, or subsequently the management team, will review evaluations and determine necessary actions, or changes to plans/ways of working, to improve performance and ensure outcomes are achieved.

Evaluation and lessons learnt will be a key part of the project delivery meetings and overseen by the Project Board. The learning can be shared with other local stakeholders through the Lowestoft Place Board, Cultural Leadership Group, Ambassador Programme, Towns Fund Hub and other strategic groups. A communications plan should be created during the development stage, to set out learning can be shared with different audiences and stakeholders. Communications could include reports for stakeholders, an accessible version for communities and perhaps a short film.

Measures of Success

Please refer to the Impact Assessment (Section 11) above for details of the outputs and how they would be measured, both in terms of baseline and proposed mechanism for evidencing achievement.

The success of the project will be measured as follows:

- completion of the overall project and individual stages within the allocated time, scope, and budget
- outputs achieved, eg number of audiences, hard to reach groups engaged etc
- outcomes successfully met, for example, everyone can experience and to be inspired by heritage
- residents surveyed will report a greater wellbeing, sense of pride and place, feel more connected and involved
- residents and visitors will have changed their perceptions of Lowestoft because of cultural intervention

³⁷ See Audience and Activity Plan for details.

- people will have developed skills and confidence eg in delivering cultural activity and showcasing culture to residents and audiences
- overall visitor satisfaction with Town Hall activities will be good or very good, measured through visitor surveys
- new networks, collaborations and partnerships will have been formed
- financially, the new Town Hall will be performing at, or above, the forecast operational levels.

13. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The high level timetable for the overall project forecasts a live opening date during the summer of 2025. This assumes that a Stage 1 grant is awarded by NLHF in September 2021, and that the timetables for quarterly grant submissions to the Heritage Fund remains the same as currently.

OVERALL PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN	
MILESTONE	WHEN (END OF MONTH)
• Assume Stage 1 grant awarded	September 2021
• Permission to Start (PTS) signed off	November 2021
• Procure team +2 months	January 2022
• Complete Activity Plan (and evaluation); get all designs to RIBA 3; updated cost plans; secure planning consent	January 2023
• Submit Stage 2 application	1 March 2023
• Decision	June 2023
• PTS	August 2023
• Getting tender ready +3 months	November 2023
• Procure & set up main contractor + 3 months	February 2024
• Construction (13 months estimate QS)	March 2025
• Open	June/July 2025

APPENDIX A - BIBLIOGRAPHY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following documents/reports have been used to inform the development of this business plan.

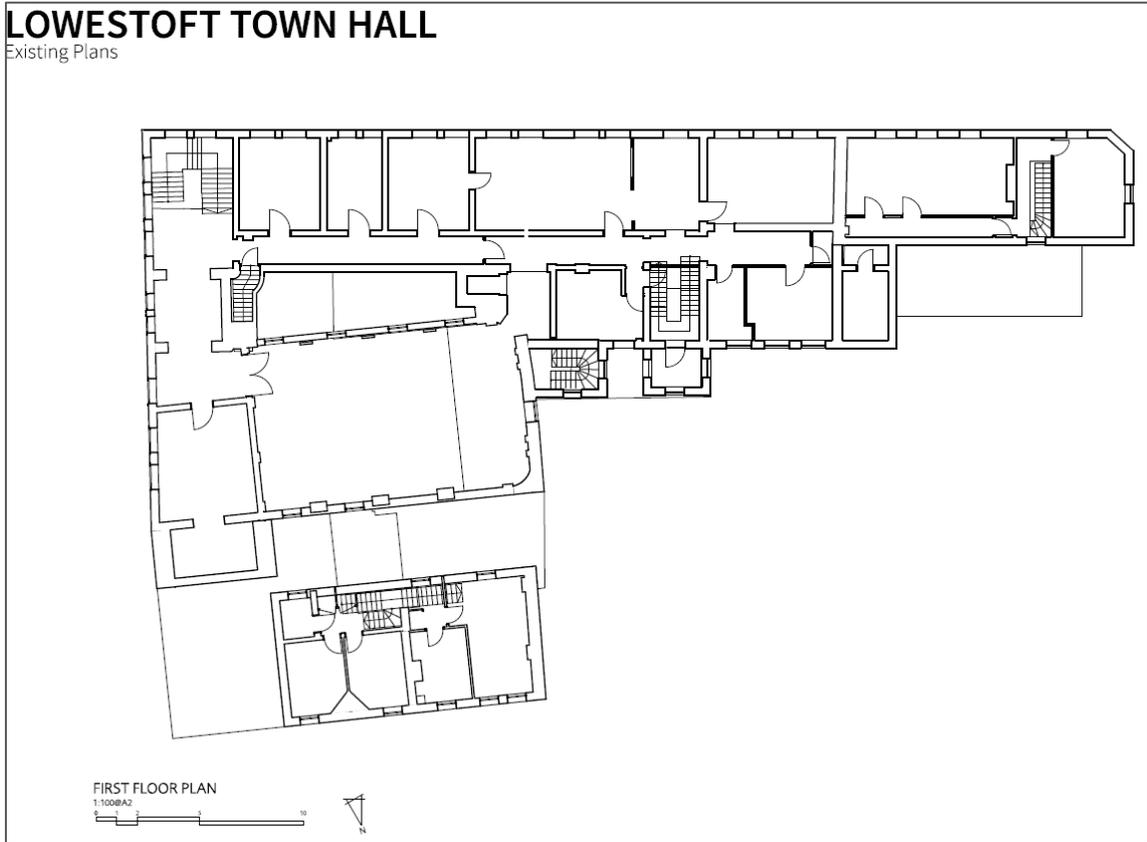
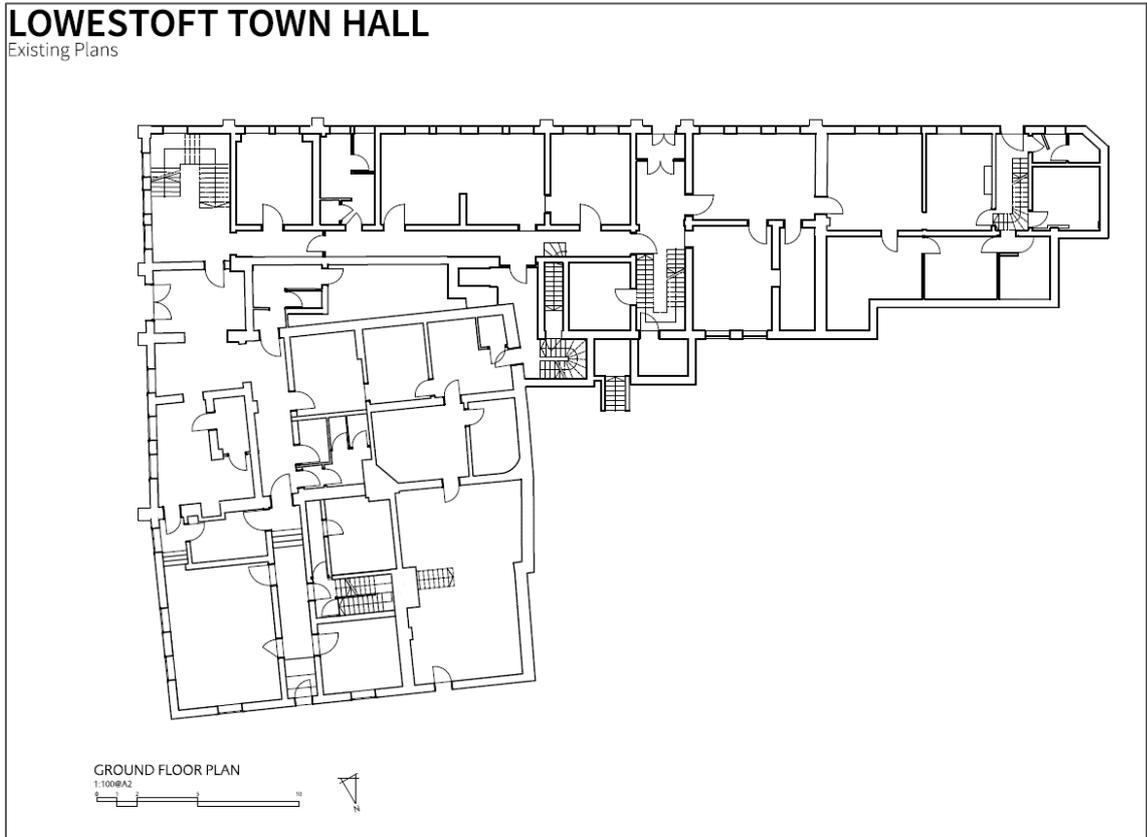
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- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
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| Jayne Knight, Suffolk County Council | Wendy Brooks |
| John Ellerby, Most Easterly Community | |

APPENDIX B - EXISTING LAYOUTS

The current layout of the Town Hall shows a complex network of small and subdivided rooms, a record of the changing requirements of the users of the building, particularly in more recent years.



APPENDIX C - ACCOMMODATION REQUIREMENTS

The following schedule was developed from MKAL's public consultation and other research and was provided to Hudson Architects to inform them of the client requirements for the building. It also includes items raised by the public unsuitable for the Town Hall.

Use	Description	Capacity	Specific requirements	Access to outdoor space?	Access/ hours of working	Net income or cost?	Footfall Generator ?
Café	Possible commercial partner. Must have access to outdoor space with seating. Potential to support private bookings, parties with catering (hence £££ rating), but would need good sized kitchen and storage facilities.	Min 40 covers indoors; ?? 40 outdoors	Café servery area (barista m/c, cake display etc); food prep area in café; separate prep area out of site; storage facilities for stock and made food (multiple refrigeration units); separate alcohol store; bar behind servery with security/lock. Mixed seating including tables and sofa/soft seating area. Ability to secure café when not in use. Ability to clear some of the area, ie storage for some tables and chairs (50%). Dumb waiter to get food upstairs. Potential to cater for up to 80 covers at receptions. NB if this doesn't fit, could choose	Y - for customers and for supplier deliveries	Y – café operator could work different hours to rest of building. Gen 7 days 9 – 5; some evenings.	£ - £££	Y
<p>Y (footfall) = high; y = lower; £££ = significant financial contribution; (£££) = high running cost</p>							
Gallery/ Exhibition Space	Required to support museum for changing themed exhibitions; also local people/schools and other organisations to stage own exhibitions. Space for engagement activities or near to a space that could facilitate this. Needs to be segregated from other TH uses (such as Town Council etc) so that can have control over where public access the building.	100m2	commercial partner with offsite prep, but storage of prepped food onsite required. Gallery lighting system; sub dividable space. Permanent hanging system. Security- One entrance in only? Lockable when not in use. Meets security standards for loans from national museums ie must be securable, CCTV etc. Ideally a stable environment- with the ability to control light, humidity etc. Needs to be near museum/heritage hub to link in with changing heritage exhibitions. Sound system for multimedia. Space to sit and contemplate. Also easy access to café and shop. See separate requirements doc.	N	Y- Accessible when café open during the day. Some evenings for preview shows. Mon-Sun max	o - (£)	Y
Green Room	A small room for bride to dress/change, guest speakers to relax before/after performance etc	3 max	A small space, ideally close to the main chamber, reception area, multiuse space and close to toilet. Comfortable seating plus dressing table/large mirror with good lighting. Hanging space. Lockable.		Mostly evenings plus Saturday daytime	-	n
Hot Desking Space/ Co-working hub	Business incubation, creates younger community in building. Co working space, modern, buzzy! Mix of one off users and those on membership deals (approx. 50/50).	25	Desks for up to 25 people (can be big units subdivided) with individual task lighting; central printer area and shredder + recycling bins; lockers for 12 people; breakout space with sofas/soft chairs etc; Zoom room x 1, huddle space for up to 6 x1; adjacent to meeting room(s); access to showers x2; use of cycle store. Fibre internet for superfast broadband. Excellent mobile phone reception.	Nice to have only – the closer to café the more sales will increase!	Could be 24/7 – need to be flexible for those on membership deals, who could access the building when	££	Y
<p>Y (footfall) = high; y = lower; £££ = significant financial contribution; (£££) = high running cost</p>							

Use	Description	Capacity	Specific requirements	Access to outdoor space?	Access/ hours of working	Net income or cost?	Footfall Generator ?
					otherwise closed.		
Meeting rooms to hire	Demand relatively low. Needed for coworking hub access (occasional use) so ideally adjacent but not essential. Use for classes and group as well as business meets	Room for 16; room for 10; huddle space for 6;	Ability to combine two larger rooms into 1; AV integrated in both 2 larger rooms. Space for catering to be delivered from café. Superfast broadband.	N	9am - 7:10pm Mon – Fri	£	Y
Messy Space	A safe and messy space, access to own toilet for safeguarding – used by arts groups and creative/crafting sessions. Needs to be segregated from general public thoroughfare	Room for 30 with space to move/ work	Deep sinks for washing arts materials, with accessible traps for clearance; storage space for materials; recycling point and rubbish area, large; worktables per 2 ie 15 large, each with power supply that are set out but mobile. Shelving for drying art works/temporary storage. System to hang items being worked on (eg large corkboards or something more bespoke/cool!). AV screen plus access to superfast broadband. Ability to connect tutor desk camera to AV screen. Good natural light preferred plus excellent artificial light.	N	9am – 9pm Mon – Sun	£	Y
Multi Use Space	This may be same as weddings/parties space. Used for a wide range of activities/groups and community events.	80 seated/ 25 tables (fairs/sales)	Could be used for: Dancing (tea dance etc); fairs/sales such as antiques fair, craft, community groups (but not scouts end of scale!), exercise classes (again, could be elsewhere) Large projection screen or AV facilities.	N	9am – 11pm Mon - Sun	£	Y
Museum/ Heritage Hub	Considerable local support for this - will need to be a significant area dedicated to the Heritage Hub, if too small it may be seen as only paying lip service to a heritage element in the TH. It will tell	200m2	On ground floor near main entrance, Needs to be near gallery/exhibition space to link in with changing heritage exhibitions. Also easy access to café and shop. Space to sit and contemplate. A stable environment- with the ability to control light, humidity etc	N	Accessible when café open during the day. Mon-Sun max	(£)	Y

Y (footfall) = high; y = lower; £££ = significant financial contribution; (£££) = high running cost

3

Use	Description	Capacity	Specific requirements	Access to outdoor space?	Access/ hours of working	Net income or cost?	Footfall Generator ?
	the story of Lowestoft with engaging multi-media and interactive displays. Subdivisions through interpretation and walls to separate different themes. With ability to change elements through display cases and pop up engagement activities. Needs to be segregated from other TH uses (such as Town Council etc) so that can have control over where public access the building.		Lockable when not in use. Meet security standards for loans from national museums. Sufficient power supply for lighting, installations etc. Lockable cupboards for engagement materials/devices. See separate requirements doc.				
Registrars	Key occupier of building, brings sound footfall. Fits with TC use. Would contribute rent, level tbd. Link to ceremonies in Council Chamber. Needs separate access, potentially, plus discreet waiting area/private room.	11 staff	See separate requirements doc. Summary: admin office for 7; 3 appointment rooms 16m2; 1 appointment room 25m2; reception (linked to admin office); waiting room for 12; private waiting for 3; toilets, possible to share with Council; showers to promote healthy living/cycling to work; staff room.		Mon – Fri 9am – 5pm, plus Saturdays when ceremonies booked.	£/££	Y
TIC inc shop	TIC likely to be Visitor Information Point, ie manned by volunteers with leaflets and info to share. Sale of goods will be heritage/cultural and tourist items, high quality. Small stock. NB TIC at Station (VIP model)	Space for leaflet stands x 3; 2 double sided gondolas; seating for 4.	Needs to be on ground floor near main entrance & museum/hub Stock cupboard (secure) in building, ideally not too far away. Lockable when not in use.	N	10am – 5pm Mon – Sun max	££	Y

Y (footfall) = high; y = lower; £££ = significant financial contribution; (£££) = high running cost

4

Use	Description	Capacity	Specific requirements	Access to outdoor space?	Access/ hours of working	Net income or cost?	Footfall Generator ?
Town Council	The Town Council in the building. Accessible to members of the public. This would restore the building to its status as the 'Town Hall'. V popular with public. Should not be the first thing a general visitor encounters - possibly enter via separate door? QUERY: would council be willing to use meeting rooms in building that are hireable to others, for smaller meetings – confirm?	10 staff, 2 members	See separate requirements doc. Summary: Town Clerk's office x 1; admin office for 9; meeting/office space for members up to 3; breakout/staff room space; meeting room for 12 (needed daily); confidential meeting space for members of public; unisex toilets, shared with other permanent tenants (eg Registrars) but not public. Shower to promote healthy living/cycling to work. Reception desk away from main office to avoid disruption.	N	Mon – Fri 9 - 5	££	Y
Council Chamber – for Council Meetings	Use of the main chamber for Full Council meetings, twice monthly minimum.	24 members + up to 50 members of public	Need AV screen for display (probably needs to be portable or integrated drop down); sound system & acoustic loop. Access to superfast broadband. Seating for up to 50 members of public. Councillors around a long table (3 sides) so can be seen by public (tricky with the dais!). Storage space for seating, tables etc nearby. Storage space for coats, prams etc nearby.	N	2 x weeknight evenings monthly 6pm-11pm), possibility of 1 or 2 more, though may use meeting rooms.	££	y
Council Chamber – non council use	Use of main chamber for civil ceremonies, weddings. Possible use for other events would be casual and fitted into the ultimate layout.	4 at front, plus up to 60 seated. 80 if squeezed in?	Two registrars normally attend, plus couple getting married. Need room for table for event, and side table for registrar. Access to decorate room required before/after. Seating for guests with aisle down middle. Ability to play music.	N	Saturdays throughout the year; some Fridays. Booked out all day.	£££	Y

Y (footfall) = high; y = lower; £££ = significant financial contribution; (£££) = high running cost

5

Use	Description	Capacity	Specific requirements	Access to outdoor space?	Access/ hours of working	Net income or cost?	Footfall Generator ?
Weddings/ Parties space	Ideally close to Council Chamber, space to accommodate up to 80 – 60 min seated for meal, plus additional guests. Needs to be segregated from general public thoroughfare and also not linked to council/Registrars use (doesn't fit the vibe of a wedding reception if you're passing notices of council meetings!). Also could be booked for general parties and receptions. Proximity to/access to outdoor space preferred.	Y	Good attractive space for a party, post wedding breakfast etc. Accommodate up to 80, ideally all seated for meal/60 at a push. Small dance floor (can be covered during meal) and area for disco to setup; sound system. Area for a bar either in room or adjacent/outside. Ideally a permanent space, doesn't have to be huge (no need to prop it up). Access for serving staff to get food from kitchen to party space (dumb waiter if upstairs?). Ideally access to outdoors or at very least ability to throw open big windows (subject to noise constraint laws).	Ideally Y – hot guests getting outside, smokers etc.	Fridays/ Saturdays throughout the year.	£££	Y
Youth Facility	From creative minds session: a space that young people can define for themselves. Decision required around providing permanent space or running occasional activities. Run things like Young Carers group, needs to be cheap. Dedicated youth working group to manage it. CAT?	30 max, could settle for 20.	Let young people determine what it looks like. Youth engagement work with them, design and shape it. No further info at this stage. Just a space! And superfast broadband.	N	Evenings & weekend day times	(£)	y
Toilets etc	Public access facilities potentially available to people who are not using the Town	? As building dictates	Needs to include accessible toilets, baby change facilities (not just in female toilets!), and a 'changing places' toilet if space/access permits.				n/a

Y (footfall) = high; y = lower; £££ = significant financial contribution; (£££) = high running cost

6

Use	Description	Capacity	Specific requirements	Access to outdoor space?	Access/ hours of working	Net income or cost?	Footfall Generator ?
	Hall (so some readily accessible on ground floor).						
Storage	Just a marker really – a lot of different activities and multi use space implies need for significant storage of chairs, tables etc.		Chairs and table storage for different rooms. Coat space close to reception rooms/large rooms used for events.				n/a
Outside	A welcoming, attractive and secure garden area, locked at night.		Landscaped gardens & planting, secured from road (gates locked at night). Café outdoor seating area. Cycle store for occupants; cycle rack for others; access to car parking if adjacent. Space where wedding guests could hang out (cordon off somehow?) for drinks whilst photos happen. Night time lighting.				n/a
Community recording studio	Soundproofed room - could attract younger footfall, generate some income from hire, but likely to be limited. Too 'niche'?	6	Too complex re sound proofing, plus cost of kit etc, unless there's an odd little room somewhere...	N	Weekends, evenings, school holidays	£	y
Info/Advice	Already exists within Marina Theatre space but will move in time. Could fit with Council role? ESC too? Citizens Advice also in town.		MORE INFO REQUIRED to determine if this fits	N	?	-	Y
Arts/creative space to hire	Focus for Town Hall the community/non-professional end of scale. Studios for long-term rental -> Battery Green. Could also consider 'designer/maker space' See pop ups below.		Post Office, Battery Green both arts focused. Do not believe we need more dedicated space, but can use messy space, multi use space, gallery and meeting rooms as appropriate.	N	?	£	Y
Cinema/Film Club	Possibly activity run in multi-use space	70 seated in rows	Would require black out blinds... Likely to be elsewhere in town?	N	Evening, 6pm – 10pm	£	y

Y (footfall) = high; y = lower; £££ = significant financial contribution; (£££) = high running cost

7

Use	Description	Capacity	Specific requirements	Access to outdoor space?	Access/ hours of working	Net income or cost?	Footfall Generator ?
Performance Space	Performance space across all arts – needs further definition; would need to function within multi-use space	?	Possibly used for rehearsals by local am dram & Players.	N	Y	-	y
Antiques Centre/Craft Centre	Dedicated antiques centre possibly too 'niche'. Opportunity for regular programme of fairs/events.	25 stalls plus up to 100 customer	Use multi use space, layout for up to 25 tables around the room with corridors in between for displays. Floor box access for power/lighting.		Weekend daytimes	£	Y
Classes/ Education	Demand relatively weak in survey. A possible activity in multi-use space.	10 - 20	Could also be in meeting rooms, for smaller classes.		Evenings, school holidays days, weekends.	£	y
Community/ social	Multi-use space requirement; these could include local groups/clubs meeting; Sales, events, fairs etc. Income mostly from space hire.	80 - 100	For sales, see Antique/Craft. Other events could be fitted in reception space?		Any time	£	Y
Dancing	Tea dances etc recommended in survey & creative minds. Could be activity in space used for receptions/parties.	40 – 60	More likely to fit in a reception space (better floor space for dancing, fewer floor boxes for power!).		Afternoons & evenings	£	y
Recycling Centre & repurposing workshop	Need for storage and equipment to operate a successful repurposing workshop eliminates it. Opportunities to run some related activities around repurposing/upcycling.	?	Multiuse space, treat similar to fairs/sales.		Weekend or weekday morning events	-	y
Sports/ Fitness	Possible to have ad hoc activities; low demand for dedicated space, and would be in competition with modern gyms/sports hall	Y	Multiuse space		?	£	y

Y (footfall) = high; y = lower; £££ = significant financial contribution; (£££) = high running cost

8

Use	Description	Capacity	Specific requirements	Access to outdoor space?	Access/ hours of working	Net income or cost?	Footfall Generator ?
	including Waterlane and Whaplode Road. May be gap in N Lowestoft though?						
Records Office	Already provided at the Library site, with secure, appropriate storage. Do outreach instead with Hold.	?	Some items will be interpreted in museum, facsimiles included in activity plan costing. Local historians private collections may be displayed but not stored (conditions, staffing etc too costly).			(££)	y
Retail inc pop-ups	Pop-ups a possibility – eg incubation of retailers, esp creatives (designer maker space?). Low income due to nature of pop-ups. Possibly better for a (large) shop in the High Street, if there is one?		More suited to High Street larger shop, as require shop frontage for maximum exposure for customers. Opportunity to have sales in multi use space, however.			£	Y

Y (footfall) = high; y = lower; £££ = significant financial contribution; (£££) = high running cost

9

APPENDIX D - FOOTFALL PROJECTIONS

Footfall projections are calculated using the 8 week plan, multiplied up to 48 weeks, then averaging the number of attendees per session.

FOOTFALL PROJECTIONS								
		Avg number/ session	Total visitors p/a					
Income from Hire								
Small Community Groups/Clubs	138	5	690					
Large Community Groups/Clubs	66	25	1650					
Business bookings for community	144	40	5760					
Workshops for community	132	15	1,980					
Commercially run workshops	72	15	1,080					
Special Workshops eg Xmas, Easte	12	15	180					
Business/Commercial Bookings	186	8	1,488					
Large business booking	66	30	1,980					
Subsidised business booking	48	3	144					
Conference	12	60	720					
Private parties	30	70	2,100					
Funerals	6	60	360					
Wedding Reception	12	50	600					
Extended Wedding Reception	12	50	600					
Midweek wedding reception	6	50	300					
Civil Ceremony	42	40	1,680					
Civil Ceremony midweek	30	40	1,200					
Green room for civil ceremony	30	-	-					<i>already counted in wedding party</i>
Citizenship ceremonies	2	30	60					
Heritage Activities	72	15	1,080					
Events	42	50	2,100					
subsidised events	12	40	480					
Sales/Fairs etc	18	200	3,600					
Special Sales	6	300	1,800					
Youth	114	15	1,710					
LTC meetings	90	10	900					
Café evening events	6	40	240					
Café run beer/gin fest/similar	1	600	600					
Free sessions	42	15	630					
Community Exhibitions	84	15	1,260					
Heritage Exhibitions/Museums	330	60	19,800					
Registrars' general appointments	2,500	3	6,250					<i>weddings & citizenship ceremonies booked in TH venue excl</i>
Councillors general meetings	30	2	60					<i>excludes council staff and council committees/FC meetings</i>
Council committee meetings	90	6	540					
Full Council meetings	12	25	300					
Shop/TIC only	300	15	4,500					
								68,422
Footfall relating to permanent users								
Council	230	9	2,070					
Registrars	230	11	2,530					
Co-working space			5,025					<i>One off users and regular members combo</i>
Café staff	330	3	990					
								10,615
Café (general)	330	120	19,800					<i>330 days, 120 customers/day average, 50% not from other e</i>
								19,800
								98,837

Week 5 standard term-time week																								
Room	Monday			Tuesday			Wednesday			Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday					
	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve			
Council Chamber				BBX	BBX	LTC			BBX			CCM					CC			Sale				
Green Room (14sqm)																	CCG							
Function Hall	Lcomm			ComBB					ComBB			ComBB					WP							
Messy Space (32sqm)				WSC	WSC	Y			Y	WSB	WSB			WSC	Free		WSC			WSE				
Meeting Rm (16sqm)																								
Meeting Rm (25sqm)	Comm	BB	Comm	BB	BB			BB	Comm		BB													
Gallery	Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex					
	Fitness class in Function Hall (weekly); Knit & Natter large mtg rm; business booking large rm; mthly book club large meet. Adult weekly craft workshop (night); Community exhibition in gallery for			Business booking in Chamber, daytime, catering. Full Council in Chamber eve. Weekly Slimming Club in Hall; Community craft workshop am; Youth activity eve (Young carers/similar)			Youth group in eve. Business booking of large meeting space. Heritage group (community) in evening. Weekly ballroom dancing class in hall.			Midweek civil ceremony in Chamber pm; commercial fortnightly art class in messy space; business booking in pm.			Community Arts workshop am; free makers workshop focused on wellbeing/loneliness			Wedding reception in hall; ceremony in Chamber; Green Room booked.			Postcard & print collectors sale in Chamber. One off adult craft course (jewellery, stained glass, Christmas wreath with catering package etc)					
Week 6 standard term-time week																								
Room	Monday			Tuesday			Wednesday			Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday					
	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve			
Council Chamber				BBX				LTC				EV					CC							
Green Room (14sqm)																								
Function Hall	Lcomm			ComBB				ComBB			ComBB					EV	Lcomm	PP	Sale					
Messy Space (32sqm)	Free	Free	WSC			Y			Y			WSB				HA								
Meeting Rm (16sqm)		subBB			subBB																			
Meeting Rm (25sqm)	Comm	BB	Comm		LTC			BB			Comm	BB	BB											
Gallery	Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex					
	Monthly health/wellbeing support group in large meeting room; weekly Knit & natter; business bookings afternoon using both meeting rooms; Adult weekly craft workshop. Free			Business booking in Chamber, daytime, catering. Weekly Slimming Club in Hall; Youth activity eve (Young carers/similar); coworking hub member using small meeting room (subsidised)			Council committee meeting late pm; Youth group in eve. Business booking of large meeting space. Weekly ballroom dancing class in hall.			Adult commercial craft course in evening; talk in council chamber; community group monthly meeting eve			Event (60s & 70s music night!) in hall; business booking all day large mtg rm.			Civil ceremony (only) in chamber; Private party in Hall; Heritage Activity in messy room; large community use hall pm			Craft Fair/Antiques Fair in Function Hall					
Week 7 standard term-time week																								
Room	Monday			Tuesday			Wednesday			Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday					
	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve			
Council Chamber			Lcomm								CCM		BBX	BBX										
Green Room (14sqm)											CCG													
Function Hall	Lcomm			ComBB				ComBB			ComBB	mWP										SubEV		
Messy Space (32sqm)			WSC			Y			Y	WSB	WSB		Free			HA								
Meeting Rm (16sqm)								LTC																
Meeting Rm (25sqm)	Comm		Comm	BB			Comm				BB		subBB											
Gallery	Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex					
	Local Historical Society or equivalent talk & meeting in Chamber. Fitness group in Hall; Adult weekly craft workshop in messy space; Knit and Natter; local community group			Youth; Slimming Club, business booking in larger meeting room			Weekly ballroom dancing class in hall. LTC committee meeting; friendship group in meeting rm			Ceremony & midweek wedding; fortnightly adult art class; business booking in meeting room			Free arts/craft workshop for older local residents; Business booking in chamber; subsidised business booking in meeting rm.			Heritage activity for 16-18 year olds			Monthly tea dance (subsidised rate)					
Week 8 school holiday																								
Room	Monday			Tuesday			Wednesday			Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday					
	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve			
Council Chamber		BBX				LTC					LTC	EV		CC			SpecialSale			SpecialSale				
Green Room (14sqm)																								
Function Hall				ComBB				ComBB			ComBB					PP	SpecialSale			SpecialSale				
Messy Space (32sqm)				WSC	WSC	WSC	Y	WSC		Y	HA	HA	WSC	WSB	WSB		HA	HA	Y	Y				
Meeting Rm (16sqm)	Comm				BB			LTC				Comm												
Meeting Rm (25sqm)	BB	BB			BB						LTC		subBB	BB										
Gallery	Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex					
	Fitness class in Function Hall (weekly); Knit & Natter small room; business booking large rm; mthly book club large meet. Adult weekly craft workshop (night);			LTC committee (eve); Youth in messy room (Young Carers); Slimming Club; business booking both rooms; children's school holiday arts club in messy			Youth group in evening; LTC committee; Weekly ballroom dancing class in hall. Kids' workshop in messy room			LTC committee meeting in meeting room and council changer. Event in Council chamber - poetry night; community art workshop; heritage activity for school holiday			Civil ceremony; Art workshop (commercial) in Messy Space. Private party function hall. Business bookings (one subsidised) in lge mtn rm			Annual 2 day craft fair in Council Chamber & Main Hall and in the courtyard; heritage activity for families in messy room.			Annual 2 day craft fair in Council Chamber & Main Hall and courtyard (Food Fair weekend similar); youth takeover messy room.					

APPENDIX F – MOSSKING REPORT ON THE COMMUNITY SURVEY 2020/21



Public Consultation – Survey Findings

Version 2.1

April 2021

MossKing Associates Limited

Section 1: Executive Summary

A Town Hall Survey was launched in mid-December 2020; its aim was to gather the views of the people of Lowestoft (and beyond) on the Town Hall's future use, and also to gauge their interest and participation in heritage. The consultation was part of a project commissioned by Lowestoft Town Council, working in partnership with East Suffolk Council and Historic England, and funded by a grant from the Architectural Heritage Fund. The output from the survey will be used by MossKing to inform the development of the business plan for the Town Hall.

The survey was open online for 45 days until the end of January 2021. A separate supply of paper copies was made available in shops in the High Street during this period. Promotion was via social media, on street posters, the Council's website and the local press, including a paid promotion.

A total of 999 responses was received, 955 online and 44 on paper. 88% of respondents completed the entire survey. In addition to responding to fixed questions, a further 1,069 free format comments were given. These are analysed in Section 3.

Analysis of the data reliability and the confidence levels achieved is provided in Section 4, and a copy of the questionnaire is in Section 5.

The key findings are as follow:

LTC's use of the Town Hall

There is overall support of the Town Council moving into the Town Hall (64% in favour) although younger people (18-34) were against the proposal. We recommend, however, that the Council should progress a move into the building, and that a communications programme is developed to explain the rationale behind this move.

Top uses for the Town Hall

The most used facility within the Town Hall would be a café, with almost half the poll saying they would use it frequently; as a key revenue generator, this is reassuring. A recurring theme in the comments was that the café should be a 'community café', although many stressed that quality must not be impacted as a consequence.

There was a similar level of support for a museum/heritage hub. Further, in the free-format recommendations, a museum garnered 30% more recommendations than use as a Town Hall, and double that of the third choice (indoor market). Emergence of an indoor 'foodie' market as a strong preference from the public requires further investigation to establish its viability, whether in the Town Hall or elsewhere.

Support for both a gallery and a wedding/event venue were strong, but interest in meeting rooms to hire was weak, with over 60% of working age adults saying they would never use them. Our overall recommendation for 'meeting' space is that it should be flexible and multi-use, not dedicated space, to reduce risk. This also has implications for the business plan, as income from meeting room hire is likely to be significantly lower than previously anticipated.

Community uses of the Town Hall

The most popular community use was a space for events, sales, parties and fairs etc – in other words, the type of facilities a community hall might offer. Given that almost 57% of respondents live in the NR32 postcode area, this implies that regular local use could be relied upon. Use by the community also chimes with the free-format comments, where a recurring theme was that this building must be open for all. However, many also recognised that commercial activity will be required to prevent the Town Hall from being a financial burden on residents.

Arts and crafting activities should do well within the Town Hall, especially for older people and those who identified as having a disability. This was the second most popular community use, and again, comments within the free-format sections support this. There was also a strong interest in the creative space question (see below) for people to run workshops on arts & crafts, so it would appear there is also a supply of experts to meet this demand.

Social/recreational and wellbeing services were moderately popular, but both sports/fitness and educational services were not, with almost half of all respondents saying they would never use them. Age is relevant here, with those over 45 driving the high negative response to sports/fitness use, and those over 55 for education. This suggests that some casual use may arise and be popular with users, but bespoke facilities should not be developed for these purposes.

Across all community uses, support from disabled people was higher; 62% of those recording a disability live in the NR32 postcode and the provision of fully-accessible local facilities would be welcomed.

Offices and creative space to rent

Interest in offices and creative/workshop space was mixed, with a much higher interest in creative space. The vast majority of people had no interest in either, but this is not surprising, as there would always be a relatively small cohort of individuals looking to rent space longer term.

Use of office space was evenly split between those seeking traditional business space/shops, and those who wanted regular access to hot desk space. This latter could well be an emergent post-Covid development of interest in 'hybrid working' and should be explored further.

Creative space was also split between long term use (40% of those providing details were creative businesses looking for somewhere from where to work and, potentially, sell) and those who wanted pop-up/casual use space for creative activities, including running workshops.

Lower-income individuals were significantly more likely to be seeking creative space (temporary or long term), which in part may reflect the relatively low income of those in the creative world. However, it has implications for rental rates: affordability will be key.

“It is a great building - our heritage.

So many places are now regretting letting these building go to ruin, while those that have maintained them are reaping rewards with more visitors to the various town, locals getting together and of course revenue.”

Heritage

Turning to heritage, there is strong interest in Lowestoft's history across most groups, with the notable exception of 'Midults' (18-34 group). This comes across even more strongly in the comments sections, where there is a clear sense of pride about Lowestoft's heritage and a desire to see a celebration of it and a return to the success of Lowestoft in previous eras.

Fishing and the beach village, buildings, people and, encouragingly, the Town Hall itself and the High Street were top topics across the survey, although younger people were less interested in these, and more interested in witches & the supernatural, and the World Wars.

The Maritime Museum and Lowestoft Museum topped the list of venues visited in 2019 for all groups. However, half of all Midults had visited no museums or heritage events in that year. This is not unusual nationally and creates an opportunity for engagement with this harder-to-reach group through the activity plan.

In terms of barriers to access, all groupings highlighted a lack of time (40%) and a lack of information (39%). Whilst little can be done about a lack of time, it is clear from the comments that people are unaware of what Lowestoft's museums have to offer, and indeed, many commented that they had not heard of several of the destinations listed. This clearly evidences the need for a heritage hub at the Town Hall that 'signposts' people to other heritage venues and events in the town.

Comments

The free-format comment sections provided a wide range of views about the Town Hall. However, several themes emerged. Encouragingly there is overwhelming support for the project to repurpose the Town Hall, with many respondents citing specific features of the building, or memories of its previous use.

However, there is also appreciation that the building will be expensive to run, and a desire both to see as much green technology as possible included to minimise its environmental impact, and commercial use injected into the building to offset the costs and minimise the burden on taxpayers.

A sizeable minority feel that the cost of bringing the building back into full use will be prohibitive, and that therefore it should not be taken on. This indicates that careful communication will be essential to explain how the capital project would be funded and give clarity around the sustainability of its future use.

A strong practical message came back from a number of respondents about the need for adequate parking nearby, to allow people easy access to the building and events, and also a potential requirement for improved transport to the area.

Confusion about the differing councils (Waveney District Council, East Suffolk Council and Lowestoft Town Council) came through strongly, with each being blamed for perceived failings of others. It is clear that ongoing communications about the differing roles and responsibilities of the two extant bodies would help in general (rather than for this project alone). However,

“The town hall building offers a great opportunity for creating a community asset and catalyst for the immediate area and High Street. This is a great project, and the council should be applauded for taking the project forward. Well done to all involved.”

quite a few respondents also specifically thanked the Council for their ambition in driving this project forward.

Conclusion

That 999 people took the time to complete the survey demonstrates the level of interest and engagement in the project. From the data gathered, there are some clear messages about the future uses of the Town Hall that residents in particular would like to see. But there are also important differences across the population, from young to old, those who are disabled or not, those living in relatively low income, and so on that will need to be incorporated as the Town Hall and its facilities are developed, so that maximum benefit can be delivered across the community.

business activities looked past feel lit events something kept start really site help long
 housing stay nice museums preserved stained glass window history part town become
 years centre lot great Parking town council spent much etc public rather s
 demolish Please historic high street see move make rooms people
 Whatever Lowestoft project Town Hall local used
 living building interest town bring needs many area
 time good beautiful building think never council enough
 High Street developed place love heritage hub will benefit important left
 community space go old High Street open sell restored outside work one meeting
 Must know features visit around now create offices lost part hope also attractive well still

Section 2: Findings

This section analyses the answers to the main questions asked. We also investigate which factors, such as age, gender, location etc result in a statistically significant difference. This is important for audience planning purposes, but also provides useful context for some of the responses.

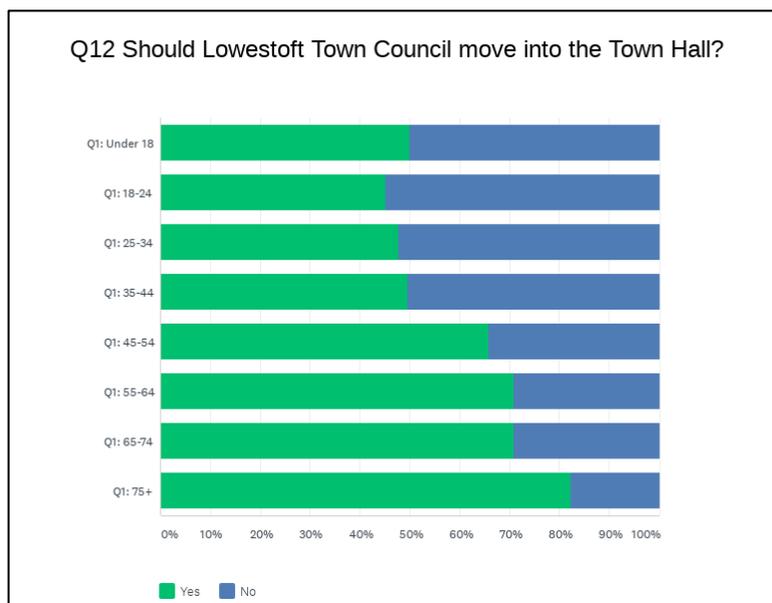
The first section of the survey, which established the demographic profile of the respondent, was compulsory. Thereafter, respondents not only had the option to skip questions but also to partially respond to a list of options within a question. Where one or more elements can be skipped, it is helpful to look at absolute numbers in addition to the percentages of those who responded. Of course, we can make no assumptions about the views of those who chose not to answer.

Note also that, to avoid skewed results in multiple option questions where items further down the list are less likely to be voted upon, these questions were presented with a randomly generated order of options, thus avoid 'fatigue' scoring³⁸. This means that we can rely on relative popularities as being a genuine response, not one driven by decreasing interest.

Should the Town Council move into the Town Hall?

Respondents were asked whether the Town Council should move into the Town Hall and were given a yes/no response option only. No explanation of exactly how this might work was provided.

Across all respondents, 64% believe the LTC should move into the building, and we recommend that this should be progressed (for several reasons, not simply popularity). This was further backed up by the free format responses later in the survey, when LTC's use of the Town Hall emerged as the second most popular suggested use for the building.



³⁸ As people go through a long list there is a tendency that they will become less interested as they progress, and either give the same response for all questions, or drop out, if that option exists. Randomising how the options appear to each individual balances out the risk of lower items receiving lower votes.

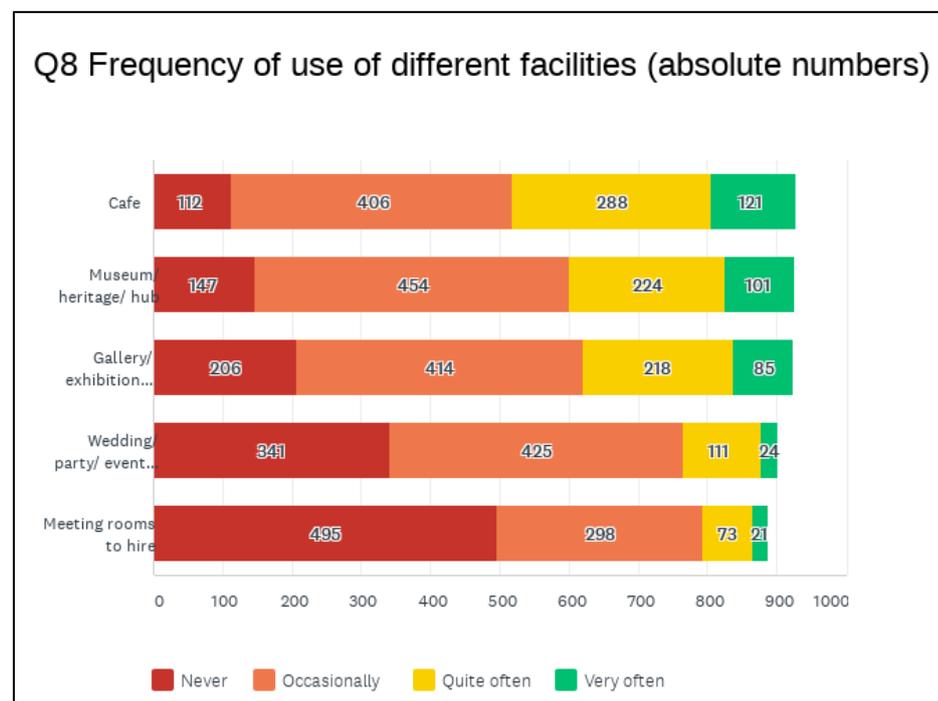
However, when analysed by age, there is a different picture, with approval of the proposal increasing by age – those under 44 are undecided or marginally against the proposal, whereas 82% of over 75s are in favour. This may reflect a lesser relevance given to the Council by younger people or that older people hark back to the old days when Council offices were there (albeit a different council). It may also be that many respondents did not consider that this could be in addition to other uses; the question did not make this clear.

The overall rating is encouraging, but it may be appropriate to undertake some communications/PR work in future, targeted at younger people, to explain the decision.

“Use it! Give the Town’s people a focus building and reasons to visit it . Why aren’t the Town council based there? There should be an information/enquiries desk at least to make it easier for local people to contact and speak to the council and councillors.”

The ‘top’ uses for the Town Hall

Respondents were asked to identify how frequently (or not) they would use a range of facilities at the Town Hall (café, museum/heritage hub, gallery, party/event space, meeting rooms to hire). No explanation was given of exactly what these would offer, so there is a possibility of differing understandings of what each facility might entail. Just under 7% skipped this question entirely.



The most popular facility across all age groups was a **café**, with just 112 people stating they would never use it (12% of those who answered this question). 409 people (44.1%) would use the café frequently (a combination of ‘quite often’ and ‘very often’) and 406 (43.8%) would use it occasionally. Those aged between 25 and 54 were least likely to use the café very often. It is reasonable to assume this is partly linked to their working lives, as over half of those in this age band are employed full-time; in all cases at least a third expect to use a cafe ‘quite often’.

As a potential key revenue generator, this level of support for the café is reassuring.

In the free format comments, a strong theme emerged that the café should be either a community café, or something where all could feel welcome, although many took the opportunity to comment that it must also be a really good quality café that brings people to the High Street (the implication being that some respondents see community cafés as lower in quality than commercial ones).

The second most popular facility is a **museum/heritage hub**, with 224 people (24.2%) expecting to use it quite often, and 454 (49%) occasionally. Just 10.9% would use it very often, but this is still 101 people, and it should be observed that such regular use of any museum or heritage hub would be unusual. However, there is an age-related difference: almost 85% of 25–34-year-olds say they would never, or only occasionally, use a museum/heritage hub. This is key information to feed into audience planning with this group as a target 'harder to reach' group.

In a later open question about uses for the Town Hall, a museum was the most popular use, more than double any other use except as a location for the Town Council.

Gallery and exhibition space was slightly less popular, with almost a quarter stating they would never use it, and 79% of 25–34-year-olds and 83% of 35–44-year-olds saying they would never or only occasionally use it. Although there is some argument that this is in line with the nature of the facility, and to be expected of these age groups it remains a concern. However, a third of all people expect to use it frequently.

An **event/party/wedding venue** was less likely to be used, with 341 people (37.8%) never intending to use it; again, this is reflective of the type of use of such a facility, which would normally be irregular, and therefore it is perhaps surprising that 24 people (2.7%) expect to use it very often. Such a response may be driven more by an expectation that it would be *in use* frequently, as opposed to the individual intending to do so, but clearly, we cannot know for sure.

Gender is important here: 47% of men said they would never use an event/party venue, which could be said to fit a gender stereotype. There was also a noticeable drop in the number of people in lower income groups who would use the facilities for parties etc; this is almost certainly a direct result of lower spending capacity and is to be expected.

In contrast – almost contradiction – in the free-format comments, use as a wedding venue was in the top ten recommended uses, with many recognising that a good venue could contribute a strong income stream to support the building.

As a professional singer that travels around the country, it's sad that Lowestoft doesn't have one good wedding venue. The Town Hall would be amazing. Build an urban garden at the back and it would be ideal

Meeting rooms to hire received relatively low support/interest and therefore to have extensive dedicated space for this purpose could be risky. Just over 10% expect to be frequent users of meeting rooms, with more than half having no intention of using them. Over 60% of adults aged between 25 and 54 expect never to use a meeting room. This adds to concerns about demand for meeting rooms to hire for business/commercial purposes, as this age group would

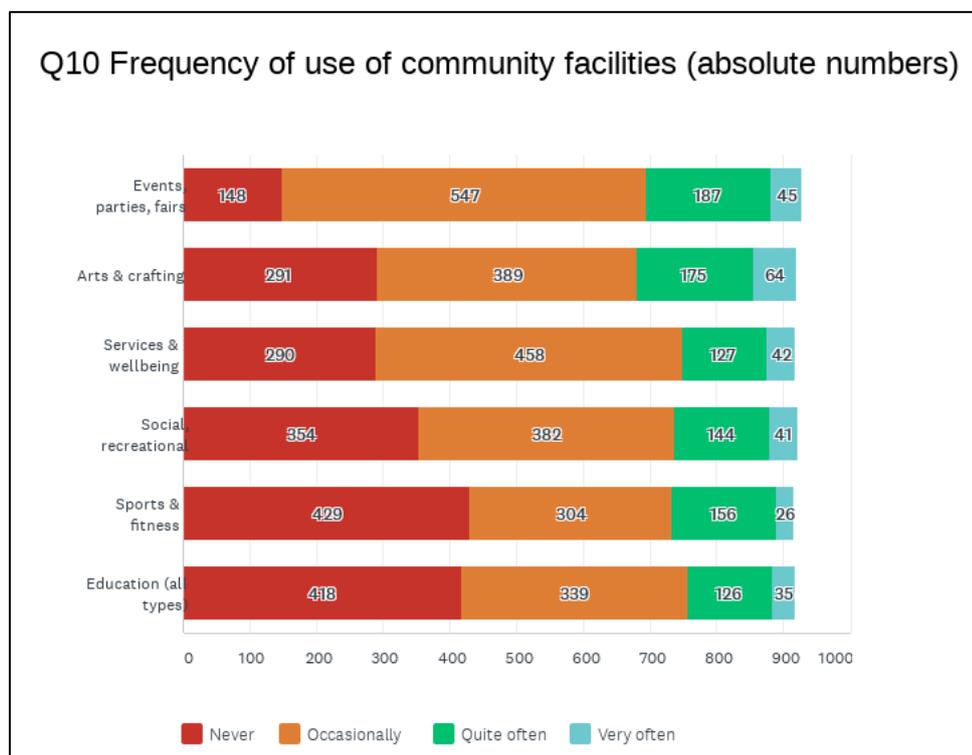
potentially be key users³⁹. However, meeting rooms tend to have regular/repeat users, and therefore widespread demand is not essential to justify their existence in some form.

A prudent approach may be to have spaces that are flexible and can be subdivided into meeting rooms but have alternative uses.

The 'top' community uses for the Town Hall

Respondents were asked to identify how frequently (or not) they would use a range of community facilities at the Town Hall (ie space for events, fairs, parties; sports & fitness activities; education of all types; arts & crafting; social & recreational; services & wellbeing). Some examples were provided under each heading (eg social & recreational: men's shed, youth club, lunch clubs for the elderly etc). Just under 7% skipped this question entirely.

Again, as not all people responded, it is better to look at absolute numbers.



The most popular facility was one for **events, parties, fairs and sales** – in other words, the type of activities that might traditionally be expected in a **community hall**. A quarter of respondents (232 people) would expect to use this frequently with 148 people (16%) expecting never to use them. There are no statistically significant differences when comparing different age groups' responses for this option., but noticeably, only 7% of those who said they had a **disability** thought they would never use this facility, and a greater number (33%) thought they would make frequent use of it.

³⁹ The 2019 Feasibility Study allocated 72m² to meeting space over 4 dedicated rooms, each being booked for 700 sessions p/a, ie 9 sessions per day across all 4 rooms; it is possible that in the (Covid) interim, attitudes have changed as virtual meetings have become commonplace.

Arts & crafting is also popular, with 239 people (26%) expecting to use these frequently. This option scored the highest 'very often' of all the community facilities, by some margin (64 people, 7%). The dominant demand for this facility is from people aged 55 – 74, although there is also, in percentage terms at least, good interest from both 25-34 and 45-54. Again, those with a disability were more likely to use arts & crafting frequently (33% of all disabled people).

For both **social/recreational** and **services/wellbeing**, support is reasonably evenly balanced, with about a third of respondents saying they would never use these facilities, and about a fifth expecting to use the services frequently (quite/very often). Once more, disabled people registered that they were more likely to frequently use these services than those without a disability. The low score for 'never' is important, as it means that the majority expect to use such services at some point.

Sports and fitness facilities were divisive. Although frequent use was cited by 20% (182 people), almost half of all respondents said they would never use such facilities. Drilling down, we can see that age is pertinent here: the high 'never' score is driven predominantly by older people (50% of respondents between 45-64, and an average of 60% of those 65 and over) although it should be noted that almost 60% of the small number of under-18s who responded also thought they would never use them, but this is probably because they have plenty of options at school.

It would appear that some form of sports or fitness activity run in the Town Hall could attract a younger contingent, although not in huge numbers, but it does not bode well for any general fitness/health-related activities targeted at older people. The latter may arise from a view that the Town Hall is not appropriate for such activity; this is partly supported from the freeform written contents (analysed later).

For **education facilities**, which was stated to include adult education, pre-school etc, 18% were potential frequent users (161 respondents), but again, almost half surveyed said they would never use these facilities. Looking at age-related responses, although more people in the 55-74 age range responded to this option, (almost 400 in total), at least half did so to state they would never use the option. This is particularly relevant for adult education, whose typical audience would fall into this age range; it may be that demand for AdEd is already satisfied elsewhere in town. The figures for the disabled are slightly higher in that 23% expect to use education facilities frequently.

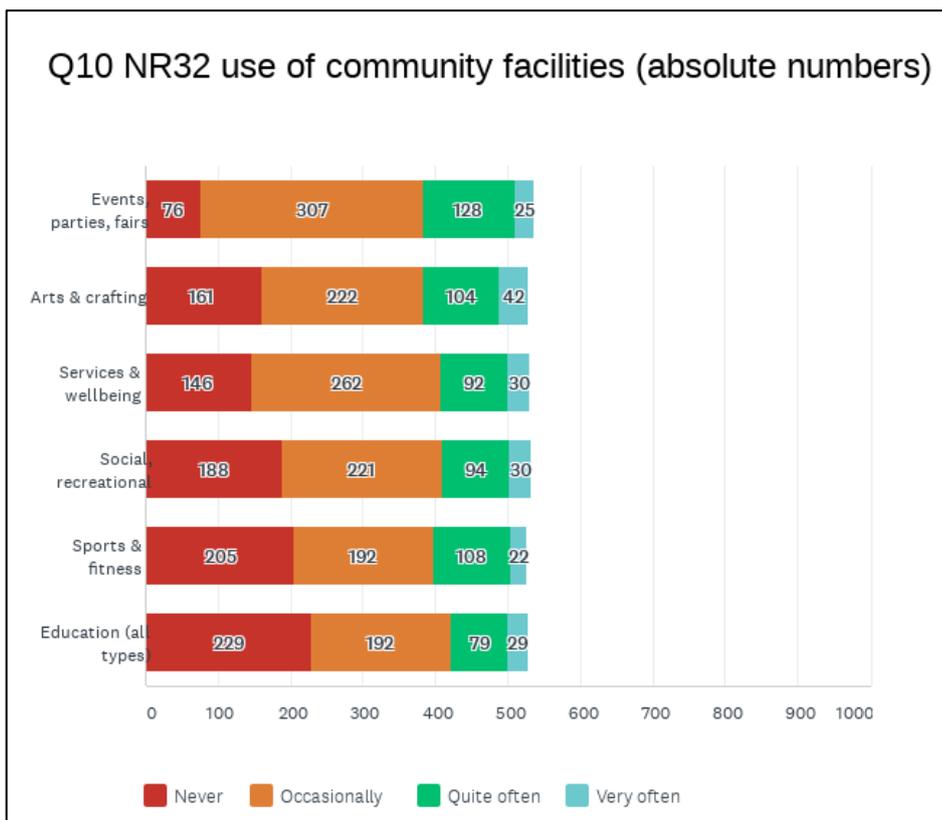
Gender plays a part in this question too. Across all bar the social/recreational option, females are much more likely to use community facilities than are males.⁴⁰ This is particularly apparent for arts & crafting, where 77% of females expect to make some use (occasional, often, very often) against 46% of men who would never use the facility.

The **location** of individuals who might use community services is important: the nearer they are, the more likely they are to be regular visitors, except of course where something unique to the town as a whole is on offer.

⁴⁰ This is analysed by percentages to address the disproportionate representation of women v men (see Section 4 on data reliability).

Filtering only the N32 postcode dwellers shows the same popularity rankings as the whole survey, with **events & fairs, arts & crafting** and **services/wellbeing** in the top three positions. The negative response to **sports & fitness** has reduced to 39% (205 out of 541 respondents) with **education** in the bottom position, with 229 people (43%) having no interest.

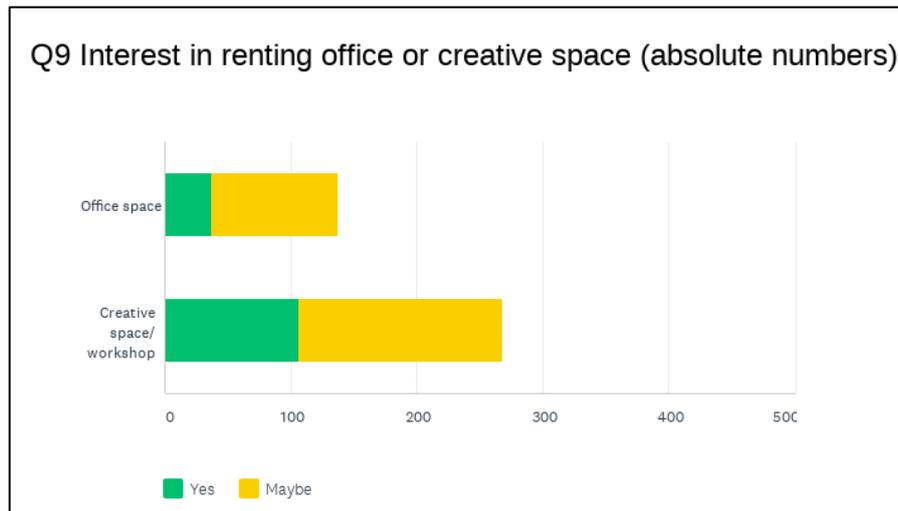
Disability does show statistically significant differences in this question, which is to be expected to some degree if disabled people are less able to travel longer distances – 62% of those recording a disability were in the N32 postcode. Although 38% of those who said they had a disability are over the age of 65, the responses from this group do not match perfectly with their age cohort across the board.



Interest in office/creative space in the Town Hall

Participants were asked whether they would be interested in renting office and/or creative space within the Town Hall. This differs from the use of meeting rooms, as the former would be hired on a per session basis, and these would be for longer rental.

Again, this is a question that respondents could skip, so we have looked at absolute numbers as well as overall percentages. 929 people in total responded, with, once more, 7% skipping it.



We can see that there is significantly more interest in **creative/workshop** space than in office space, and that the vast majority of respondents have no interest in either (85% did not want office space, and 70% were uninterested in creative).

However, a total of 138 people *could* be interested (yes/maybe) in an **office**. The freeform responses suggest that this use is evenly split between small businesses looking for traditional office and even retail premises, and individuals looking for hot desk or temporary office facilities away from home and/or their main office. This last may reflect an emergent post-Covid trend for hybrid remote-office working and will be explored further.

Turning to **creative/workshop space**, there is more interest, with 268 people stating 'yes' or 'maybe', of whom 106 returned a 'yes' response. Again, looking at the additional comments, we can see that there is a blend of people looking for maker spaces and studios, with potential to sell (65 creative businesses), and those who are looking for somewhere to run workshops, with a dominance of shorter-term hire uses (98). Six of those looking for space intended to run shops, which, if not accommodated in the Town Hall, could be suitable for vacant properties in the High Street.

Top uses for creative workshops included crafting and textiles, health & wellbeing (as distinct from beauty), photography and general 'arts'.

A significant proportion (39%) of those who said 'yes' to renting creative spaces are **in relative low income** and it must be assumed that their capacity to pay 'market' rates for such space could be limited; this does not preclude their inclusion in the Town Hall but does set parameters for income generation.

“Workshops teaching textile craft skills, upcycling fabrics and repurposing furniture. All skills that will reduce waste, inspire creativity and very definitely improve mental health. Using volunteer crafters to run the workshops could enable the sessions to be free for those on benefits.”

For both options, interest levels decrease with age, which is to be expected; Midults (18-34) have the highest level of interest in creative space, whilst 25-34 and 45-54 age groups lead the way for office space. Almost 50% more women were definitely interested in creative space, but there is no significant gender difference for office space.

Disabled people were more likely to be interested in use of creative spaces/workshops than the survey as a whole – 37% of those who are disabled said they would possibly be interested (split evenly between yes/maybe). An alternative way to look at this is that 13.4% of those interested

in a creative/workshop space are disabled, whereas 9.7% of the overall survey indicated they had a disability.

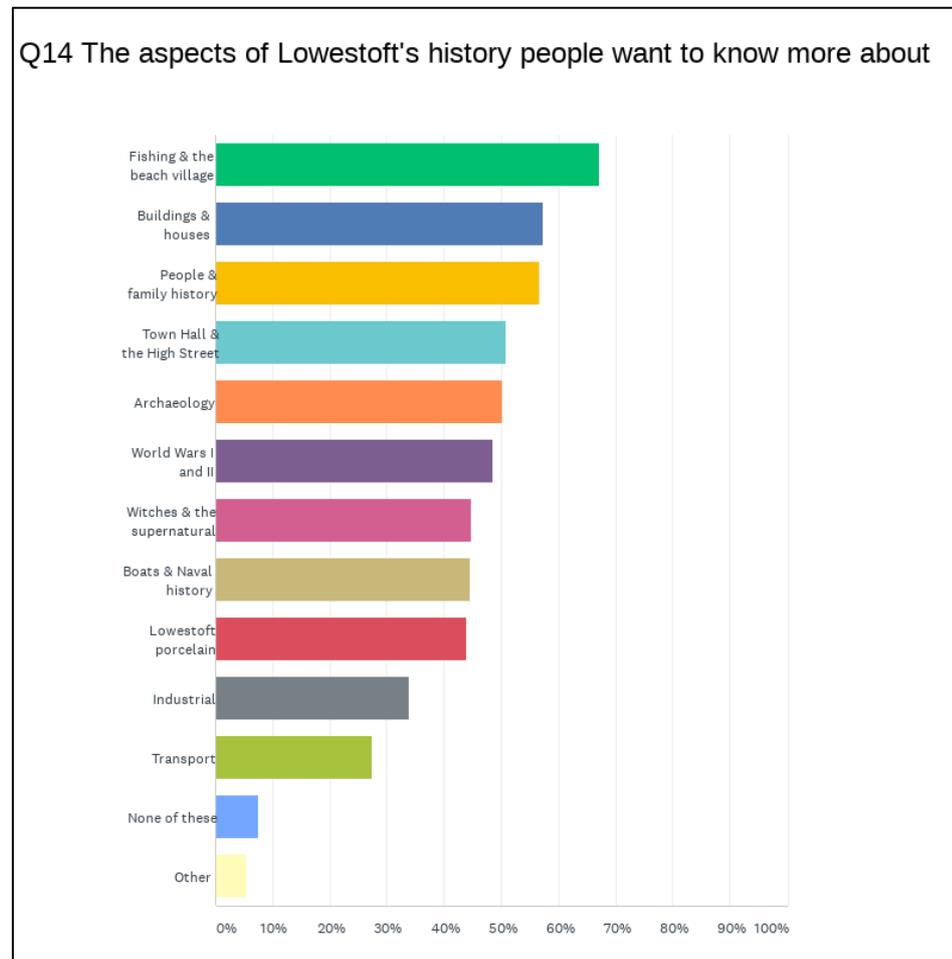
Knowledge of Lowestoft's history

Respondents were asked to use a sliding scale to estimate their overall knowledge of Lowestoft's history; the average overall is 55%. There is no correlation between age and knowledge, with every age group providing a wide range of responses.

It is possible that the responses here are driven partially by level of interest – those who are disinterested could be more likely to return a low answer. However, there is probably little value in analysing this too far, and instead take a 55% knowledge level as a measure to show there is more to be learnt. This is supported by a strong response rate to the following question, which asked what aspects of Lowestoft's history people wished to know more about. With an 87% response rate, this indicates that there is both an interest in increasing knowledge *and* capacity for knowledge to increase.

The most interesting aspects of Lowestoft's history

Respondents were asked to tick which aspects of Lowestoft's history they would like to know more about. There was no limit to the number of options which could be selected, and no requirement to rank them. The option to select none of these or provide other details (freeform) was also given. Despite this being an optional question, 87% responded.



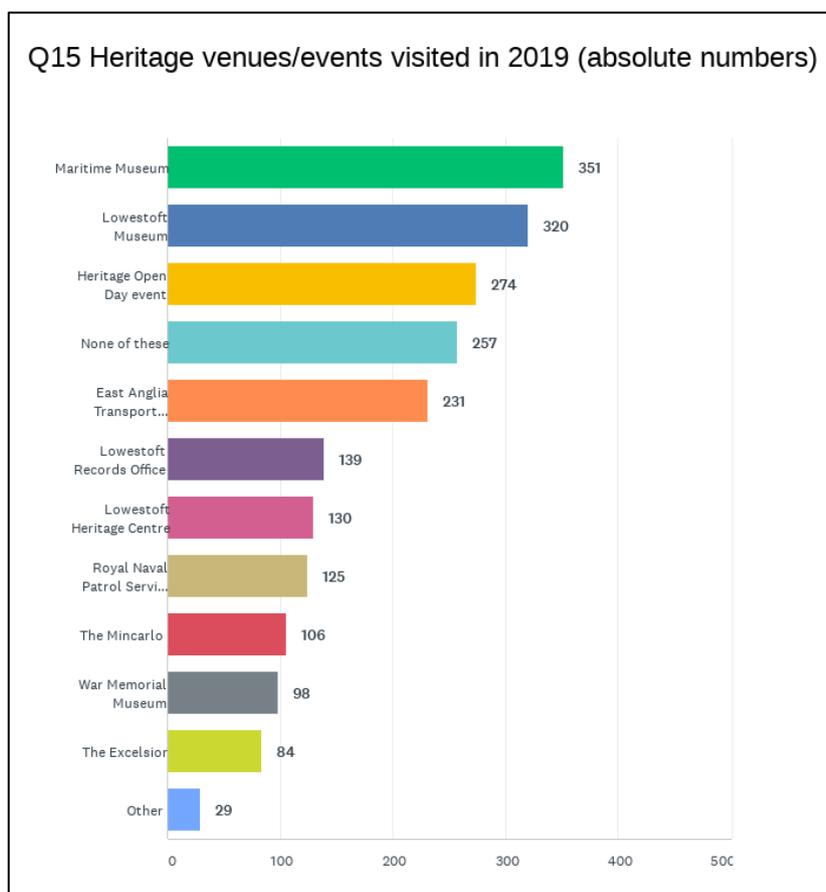
Overall, the history of **fishing and the beach village** was the top choice, with 578 respondents selecting it (67%). Encouragingly, the **Town Hall & the High Street**, as well as **buildings & people** ranked highly too, with more than half the respondents expressing interest in these. Surprisingly, **Lowestoft porcelain** was one of the lower rated topics, with 378 'votes'. **People & family history** ranked third, with 489 people selecting it, suggesting why there has been such an outcry at the removal of records to the Hold; however, this also indicates a potential opportunity to meet this demand with Suffolk Records Office undertaking outreach work in the Town Hall.

When examined by age, the picture changes. **Fishing & the beach village, industrial, Lowestoft porcelain** and **boats & Naval history** all are low ranked by younger people, with interest increasing directly with age, older groups rating these amongst the top. Exactly the opposite is the case for **witches & the supernatural**, and to a lesser extent **World Wars I and II**, although in this category the contrast of top (60%) to bottom (49%) is less significant.

Looking at gender, rather stereotypically we can see that men are almost twice as likely to be interested in **industrial, boats & Naval history** and **transport** than women; conversely, women are much more interested in **people & family history**, and **witches & the supernatural**.

There were no significant differences in interests according to income, location or household structure.

Heritage venues visited in 2019



The survey asked people to indicate, from a list of options, which heritage venues and/or events (eg Heritage Open Days) they had visited in 2019 (2020, for Covid reasons, was discounted). In total, 854 people responded, 85% of the total.

The top venue visited was the **Maritime Museum**, with 41% of respondents having visited it. Although it charges an entrance fee, this is low (~£2), and does not appear to present a barrier. The most expensive venue is the **East Anglia Transport Museum** (£9 per adult), and in this survey at least, its figures are

lower for 'Lowestoft people'. Encouragingly, given its current stewardship of the Lowestoft

Collection, the **Lowestoft Museum** polled 2nd highest, with 37.5% of the survey having visited in 2019.

The popularity of **Heritage Open Days**, an acknowledged success in Lowestoft, is reflected by its performance in this survey, with a third of all respondents having attended at least one event.

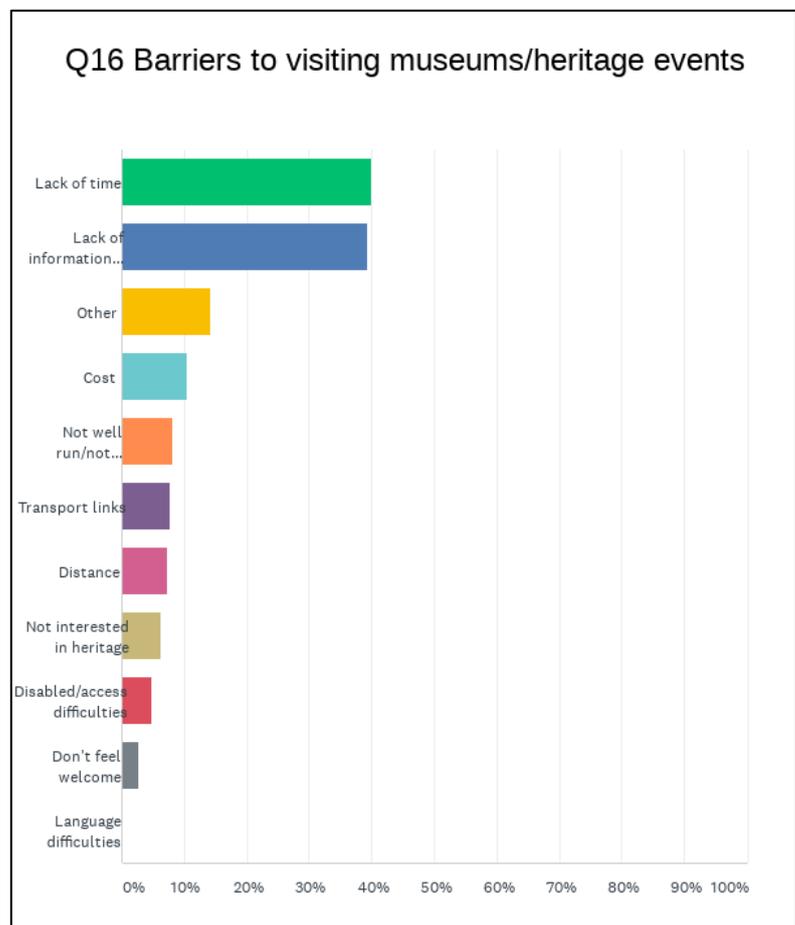
In total 29 people cited other events, in which First Light and an exhibition at the Parcels Office are prominent. More analysis will be undertaken on this shortly.

There were no significant differences in age or gender, with the exception, again, of Midults (18 – 34), where just under half the respondents (49.3%) had been to none of the above. This reflects a national disinterest in heritage for this age group, and there is work underway at East Suffolk Council to try to understand the issues (see barriers below for some insight). Clearly, engagement with this group is an important target for the Town Hall project.

Barriers to visiting museums & heritage events

The survey asked people to choose from a list of options any reasons that prevented them from visiting museums or heritage events; included in the options was 'not interested in heritage'. Respondents could choose as many as they wished. 800 people (80%) answered this question.

The top two barriers identified in the survey overall were **lack of time**, and **lack of information about them**, with 40% and 39.4% respectively citing these as issues. The dominance of a lack of information in the list of barriers provides very strong evidence for the potential value of a heritage hub at the Town Hall, delivering better information and driving footfall to the wealth of heritage venues and events in the town.



In the comments provided under 'Other' in an indication that **lack of information** is an even greater issue than the above suggests. Restricted opening hours and closure during the winter season were also cited, but as mostly volunteer-led venues, it would be difficult (and possibly not worthwhile) extending opening hours. This could change if there was greater footfall in the town and a higher demand from tourists.

Several people also noted that they had 'already visited in the past', with some stating their perception that there is little that changes in the museums over time. This underlines the need

for the Town Hall to refresh its interpretation and stage new temporary exhibitions (well promoted!) as regularly as possible, to attract repeat footfall.

For the Midult group, the top two barriers were identical to those cited across the survey: **lack of time** (47%) and a **lack of information** (42%) about what is available/on. Perhaps surprisingly, just 12% said they were not interested in heritage at all; this supports aspirations to engage with this currently disengaged group, as there is no significant disinterest in history itself.

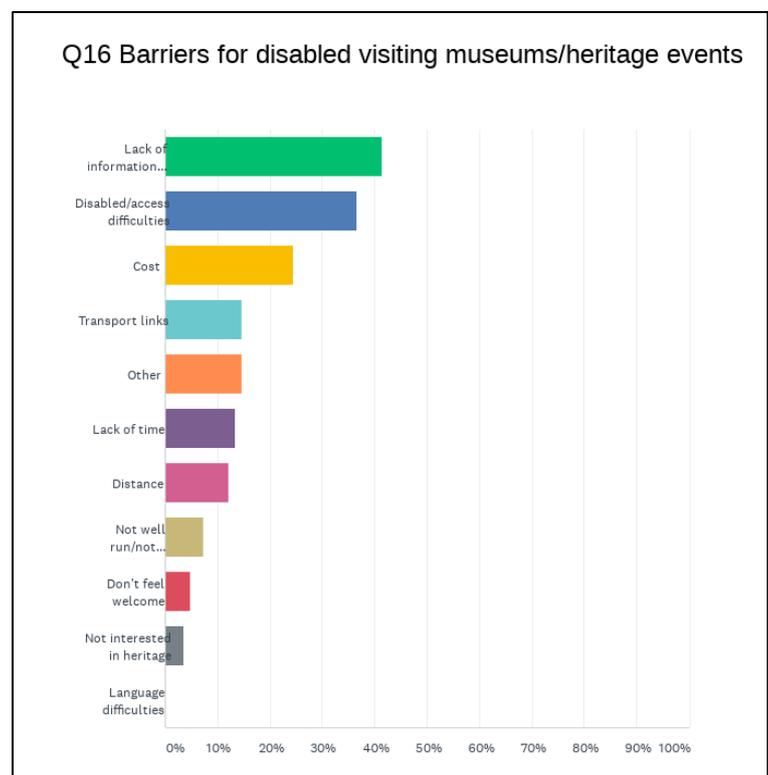
“They could benefit from improved interpretation - the standards similar to Time and Tide and regular themed exhibitions, where there are galleries that are refreshed with something new to see each time.”

There were no gender or other age-related differences. However, people on relative low income are more likely to cite both **cost** (18% v 10%) and **transport** (12% v 8%) as barriers to access. This segment does not see **lack of time** as such a barrier (29% v 40%), probably reflecting their employment status (15% in full time employment v 34% overall).

Note that, whilst no respondents cited language difficulties as a barrier, it must be acknowledged that people who might have language difficulties would be unlikely to be completing a written survey of this nature, and therefore in the longer term further research should be done to identify whether this is an issue or not.

For those with a disability, access difficulties are a major barrier– this ranked second top for this grouping (37%), although again the lead barrier was a lack of information (42%). Below the top two, the disabled grouping continued to have a different profile of barriers to all others. For example, 24% cite cost as a barrier and 15% transport links (9% and 7% respectively for non-disabled respondents). Note too that these barriers are greater for the disabled than even for those on low income (see below).

Clearly, access difficulties are inevitable in some of the heritage venues and events in Lowestoft because of the nature of the buildings in which they are sited, and it goes without saying that access barriers will not be accepted in the Town Hall (with the obvious exception of the access into the clock tower).



What difference does income make to people's views?

We asked people to give an indication of their combined household income. One-fifth preferred not to say.

For those on relative low income⁴¹ - a total of 263 respondents - 31% are employed full or part-time. Almost 21% said they had a disability but only 5.6% were unable to work because of it; 64% are female (but note that this is the broadly in line with the gender split for the whole survey response).

Just over 24% of those with relative low income are aged between 55 and 64, and a further 26% are 65 – 74. Retired people account for 42.5% overall, which could mean that a good number of the 55-64 age group are already retired. Two-thirds of those in relative low income households live in the NR32 postcode, ie they are part of the local community (a further 29% were in NR33).

So does low income change people's views? In most aspects, there is no great difference. Facilities were ranked in the same order of popularity as in the survey overall, as were community facilities. However, there was a marginally higher indication of use (+4%) in both the café and museum, and similarly there was higher interest across all of the community uses. This probably reflects the proximity for local people, and the fact that over 40% of people in this segment are retired, 8% are not employed and a further 16% work part time. This is supported by the fact that 'lack of time' was a less prominent barrier to accessing heritage venues for this grouping (29% v 40% overall).

People in this segment are less likely to use the Town Hall for parties and weddings, which is almost certainly a direct consequence of lower income.

The most important difference for this lower income segment is the interest in creative workspace. Just over 36% of respondents said they would be interested in creative workspace (yes/maybe), compared to 18% in the overall survey. This has implications for how such space might be charged: a significant proportion (39%) of those interested in using creative spaces are in relative low income.

People on low income are just as likely to visit heritage venues in Lowestoft as those on higher income; this will partly be down to the fact that the majority of venues are free, or charge a nominal entry fee. Not unexpectedly, cost is stated as a greater barrier to visiting heritage venues in general (18% v 10% overall) as is transport (12% v 8%).

⁴¹ Relative low income, as defined by the UK government, is <60% of the national median wage. National median wage in 2019 £30.4k, meaning relative low income would have been below £18,250. Our two lowest bands fall into this category.

Section 3: Comments and Feedback

There were two opportunities to make open, freeform comments, the first specifically asking what the Town Hall could be used for, and the second at the end of the survey, asking for any other comments in general.

What suggestions did people make for uses of the Town Hall?

In total, 689 responses were made, which included 640 recommendations for uses or functions to be included in the Town Hall.

Within the top ten recommendations were the expected or previously indicated uses, such as a museum, use by Lowestoft Town Council, a gallery/exhibition centre and a café. However, in third place, with 41 recommendations, was an indoor market, including food. About half of respondents were specific: this should be a covered, regular 'foodie' market showcasing local produce, aimed at bringing local and visiting customers to support local businesses. About a third also linked this to the perceived failings of the Triangle Market.

A museum was by far the most frequently cited, with 87 people mentioning this use. For the majority, this should be a museum about Lowestoft, although a minority felt that the Lowestoft Porcelain collection – or, in a few cases, Lowestoft Museum in its entirety – should be relocated to the Town Hall.

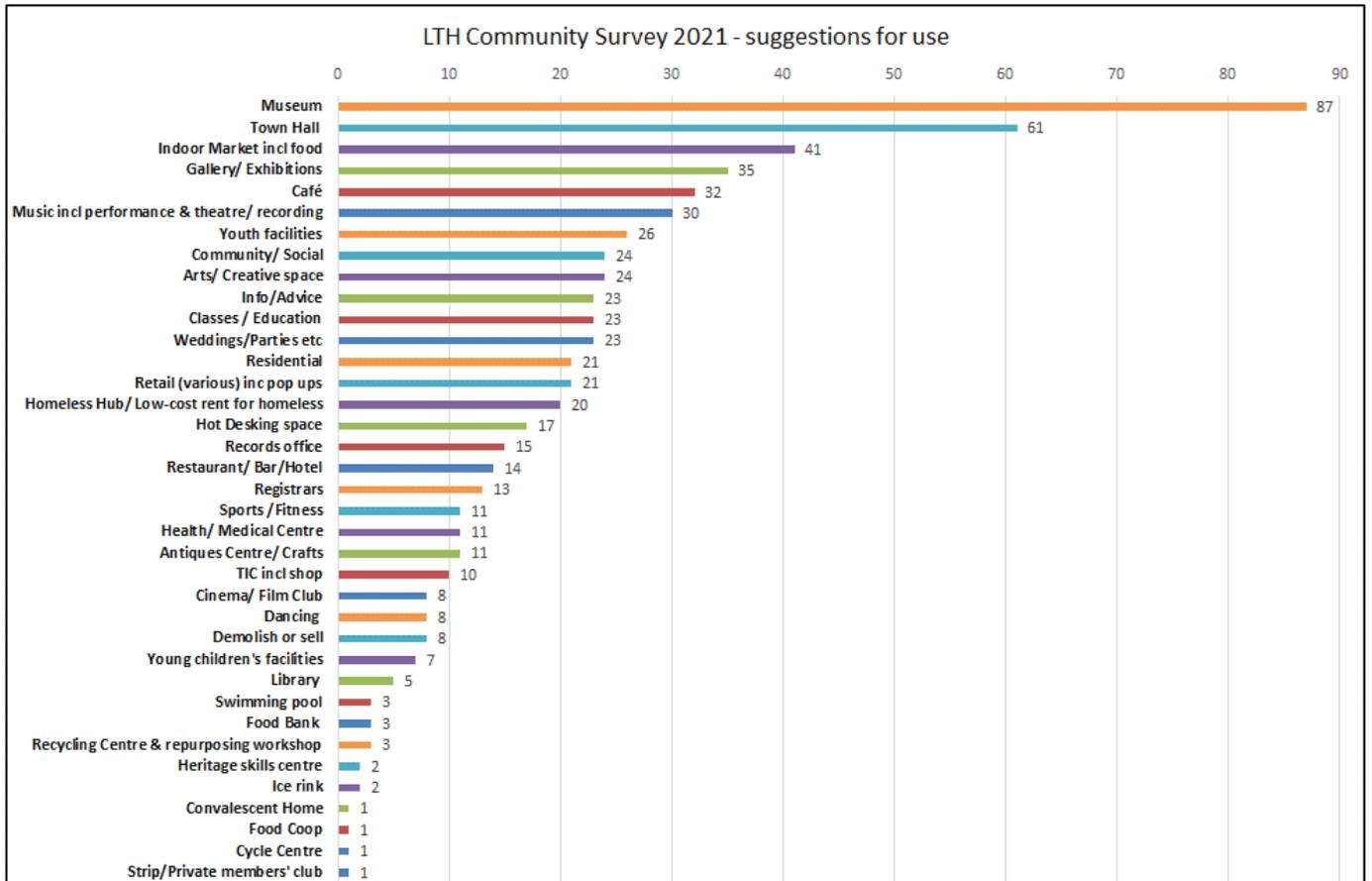
Youth facilities of varying sorts were also popular; this was often accompanied by a comment that there was a lot for young children to do, but very little for youth/teens. This is probably reflected in the lower ranking of young children's facilities, with only seven people suggesting this.

Two social services stand out in the recommendations: a health/medical centre (for some, specifically a walk-in centre with medical and dental services); a homeless hub providing support and care for homeless people, including, for some, provision of cheap accommodation.

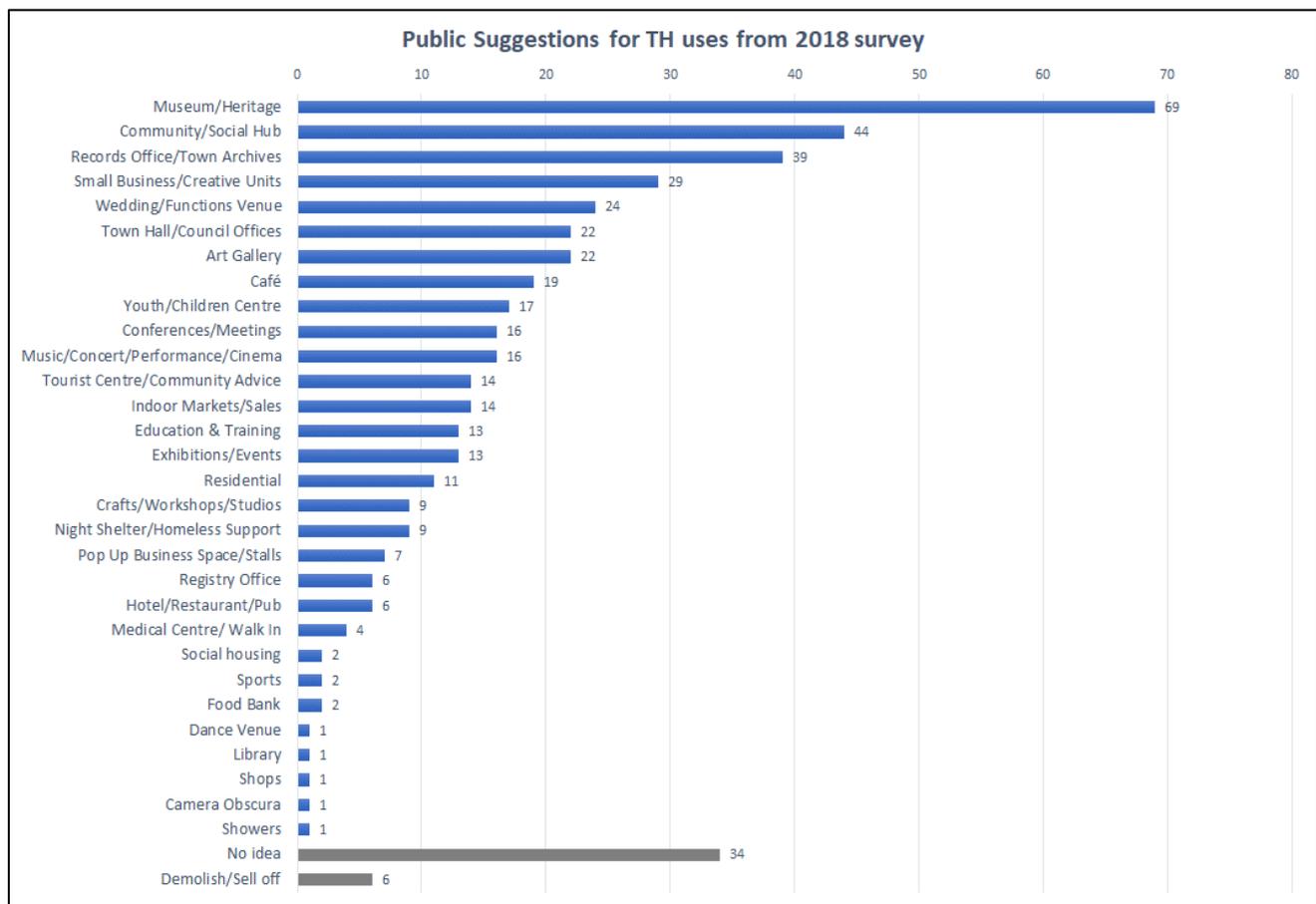
Hot-desking (including office space to be rented by the hour/day and for start-ups) was raised by 17 people (and by a further 7 in the office/creative space section). Notably, there was only one suggestion for an office for longer-term hire, perhaps because of the availability of space elsewhere in the town, or because offices were specifically included previously in the survey itself.

It is fair to say that several of the recommendations, including some mentioned above, reflect actual needs or perceived gaps in local provision. Clearly, some are not suitable for the Town Hall, and some which could be suitable for the space may not be deliverable for other reasons.

Few people recommended selling or demolition of the building – just 8 in total (and this was balanced by the same number requesting 'don't demolish'). In general, most people want to see the building retained and repurposed. However, note that it would be less likely for someone to take the time to fill out the entire questionnaire if loss of the Town Hall was their preference.



When compared to the public survey of 2018 (chart below), when residents were asked about their suggestions for uses for the Town Hall, some shifts in views can be seen. It is important to look not at numbers but at rankings, not least because the sample sizes are significantly different (2021 is approximately four times larger than those who responded to this question in 2018). The Museum remains the top use, but perhaps more interestingly, the relative importance of an indoor market has moved up the rankings significantly, and at the same time, the Records Office has slid down. This latter is no doubt due to the time that has passed since the Hold project was implemented.



What other feedback did people give?

Almost 50% of all comments including general remarks, as well as giving specific recommendations for use. Overwhelmingly⁴², these were supportive, with many people commenting on the impressive appearance of the façade, their memories of it in the past, and of specific features such as the Morton Peto stained glass windows, and the Curfew Bell. There was also a recurring demand for the building to be brought back into use for the people to see and use. It is clear that for the vast majority, the Town Hall is a much-loved landmark that they wish to see take on a new life.

One theme (about 25 comments) was the desire for the building to be environmentally sustainable, using as much green technology as possible, and ensuring that its negative impact on the environment is minimised.

About 8% of respondents commented that the building must be sustainable financially, and a few mentioned that it must not be a burden on taxpayers in the future. This led several to make recommendations for use, such as market residential, which they felt would achieve this objective.

⁴² Overwhelming support is not entirely surprising in a survey about the future of the Town Hall – there is an implicit bias in a survey asking for people to go through a range of future uses, and it is fair to say that a good number of those who do not support the Town Hall having a future would not take the time to do the survey simply in order to demand that it be demolished.

Comments also revealed that a surprising number of residents do not understand the difference between Lowestoft Town Council and Waveney District Council/East Suffolk Council. A number of those 'voting' for the town council to return to the building commented that they should never have left and/or that the money should not have been spent on Riverside. It is likely that some of this arises from the name change of WDC to ESC in the same period that Lowestoft Town Council was formed, but some communications to differentiate between the bodies may be helpful, not just for this project but in the wider arena.

The need for improved parking, to support a renovated Town Hall, was raised by 24 people, with the majority also mentioning that a revived High Street will also need more parking in the area. Public transport to the area was also recorded (by a smaller number), along with comments that this has reduced in recent years thus contributing to a drop in footfall. A few recommended the reinstatement of the tram service.

A general theme of 'get on with it' was also observable, with some expressing frustration at the length of time that has elapsed since the building was vacated, and others that another consultation is underway. Given the constraints of funding timescales and processes, and the likely duration of the capital works, it would be appropriate to set expectations in communications to the residents of Lowestoft.

It should also be noted that a small number of people went on to praise the Council (whichever one they were referring to!) for taking on this project and continuing to strive to deliver a new life for this historic building.

Section 4: How good is the data?

How many responses were submitted?

In total, 999 responses were received, of which 955 were submitted online, and 44 on paper. Not unexpectedly, the ages of those who responded on paper were on average higher than online. More surprisingly, the percentage of male v female was reversed when on paper (37% v 62% for online; 60% v 40% for paper); however, the numbers involved are small, and there is no conclusion that could be safely drawn from this.

How much confidence can we have?

We aimed to collect sufficient responses to have a confidence level of 95% with an error margin of ± 5 ⁴³. To achieve this, we required 382 responses, which we have exceeded. This means that we can retain a confidence level of 95% and decrease the margin close to ± 3 .

How representative is the data of Lowestoft overall?

Just over 90% of respondents come from NR32 and NR33 postcode areas, which include all of the Lowestoft area defined in the Town Investment Plan. However, both postcodes extend out

⁴³ To explain how confidence levels and margins work: with a margin of error of ± 5 , if in a survey 60% of people pick a particular answer, we can be sure that if we asked the *whole* population, we would find 55% - 65% would pick the same answer. The confidence level tells us just how sure we can be of this, ie how often the answer should lie within the range. In our case, this is 95%, the research norm.

into the countryside beyond – NR33 for example includes Kessingland and Gisleham whilst NR32 extends to Somerleyton. By sampling the postcode data, however, we can estimate that over 94% of respondents from each of these postcodes is within the Town plan defined area (which of course is to be expected given the topic of the survey). This means that it is safe to use the data to represent the views of Lowestoft residents.

Looking at specific postcodes, the NR32 postcode (ie the area that surrounds the Town Hall and extends north to Corton and west to Somerleyton) represents 56.5% of all responses. As some of the survey is focused on community uses, and there is a reported tendency in Lowestoft to stay on one's own side of the river, this should mean that the data about community usage can be relied upon.

How well does the data represent people outside Lowestoft?

With only 10% of respondents living outside Lowestoft, we can be informed by their comments, but it would be risky to make any major decisions based on this information alone.

However, over one third of the people outside Lowestoft live in the NR34 postcode or are within 10 miles of the town. This means that it is safe to include their data in the overall opinions about the Town Hall.

How accurately are disabled people represented?

In 2018/19, a national study by Scope found 14.1m (20% of the population) recording that they had a disability⁴⁴ which is markedly higher than in our survey (9.7%). This may be due to the interpretation of 'disability', as the Scope study found a large proportion were (correctly) reporting mental health issues as a disability.⁴⁵ It is likely that in our survey individuals have had a narrower definition, quite possibly leaning towards mobility issues, or indeed disability as defined by owning a Blue Badge (4.1%). However, just under 10% of all respondents represents a sizeable minority and is directly aligned with the findings in the Lowestoft Town Funds Area profile developed by East Suffolk Council, which identified 10% of residents whose day-to-day activity was limited 'a lot' by long term health or disability issues. Follow-up discussions with disabled group coordinators locally may help to flesh out this section further.

Is the age mix representative?

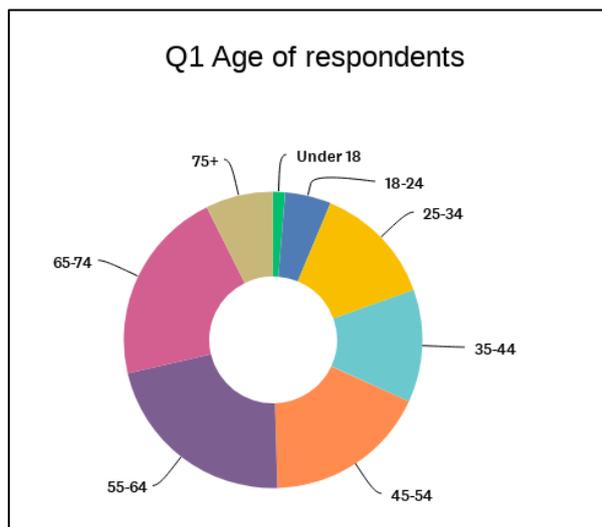
There is a good age spread of respondents, although, as is expected of surveys of this nature, there is a significant under-representation of young people under 18 (1.3%), and a slight over-representation of people 65+ (28.6% in the survey against overall population share of 24.8%⁴⁶). There is an encouraging level of response from 'Midults', ie those aged 18 – 34, with over 180 responses in total (18.2%), comparing to a Lowestoft population share estimated at just under 18% for this segment⁴⁷.

⁴⁴ Family Resources Survey 2018-19 (published Mar 2020), Scope

⁴⁵ A person is considered to have a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has 'substantial' and 'long term' negative effects on their ability to do normal daily activities. This is the core definition of disability in the Equality Act 2010.

⁴⁶ Figures from the Lowestoft Town Investment Plan, based on ONS 2017 mid-year estimate.

⁴⁷ The Town Investment Plan does not identify this particular segment.



Under 18	1.30%	13
18-24	5.01%	50
25-34	13.21%	132
35-44	12.31%	123
45-54	17.72%	177
55-64	21.82%	218
65-74	21.32%	213
75+	7.31%	73
Answered		999

Are genders balanced?

37% of recipients are male, against 62% female, which means that we have a disproportionately high representation of women. To address this, we have compared the responses by gender, to identify where there are statistically significant differences. These are covered in the individual questions in Section 2.

When combining age and gender, we find that Midult (18-34) females were almost three times more likely to complete the survey than males. In the 35-44 age group, females were twice as likely to participate. Only in the under-18s and over-75s do males outnumber females. Again, to understand if there is any significant skewing of responses, we have compared the groups by age and gender. These are covered in section 2.

How accurately is economic activity reflected?

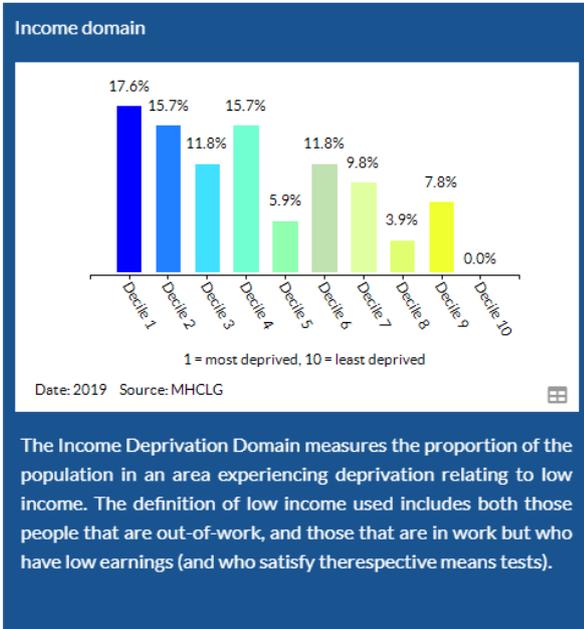
In our survey, 34.3% of respondents were in full time employment against 39% in the Lowestoft Town Funds demographic data. A similar shortfall occurs for part time employment (16.1% v 20%) and for self-employed (4.35% v 9%). In contrast (and to a degree, in explanation) 32.2% of those surveyed are retired against the Town Funds demographic data of 23%. This is a direct reflection on the proportion of older people completing our survey.

To overcome the 'skewing' that this has created, we have filtered the survey data for those who are working (in any capacity) to compare their responses against those who are not and identified any statistically significant differences. These are recorded where relevant in the main report.

40% of those who identified as disabled are retired, with a further 23.7% unable to work. Just under 30% were employed in some respect (full, part-time, self-employed). There is no comparable demographic data for these statistics.

Are people on low incomes adequately represented?

A total of 263 respondents would be categorised as coming from households in relative low income, ie 26.3% of the overall survey. This is a high percentage, especially as 20% of respondents preferred not to disclose their household income, and it must be assumed that



some of these would also fall into the low income bracket. There is no direct demographic data available for this but looking at the deprivation data for Lowestoft for income (left), it would appear that the numbers of respondents on relative low income is not out of line for the town⁴⁸. Furthermore, the 2016 data shows 20% of children in relative low income households⁴⁹.

⁴⁸ Source: MHCLG 2019 via Suffolk Observatory.

⁴⁹ HM Revenue and Customs - Personal Tax Credits: Children in low-income families local measure 2016.