

Lowestoft Town Hall



Business Plan

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Version 5.2

Issued to support public consultation for a Public Works Loan

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Note that this business plan has been edited to remove commercially sensitive information, prior to the main contract being tendered in 2024. This includes elements such as the Quantity Surveyor's cost plan and the detailed capital budget.

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 this, 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 strategic context and economic background are detailed in Section 2.

The 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.

The Town Hall will be restored and extended to become an inclusive centre for the community and visitors. It will be occupied by two 'anchor tenants', Lowestoft Town Council¹ itself, and Lowestoft Registrars.² The remainder of the building will have public/community use at its heart, with multiple areas welcoming people on an ad-hoc basis:

- A café, operating mostly during the day for visitors to the building and tenants.
- A co-working space where entrepreneurs and businesspeople can rent desks by the day and use meeting facilities etc
- A heritage gallery that will interpret the history of the town and the Town Hall and signpost visitors to other heritage destinations in the town.³
- A gallery staging heritage-related and other exhibitions, including national touring exhibitions.⁴
- A multi-use events space and bar for weddings, parties, community group activities and events.
- Meeting rooms used by both tenants and members of the public, bookable by the hour.
- A messy space, used for heritage activities, art and crafts workshops, and youth activities.
- The Council Chamber, used for council meetings, civil ceremonies and other events.
- A new courtyard garden providing a green space open to all, improving the biodiversity of the town centre.

The Town Hall is likely to be open up to six days a week in the winter and daily in the summer. General 'office hours' will predominate, but many events and meetings will take place out of hours.

With the above usage, it is predicted that an annual footfall in the region of 80,000 would be achievable.

Income will be generated from a combination of:

- Rental and overheads' contribution from anchor tenants.
- Café operation⁵
- Catering/bar for 3rd party events
- Room and equipment hire by individuals or groups
- Directly organised events and activities, including ticket sales, bar/catering income etc
- Commission from exhibition sales
- Merchandise
- Grants, sponsorship and donations

An extensive programme of activities, running from the earliest stage of the development project, has been, and will continue to be, targeted at people under served by heritage, 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

¹ Lowestoft Town Council is both owner of the building and a 'tenant' in that it will pay an annual contribution (set at £40k for the first five years) to the Town Hall as de facto rental payment.

² This is subject to final agreement re lease details by Suffolk County Council.

³ Comprehensive details of the heritage elements are covered in the separate Audience & Activity Plan (MossKing Associates) and Interpretation RIBA3 Plan (PLB).

⁴ This is an aspiration of the project but is subject to further work to ensure that the gallery is designed to meet the exacting standards of such exhibitions.

⁵ It has been decided that the café should be run directly by the Town Hall team, so costs and income have been increased to reflect this. Catering for 3rd party events will also be bid for by this team.

farther afield will be engaged by the interpretation offer within the heritage gallery, in the separate exhibition space and throughout the public areas of the building.

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 team will consist of managers, baristas and waiting/catering/bar staff. In total 6.42FTE jobs will be created by the catering arm alone; in combination with the Town Hall management team, 13.5FTE direct employment opportunities (21 positions) will be created, with over half of these above minimum wage.

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. More recent consultations⁶ on the designs (January 2023) saw a continuation of this high level of support for the project overall, with residents giving a score of 8.64/10 for the designs, and 79% of respondents supporting a PWLB loan being taken out.⁷

The project is described in detail in Section 5; governance and project and organisational structures are in Section 6.

What has changed since the development stage application?

Our development phase has run for 14 months, during which time we have procured all of the necessary professionals to develop our thinking.

The designs for the Town Hall have changed significantly since our Stage 1 bid, informed by our conservation management plan and by more detailed analysis of needs. As a result, the building is 15% larger. Capital costs for the construction project have increased, not only because of the larger footprint but also due to the considerable inflation in the construction sector. We have undertaken extensive opening up works and condition reviews, which are informing designs, particularly at a technical level, as well as our cost plans.

A wide range of surveys has taken place to help develop greater cost certainty over works required. This has included extensive site investigations, opening up works, asbestos R&D, a stained glass condition study, UXO risk analysis and a degradation study. To support the planning & listed building applications, which was submitted in May 2023, a preliminary ecology assessment and transport statement have been developed, and archaeological investigations are underway. These were requested by the LPA/other consultees at a supportive pre-application session held earlier this year.

The business model has been further developed, with decisions on governance and on how the different functions within the building will be run. Lowestoft Town Council will directly govern - and manage

⁶ This consultation was much smaller; since people were invited to view architects' designs, this potentially attracted more of those greatly in favour or greatly opposed to the plans. However, the feedback remains encouraging.

⁷ Research into residents' opinions re the PWLB loan has always focused on there being no change to council tax as a direct result of any PWLB loan; Lowestoft Town Council's approval in principle for such a loan is also conditional on this.

operationally - the Town Hall; the café will now be an in-house operation, rather than leased to a third party; the co-working hub will be managed by a Town Hall team that reports to the Clerk but is distinct from the day to day council administration function.

Our pilot activities have engaged with 1400 instances of participation⁸ in the period, and we have learnt that it takes more time than anticipated to organise and deliver activities. In response, we have made the Heritage Manager role full-time, and determined that it will be a staff appointment from the outset. This will also reduce our reliance on volunteers, in recognition of the increasing difficulty of attracting volunteers, although many volunteering opportunities remain.⁹

We have undertaken further research with stakeholders and audience groupings in Lowestoft, as part of our interpretation plan development. This has led us to understand better the ways in which people will engage with heritage, informing our interpretation content and design and our activity plans.

In reviewing business activity, we have reduced the predicted number of bookings for community events and from business, as we are not seeing a full recovery of these to pre-pandemic levels and we do not expect this to change in future. However, we have increased confidence in the likely take-up of the co-working spaces, directly as a result of increased hybrid working practices, post-Covid.

In response to our analysis of the impact of Covid along with the changed organisational structure, our outcomes have altered, with more than double the number of direct FTE roles predicted, but a 10% reduction in expected footfall. Our operational financials have changed significantly with the income and expenditure relating to café operations now included, although we still expect the overall performance, in terms of viability, to remain.

The Project Team

The overall project is led by Sheila King, of MossKing Associates on behalf of Lowestoft Town Council.

A full team has been working on the project since mid-2022; this includes cost consultants Andrew Morton Associates, and a full design team led by HAT Projects. A conservation management plan, developed by Alan Baxter Associates, informs their design work.

Heritage Project Manager Jess Johnston lead a team running heritage engagement pilot activities to inform the Stage 2 audience and activity plan, as well as overseeing the development of the interpretation plan and designs by PLB Limited. The impact of the pilot heritage engagement has been evaluated by Dr Harriet Foster.

The project team for delivery will remain much as detailed above, since consultants were appointed for both stages (with a break clause), but both cost consultancy and evaluation will go out to tender, as they were procured for development only. A permanent Heritage Manager, who will lead activities, will be recruited as a staff member early in the next stage. *The project structure is shown in Section 6.*

⁸ We consider an 'instance of participation' is a more accurate count than 'participants' as it takes into account those who attend a series of events or activities and does not present them as new participants.

⁹ In discussion with the Heritage Focus Group, it became clear that we should not rely heavily on volunteer support; we also needed to ensure that the heritage focus of the Town Hall did not attract volunteer support away from the very organisations it plans to support.

Financials – Costs, Funding and Cashflow

The project, based on HAT Projects' and PLB's RIBA3 designs, is currently costed at ~£10m, including 24% contingency and inflation provisions. Costs have risen significantly over the Stage 1 estimates, because of inflation in the construction sector, as well as the proposed design being 15% bigger in gross internal floor area than originally drawn.¹⁰

Funding of £1.86m has already been secured from the Towns Fund for the next stage of the project along with £3.26m from the NLHF and £900k from East Suffolk Council. Lowestoft Town Council proposes to fund up to a further £4.0m via a Public Works Loan Board loan.¹¹ This will fully fund the project, and provide up to £900k additional contingency, but we will continue to seek other funding to reduce the Council's committed contribution. We have had initial discussions with renewable energy providers regarding financial support for some of the 'green energy' elements of the project.

The £4.0m PWLB loan will be deposited in the Council's reserve, and in addition, a percentage of the Towns Fund will be paid over at Permission to Start, with further payments at specific milestones in the project.¹²

With a loan of £4.0m, in combination with the Towns Fund £1.86m, cashflow management throughout the main construction project is relatively straightforward, although there will be a deficit after capital works complete, peaking at -£310k in the latter stages of the project until the final NLHF payment.¹³ The reserves building in the operational business should help offset this, and it is expected that LTC would also provide cover until the final grant payment is received. Clearly, any additional funding would ameliorate the negative cashflow position yet further.

Operationally, the business is forecast to return a small profit in year 2, rising to £42k in year 4, when residual grant funding will have ended. A cumulative surplus (net of the maintenance reserve) of just over £120k is expected by end year 5. A budget of £40k annually will fund maintenance and renewals, with around £20k of that budget expected 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 residents of Lowestoft via their council tax costs. .

Timetable

The Town Hall should open in autumn/winter of 2025.¹⁴ *The key milestones are provided in Section 11.*

¹⁰ The 15% increase is mostly due to a more accurate assessment of the space required for services (toilets, kitchen, circulation, plus plant, storage etc) as well as accommodating Lowestoft Town Council, which was incorrectly sized previously.

¹¹ LTC committed in principle in March 2023 to supporting the project with a PWLB loan up to £4.0m, provided the servicing costs plus contribution towards the running costs of the Town Hall did not in itself trigger an increase in the precept.

¹² The exact milestones that trigger payments from the Towns Fund will be confirmed when the next stage agreement is signed, but the principle is that the funds will be paid over in advance. These offset the cashflow issues that could otherwise arise from NLHF funding being paid in arrears.

¹³ NLHF retain 10% until the completion report is lodged.

¹⁴ This is based on a 16 month construction period; the exact duration will remain unknown until the main contractor is appointed in middle of 2024. Even then, the construction period may alter dependent on findings.

Impact

The project will help regenerate Lowestoft. The local economy will be boosted, through the creation of direct 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 8.

Risks

The main risks to the proposal are cost-related. The capital project represents a financial risk, especially with inflation continuing to rise, but with the extensive surveys/opening up works and detailed work undertaken to date, and a 24% contingency & inflation provision, these risks are contained. There are sound mitigation options against financial pressures for the operational business.

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. A key element of our evaluation is that it reports throughout the delivery stage so that we may react to its findings.

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 is helping to manage down risks further. We have also undertaken many site surveys and a range of opening up works, so that we understand as much as possible at this stage about the condition of the building, and the surrounding land.

Risks are detailed in section 9.

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

This business plan has been prepared for Lowestoft Town Council by MossKing Associates Limited. The document, which has been developed to support a second round 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 rapidly deteriorating, despite some repair works 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 team of nine professional staff 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, public toilets, a market site and buildings including museums and the Town Hall.

The Council's precept income for 2023/24 is £1,975,790. Having been in existence for just six years, the Council faces considerable challenges in managing its large asset portfolio, some of which were inherited in an aged and dilapidated state.

The nine staff are the Town Clerk (and Responsible Financial Officer) who reports direct to Full Council, the Deputy Town Clerk, Committee and Project Clerk, Committee Clerk, Finance and Information Officer, Events and Administration Officer, Communications Officer, Facilities Maintenance Officer, and Parks and Community Officer. During 2023/24, the Council will complete its work to bring grounds maintenance in-house, adding further staff.

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, without any supporting budget. 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.

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

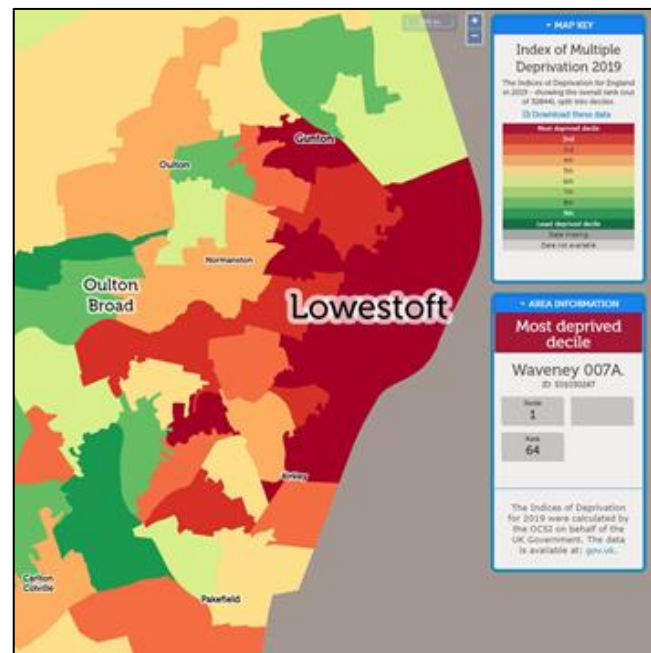
almost 30 hectares, dealing with both commodities and fish. During this period, the population of the town expanded almost fourfold, to 36,000, by the end of the nineteenth century.

Today, the town has a population of 73,815¹⁵, in just over 29,500 households. Over the last 35 years, Lowestoft's traditional industries, such as fishing and manufacturing, have declined.¹⁶ As a result, deep-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.¹⁷

Between 2009 – 2020, net expenditure per person in local authorities in the 10 percent most deprived areas fell by 31%, compared with 16% in the least deprived areas. This is evidenced by the fact that over this period, deprivation/deprivation ranking has worsened for the most deprived areas in Lowestoft.

Two of the most densely populated and most deprived 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.¹⁸ Although 68% of adults are classed as economically active¹⁹ 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



¹⁵ ONS 2019/ East Suffolk Council, *Lowestoft Town Investment Plan* (November 2020)

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ Consumer Research Data Centre/ONS Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2019

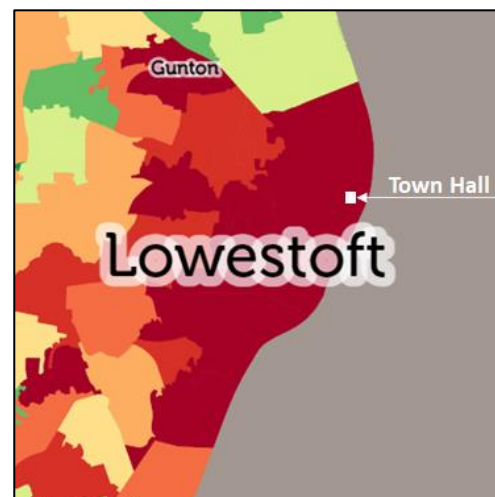
¹⁸ HM Revenue and Customs - Personal Tax Credits: Children in low-income families, local measure 2016.

¹⁹ ONS Census 2011/DCLG update 2019.

dominance of low income across the town as a whole.

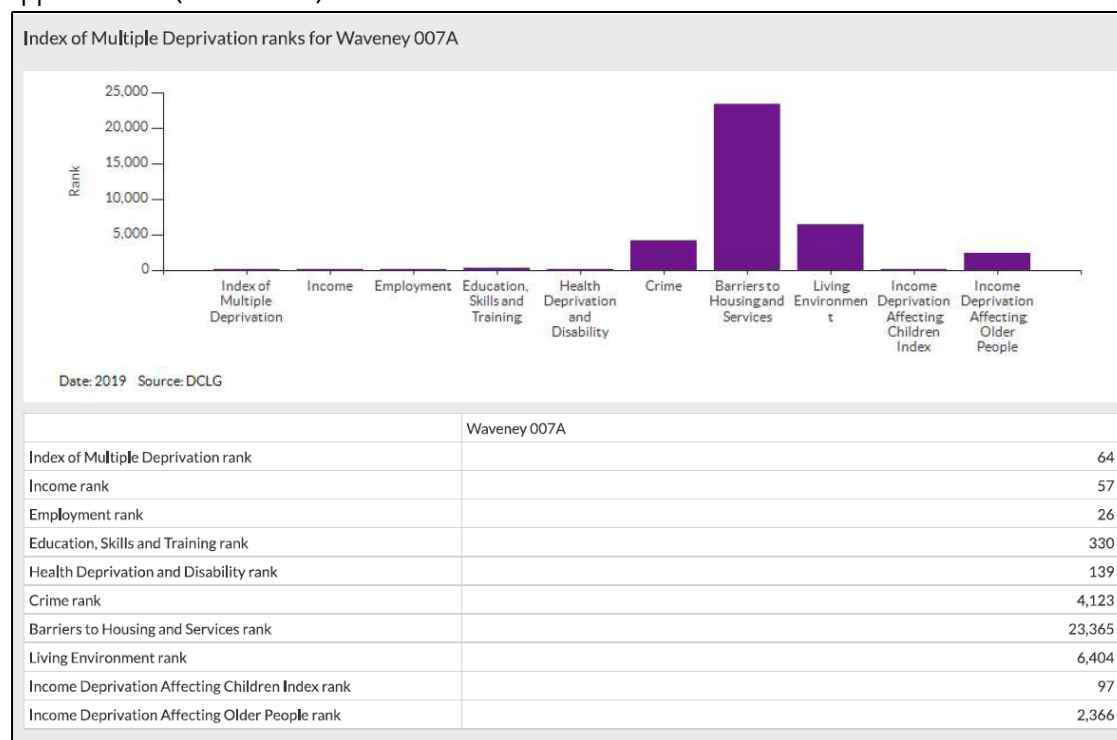
As with many coastal communities, almost a third of the population is aged 60+ (30%) against a national average of 22.5%; 33% of households have single occupants. The health of Lowestoft residents is lower than the national average, with 21% of adults stating their activity is limited a little or a lot 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.²⁰

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, even closer to Lowestoft itself, the suburban areas and Lowestoft's 'hinterland' of villages can have a similar masking effect on the issues within the town centre. The profile of Lowestoft within its hinterland is discussed in the next section.



To understand the specific challenges of these areas of Lowestoft in the bottom two deciles nationally, we have focused on the one 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.

Looking at each of the domains on the chart below²¹, we can see that the ranking is driven by low levels of education and skills (ranked 330th out of 32,844), poor health (129th) and poor employment opportunities (26th lowest).



²⁰ Fryers et al. (2005) in World Health Organisation and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (2014) *Social Determinants of Mental Health*

²¹ Suffolk Insight/ONS estimate 2019.

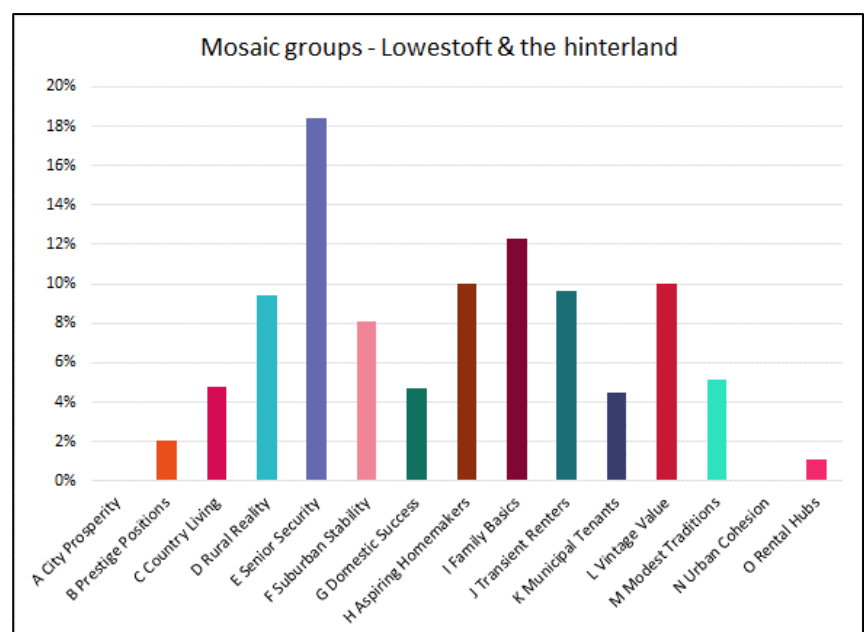
No less than 26% of children in this LSOA live in households in absolute low income, and 35% in relative low income, hence this area is 97th worst in the country for income deprivation affecting children. Indeed, it can be argued that this area's overall IMD ranking is propped up by the 'Barriers to Housing and Services' domain, where Lowestoft performs extremely well partly because of the efforts of both district and county councils in providing essential services and access to affordable housing.

Note however, that Waveney 007A is neither unique in Lowestoft, nor is it the most deprived – Kirkley Ward immediately south of the river is 26th most deprived nationally.

Economic Backdrop – Lowestoft & its 'hinterland' – MOSAIC profiles

Looking beyond Lowestoft itself to take in its 'hinterland' – ie the area beyond the town's boundaries that looks to Lowestoft as its commercial and cultural centre – we find a picture that is slightly more prosperous than within the town alone, but nonetheless a contrasting profile to national averages.

MOSAIC data²² for Lowestoft including its hinterland shows a distinct dominance of MOSAIC group E – Senior Security. This group represents 18% of the population, against just 8% nationally. Senior Security is described as 'elderly people with assets who are enjoying a comfortable retirement'. This group have the time and disposable income to be regular visitors to the Town Hall and participants in its heritage and cultural activities and could be strong contributors to local regeneration.



The next largest grouping is group I = Family Basics. This group consists of families with children who have limited budgets and can struggle to make ends meet. Their homes are low cost and are often found in areas with fewer employment options. Family Basics groupings make up 12% of Lowestoft and its hinterland's households, compared to 9% nationally. This group will form a target audience for our heritage and activities; it will be essential to overcome financial barriers to access to enable them to benefit from the Town Hall's offer.

Three further groupings each represent 10% of households: H – Aspiring Homemakers; J – Transient Renters; L – Vintage Value. Aspiring Homemakers are younger households, singles or couples, with/without children, most of whom have only recently set up home. They live within their budgets but aspire to develop further – for many, affordable property, either rented or bought, is a major attraction to an area, and Lowestoft has much to offer this grouping. Many Aspiring Homemaker households may

²² 2021 Experian data

be new to the area, attracted to its affordability. As such they too can contribute to regeneration; many may also become users of the co-working hub.

Transient Renters are mainly single person households choosing to rent low cost housing in the short term before moving on – they may stay within the area or relocate. This group could be short term beneficiaries and supporters of the Town Hall, including some users of the co-working hub, and may migrate to Aspiring Homemakers if the town has enough to offer them. This group can both help regeneration and benefit from the town's regeneration.

Finally, Vintage Value are elderly people who mostly live alone, whose levels of independence vary. Health needs are growing and incomes declining. Many of these people live within the town, potentially close to the Town Hall, and the social and wellbeing value of its facilities will be increasingly important for them.

Looking at the key groupings, it is clear that the Town Hall has the potential to contribute to the lives of those in the dominant MOSAIC groups, and in turn can benefit from their support. However, it will be essential to ensure that what the Town Hall offers is affordable and attractive to their varying needs.

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,²³ 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 undergoing some restoration.

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, one with a Seaside Award²⁴, 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.²⁵ The South Beach area has two piers, pavilions, seafront gardens and beach huts; a Seafront Vision is regenerating this area to transform it into a year-round destination; its first major implementation was the restoration of the East Point Pavilion, funded through the Towns Fund. On the north side of town,

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

²⁴ Lowestoft South & Kessingland beach gained a Keep Britain Tidy Seaside Award in 2022 for its beach management.

²⁵ *Town Investment Plan*, 2020

a £1.4m investment to develop Ness Park at the most easterly point in the UK has been completed recently.

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.²⁶

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.²⁷ The same study found no offices in the old High Street, against 4% national average.²⁸ Vacancy 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). In a follow-up study in 2022, 50% of businesses expected their performance to continue to decline.

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, the 2019 People and Places study 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,²⁹ compared with 2,211 in the main shopping street.

A Covid Impact follow-up survey conducted by People and Places, which looked at the town centre overall (ie not specifically the High Street) found 48% of people were visiting the town centre less frequently than pre-pandemic; of those visiting for leisure purposes, this had decreased by 69%.³⁰ However, predicted durations had increased, with 38% staying one hour or less. The number of

²⁶ *Town Investment Plan, 2020*

²⁷ People & Places, *Lowestoft: The Heart of Our Town* (December 2019)

²⁸ A recent review suggests there may be one office on the High Street

²⁹ Note that this data included a Saturday, whereas normally a mid-week market day is used. This may have boosted the figures.

³⁰ People & Places, *Assessing the Impact of Covid-19 on East Suffolk Town Centre Businesses* (Apr 2022)

respondents visiting at least weekly was consistent with previously, and this is borne out by just 2% now visiting daily indicating a shift towards longer gaps between visits and more use of online retailers.

The Impact of COVID-19

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was significantly worse for people living in deprived areas, with almost twice the numbers of deaths than in the most affluent areas³¹.

However, it is not just in the death rate that Lowestoft's deprived areas suffered. Large numbers of residents rely on seasonal and temporary employment, most of which did not exist during the pandemic, and in many cases zero-hours contracts were terminated by employers, rather than furloughing staff. Financially, although wealthier households increased their savings during the pandemic, the period was a struggle for those on low incomes, and for many residents, levels of household debt will have increased.³²

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.

As we emerged from lockdown, the economic impact on Lowestoft became clearer. Almost £15m was 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, some of these businesses did not reopen, and residents have been slow to return to town due to fear and/or habituated isolation.

The People and Places Covid Impact survey also found that, post-Covid, events and cultural activities were given some of the lowest satisfaction scores from town centre users, with cultural activities scoring just 1.6 out of 5.

Community Consultation

In late 2020/early 2021, a survey was conducted across Lowestoft asking residents about their preferences for the future of the Town Hall³³, and about their interest in, and engagement with, heritage.³⁴ The findings have been used to inform the plans for the Town Hall and to develop the

'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

³¹ 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)

³² Citizens Advice, *Excess debts - who has fallen behind on their household bills due to coronavirus?* (September 2020)

³³ A 2018 survey, conducted by Lowestoft Town Council was used as a baseline input for the survey.

³⁴ 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.

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.³⁵

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.³⁶ 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 area – this applied across most segments, although for disabled people 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 area 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.

³⁵ The majority of the other respondents came from NR33 postcode, ie still within the town.

³⁶ '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. subsub

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 survey report is available at Appendix G.

Since the original consultation, as part of the interpretation plan development,³⁷ a series of stakeholder engagement events and focus group workshops with representatives of target audiences have been held. These have informed the design of interpretation and determined its content.

The most popular topics collectively are 'Entertainment' and 'Battles and Bombs' (jointly), followed by 'The Witch Trial' and then 'When Lowestoft was rich and successful'. The least appealing topic is 'What it's like to be local', followed by 'Living by the sea' and 'The buildings'.

A clear shift in the areas of interest is detectable, perhaps due to the targeted nature of the focus groups in particular, which worked with people who were less likely to participate in the previous consultation. However, although certain topics, such as 'The buildings' are less popular, they remain included in part of the interpretation plan, integrated into other themes.

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 secured £24.9m from the Towns Fund³⁸ towards several programmes of economic development projects within a Town Investment Plan, one of which is the 'heritage quarter', including the Town Hall.

Lowestoft was one of just seven towns nationwide to have two Heritage Action Zones, one mostly 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*

³⁷ Refer to PLB's RIBA3 Interpretation Plan, April 2023

³⁸ 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.

full of promise – unlocking their potential and making them more attractive to residents, businesses, tourists and investors.'

East Suffolk Council's 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, their 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.³⁹ 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.

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 development stage of the current project, in the light of escalating capital costs in the construction centre, have also considered three alternatives to the design proposed:

- a full refurbishment of the Town Hall without new build
- a full redesign without new build, and
- demolition with rebuild on the site.

Refurbishment of the existing building within its current footprint and existing layouts would cost approximately 80-85% of the current capital costs of the preferred option.⁴⁰ However, it would not be possible to create both a gallery and a large events space, 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. Loss of heritage activities in the project would reduce the overall heritage value delivered, potentially jeopardising capital funding from NLHF. Moreover, both heritage and community outcomes ranked highly on the list of desired uses in our original community consultation.

We have calculated that loss of these spaces would reduce footfall by 20%, jobs created would reduce by 3.3 to 10.2FTE, and, by operational year 5, a cumulative loss of £241k would arise. Furthermore, the lack of the events space would eliminate the majority of the large community events, which are a key benefit identified by local people in consultations to date, and this in turn could affect support for a PWLB loan.

A further option would be to phase the implementation, such that the building was restored, but only a temporary marquee was used for the first 5 years (subject to planning approval) rather than building the events space. By securing further funding and contributing profits accrued to date, the permanent events space would be planned for year 6. This would deliver a predicted net reduction of around £650k in the initial capital expenditure (some infrastructure would need to be included in the first phase, even if not used), but would then require around £900k to be spent to create the new space. This option is considered too high risk:

³⁹ The full Colliers' report can be seen here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/content/docs/research/options-for-lowestoft-town-hall-and-adjacent-sites/>

⁴⁰ This estimate has increased from the previous 40% because of the now-identified poor condition of the Town Hall, a different design and layout, and the requirements re M&E and access.

- if no funding were secured, it could not be afforded from profits alone
- costs would be higher in future due to preliminaries etc for a standalone project
- there is 'wasted' expenditure in the investment in the temporary space meaning that overall the project would cost more to deliver in two phases, than one
- if delays arose, it is likely that planning consent for the temporary structure would expire, and the Town Hall would be left without an events space
- there would be unacceptable disruption to the operation of the Town Hall whilst the events space was built.

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 achieves excellent levels of energy performance and utilises renewable energy and sustainable and/or recycled local materials wherever possible, was considered a better, low-impact strategy.

The final option considered and dismissed in the previous stage 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 PROJECT

This project will refurbish and extend the Town Hall 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

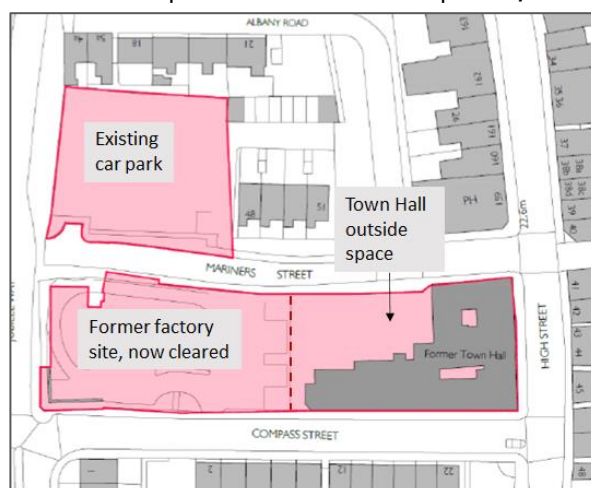
The Town Hall is a Grade II listed landmark⁴¹ and the most prominent building on the High Street. It was rebuilt in 1859 on the site of a previous Town Chamber. The new building was designed by John Louth Clemence, a student of CR Cockerell. The local entrepreneur Samuel Morton Peto donated stained glass windows that survive to the present day. In c 1870 the New Market Inn, now part of the Town Hall complex, was built on Compass Street.



The Town Hall is of a striking Italianate design, contrasting in scale against its setting in the medieval High Street. It 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.

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.



Overall, the gross internal space is c 1,410sqm 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 Council Chamber with its notable stained-glass windows⁴², the ceremonial stairs and entrance to the Chamber, the civic offices on the ground and first floors with their engraved windows and encaustic tiled corridors, and the clock tower. On the second floor of the former pub building at the western most end of Compass Street, there are small modern offices, in poor condition.

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

⁴¹ For details of the listing, and a brief history of the building: <http://bit.ly/LTHListing>

⁴² The main stained glass window, 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 are documented in *Stained Glass at the International Exhibitions 1851 – 1860*, by Jasmine M Allen, curator of the national Stained Glass Museum in Ely.

Owned by Lowestoft Town Council since April 2017, it has been vacant and boarded up⁴³ 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 through water ingress from slipped roof tiles, failed roof coverings and inadequate rainwater management systems. Issues with external masonry include open mortar joints, loose and spalling brickwork and copings, some caused by water from failed rainwater management systems. 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 decayed plasterwork as well as significant fungal growth and evidence of dry rot. At least 67 original windows need repair.

Town Hall – Proposed Designs

HAT Projects, our architects and design team leaders, have developed designs to meet the requirements' brief created from community consultations and our other research, informed by the conservation management plan developed by Alan Baxter Associates.

The intention is to create a building that has sensitively retained the character of the historic Town Hall, that is open to all, and that is instantly welcoming from the High Street. On a townscape level, the proposals mend the urban block of which the Town Hall forms the most prominent part, which has lost its coherence due to the demolition of the other buildings on the block during the post-war years.

The proposals open up the currently disused lightwell in the centre of the Town Hall, enclosed with a glazed roof, to create a well-used orientation and circulation space that joins together the existing parts of the Town Hall complex and



⁴³ The picture to the right of this paragraph has been digitally enhanced to remove the window boardings, but otherwise shows the current appearance of the Town Hall with its vacant plot to the rear.

leads to new-build elements beyond, through an internal 'street'. The undercroft below the Council Chamber will be opened up to create a single space, where a café will sit. The heritage gallery/hub is located in the most historically interesting and intact rooms on the ground floor on the Compass Street (south) side.

To the north of the café is a gallery, with north facing skylights; this room can be secured, to meet the requirements for national touring exhibitions. The gallery will host a changing programme of heritage exhibitions, community art and co-curated shows.

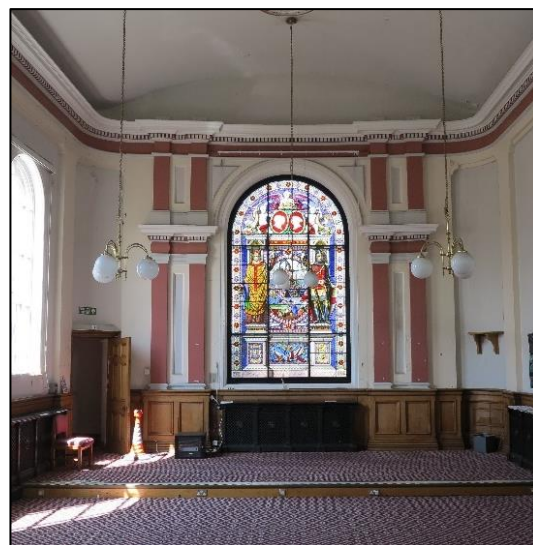
The heritage area and gallery will be linked physically and visually by the café, which opens out onto the courtyard garden.

The existing ceremonial stairs are retained, leading to the first floor where the main Chamber is located alongside a further meeting room that also serves as a Green Room and ancillary room for weddings. The Council Chamber 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, including the seriously degraded plasterwork and stained glass, as well as introducing services in a sensitive manner. 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 of the ground floor will be a meeting room for hire, and a messy space adjacent to the heritage gallery, to be used for creative and arts activities, both community and commercial. This same space will be used by youth groups, some led by adults and some self-led. A further meeting room is on the north-east corner of the building, separately accessible out of hours.

Both the Registrars and Town Council will be accommodated in the southern (Compass Street) side. 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' presence on the first floor will also encourage people to use the Chamber for larger civil ceremonies.

The Council will occupy the second floor of the most westerly section of the building – the former new Market Inn - which is extended to create additional floorspace and has its roofline raised to accommodate air source heat pumps fully screened from view. Below the Council, on the first floor, will be the co-working



hub. Council, Registrars and co-working hub members will be able to enter the building via the rear doors, thus providing secure access including out of hours.

The building will be fully accessible throughout, with the exception of the clock tower and one room in the Mariner Street wing. Three lifts (two full lifts and one platform lift) are introduced to ensure accessibility and flexibility, so that upper floors are accessible during normal public opening hours and for out of hours use by staff. Zoning will be introduced to manage security throughout the building.

Finally, as a new build on the west side of a new landscaped courtyard to the rear of the building, there is a multi-events space and bar with capacity for 60 – 80 seated and just under 200 standing. This will support not only the many community activities identified through our consultations, but also commercial, including use for wedding receptions and parties. A bar and separate prep kitchen are attached to the events space, the latter 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. It will be energy efficient to operate and can be used independently of the rest of the Town Hall, allowing flexibility for the end users and for hires out-of-hours.



The location of the new events hall helps to protect and shelter the Town Hall and its new courtyard garden, which is designed to be a calm, peaceful urban oasis for all to enjoy. The garden is fully accessible and can be entered directly off Mariner Street. It will include a wildlife pond and be planted with native and wildlife friendly plants and trees. The courtyard can be used for spill-out seating for both the café and the event hall, due to the spatial zoning created in the design.



To the rear of the building will be a new pedestrian laneway linking Mariners Street to the north with Compass Street on the south, which reinstates a historic lane in this location. This route will provide access to the building for staff and co-working users, to the refuse stores, and secure cycle storage to encourage sustainable travel. A green wall/hedge will separate the lane from the adjacent land, currently vacant.⁴⁴

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

⁴⁴ The adjacent land is owned by East Suffolk Council.

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 be unfair for any financial assistance to be borne by Lowestoft Town Council alone.

For existing buildings the planning requirements and expectations are not onerous in terms of sustainability, but here the client and project team are aiming well beyond statutory requirements to embed sustainable development principles. These include reducing emissions and resource usage, and also ensuring the building is adapted to the changing climate.

The project has been carefully devised to make fullest use of the heritage building, with new extensions accommodating elements of the brief that the existing building cannot, such as a flexible events hall and gallery, and also providing the plant space required to service the Town Hall with low carbon heating and ventilation. This strategy maintains the listed building's character, whilst greatly increasing its uses and comfort, in a manner which minimises environmental impacts.

Sensitive improvements to the building fabric performance are proposed in order to reduce operational energy requirements, where these can be achieved without compromising the heritage fabric or character. These include insulation to roofs, secondary glazing where possible, and thermal upgrade of walls where existing damage to the historic fabric necessitates making good. New extensions are designed with good passive environmental performance.

Overheating studies have been undertaken, testing summer comfort of the building against 2050 future weather files to promote long-term comfort and climate resilience. External shading is proposed to prevent direct solar gain in summer and reduce the reliance and extent of servicing needed to maintain comfort. Additional external elements such as shading can be controversial on a heritage building, but here are acknowledged as an appropriate response, providing a practical reversible sustainable solution to thermal comfort, and a manifestation of climate and ecological emergency commitments.

Despite the project having restricted outdoor space, the project's courtyard garden is designed to maximise environmental benefit, with a pond to support the scheme's sustainable drainage system (SuDS) and native planting to increase biodiversity and support local wildlife. Significant reductions in fresh water usage are proposed by use of water efficient fittings.

The project's materials must be robust and easy to maintain to suit a well-used public building, and the project team aim to make meaningful reductions in their embodied carbon and environmental impacts. This includes selecting natural materials - which also promote a healthy internal environment by minimising VOCs - and local materials which minimise transport emissions. Circular economy strategies will be pursued such as incorporating reused elements and reclaimed materials to reduce embodied

carbon, reduce ecologically damaging extraction of new materials elsewhere, and support local sourcing networks. The building's original decorative cast iron radiators and light fittings will be refurbished and reinstated. Requirements for responsible sourcing of materials, minimising construction waste and diverting waste from landfill will be included in the construction contract. Soft landing processes are proposed at the project handover to optimise in-use performance and occupant satisfaction.

The scheme has been developed with much user engagement to ensure it meets the community's needs. A key project principle has been accessibility for all, making the Town Hall both physically accessible and intuitive to navigate. All internal and external areas (except one office) are fully accessible to all users, and the spatial strategy opens up the ground floor for ease of navigation.

The building is very central and conveniently located for the town – research has already shown a high level of pedestrian access to the town. The project will encourage cycling to work with provision of secure cycle storage and showers for staff provided in the building.

Lowestoft Town Hall presents an ambitious vision to return a heritage building to community use, incorporating sustainability strategies which are innovative to listed building refurbishments. We intend to communicate the sustainability achievements to the community and stakeholders and have developed an activity for the first year of operation that focuses on this, working with young people. We will record lessons learnt from the project - the strategies successfully implemented, and challenges overcome - to inform and promote future sustainable reuse of heritage buildings.

Town Hall – Planning & Listed Building Consent

Pre-application advice was sought from East Suffolk Council, Suffolk County Council and Historic England at the start of 2023. An application for Full Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent was submitted in May 2023, accompanied by a transport statement with parking survey, as requested by Suffolk Highways. Archaeological investigations and bat roost surveys were completed during the summer, with no issues arising.

The LPA (East Suffolk Council) has confirmed that this is not a 'major application' and therefore determination time should be eight weeks as standard. A decision is expected in November.

Town Hall Facilities – Target Markets

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

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 office 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 access will be available, with services including printing, meeting/huddle spaces, Zoom room etc. This group should also be regular users of the café.

Design and management of this space will require particular care, to ensure that it meets the market needs for a co-working space – it must be unique, interesting and without a corporate or ‘council’ feel. It will be managed as a separate entity by the marketing manager on the Town Hall team, who will ensure that its identity/brand is developed appropriately.

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 not well- 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 a catering option 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).

Events space: 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 high-quality reputation can be built.

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 some are licensed for ceremonies. For the Town Hall, the target market should be at the 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 events space. 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.⁴⁵ 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 ceremonies⁴⁶.

Messy Space: the messy space has two functions, firstly as the name suggests as a space where arts & crafts activities can take place. Its proximity to the heritage gallery will enable groups to participate in events that start, or take inspiration from, the heritage interpreted in the gallery.

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 'Frontline Families' in the immediate vicinity, reasonably priced events should be popular.

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 partners⁴⁷ to access young people, who otherwise are less likely to be attracted to events in a relatively formal building.

⁴⁵ Lowestoft Registrars currently conduct just over 100 civil ceremonies in their offices annually.

⁴⁶ Office for National Statistics 2017

⁴⁷ 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.

Town Hall Heritage Gallery – Interpretation Overview

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

Developed by People, Landscapes, Buildings (PLB Ltd), the interpretation designs have been informed by an extensive programme of workshops with project stakeholders and specific target audience groups. This has resulted in an overarching concept of 'Shifting Sands', which in turn includes themes such as 'Stories from the Sea' and 'Tradition, Superstition and Witchcraft'.

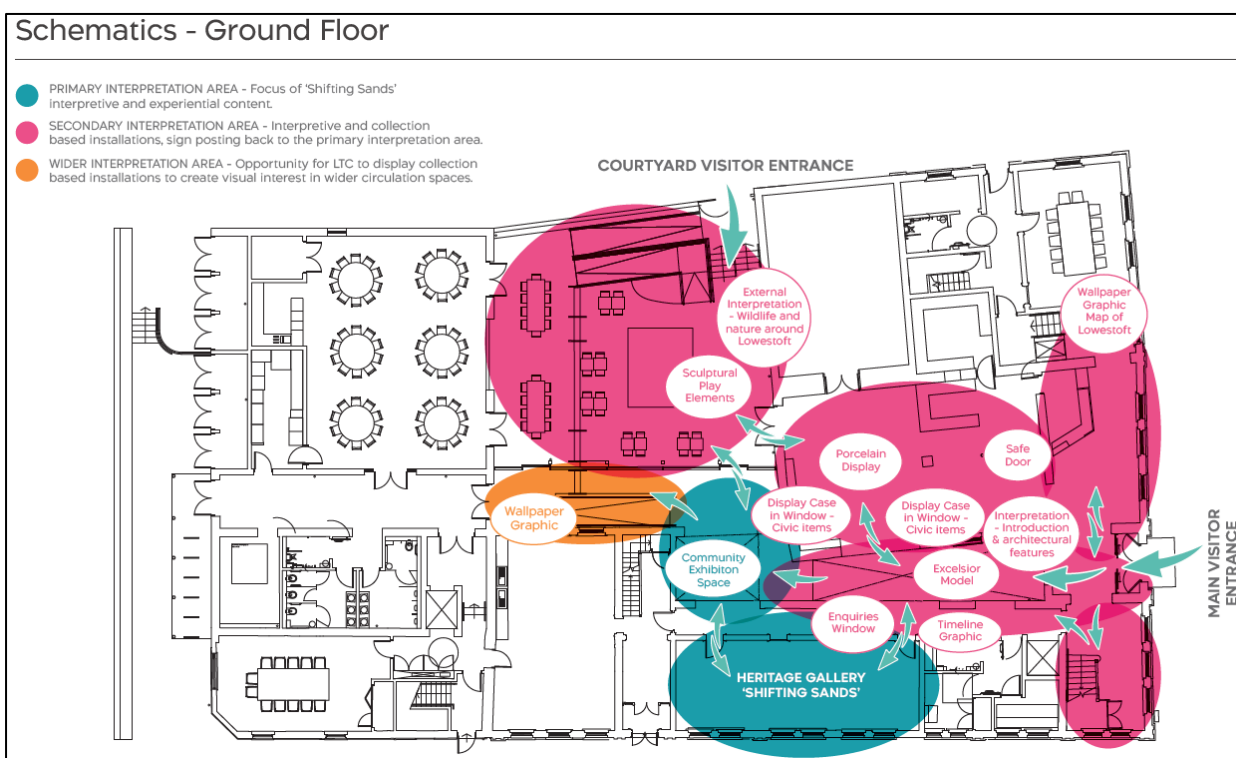
The Town Hall will signpost people to local museums and heritage sites across the town, and our visitor information point will facilitate the sharing of information and promotion of other heritage locations and events in the town.

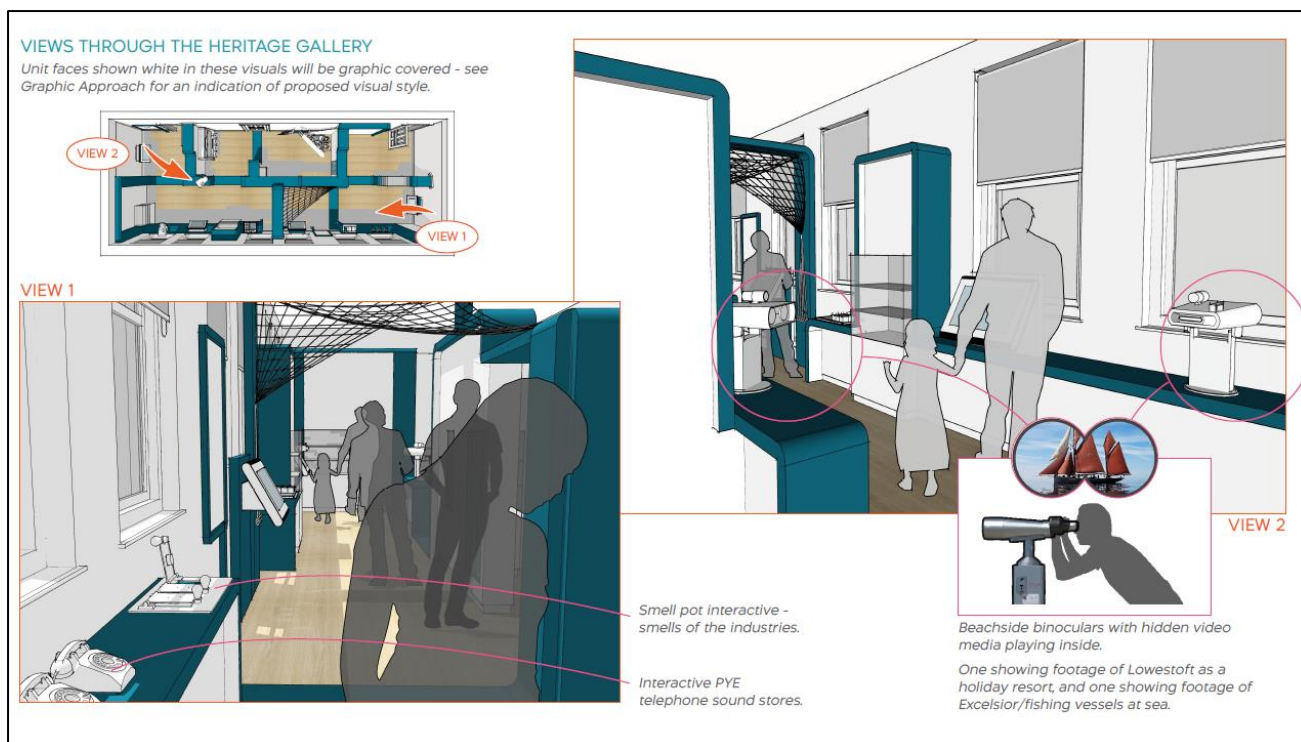
This will address one of the major issues for local people identified in our research – that they do not have information about the different museums in town – as well as provide a more coherent offer for visitors, especially those that arrive in the low season when the local museums, run by volunteers, 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 underserved groups, the interpretation will be interactive, involving film/moving images, sound and hands-on exhibits. The first illustration below shows the primary (blue) and secondary (pink) locations for interpretation within the building, and the second provides the conceptual design of Shifting Sands throughout the Heritage Gallery itself.

Lowestoft is a town that has always lived on the edge. Its most easterly, coastal location and topography has resulted in a constant state of transition. It is a town of changing fortunes, dramatic ups and cataclysmic downs, and literally at the mercy of the elements and environmental changes. What dramatic events have shaped Lowestoft's past and present, and what's in store for its future?

PLB Interpretation Plan RIBA3,





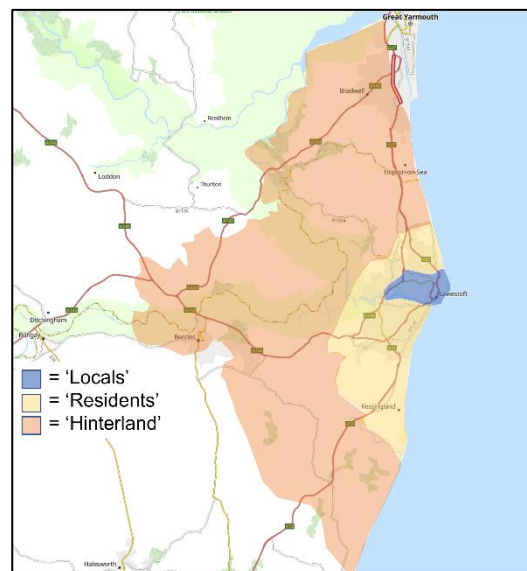
Town Hall Heritage Gallery and Exhibitions – Audiences

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

In 2023 the project commissioned an Audience Agency Area Profile for the areas in and around Lowestoft in order to use the most up to date statistics to inform our planning. 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.⁴⁸

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' (orange).

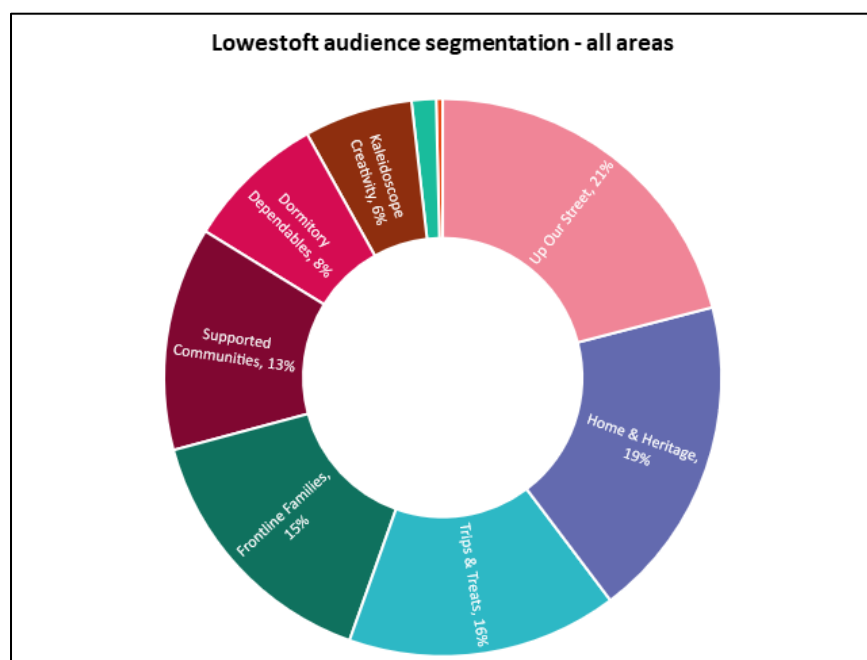
During the development stage, we incorporated an additional four postcode areas to the north of Lowestoft into our hinterland area. This area traditionally had



⁴⁸ The Audience Agency uses Experian 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.

associations with Lowestoft. The report was also able to provide further in-depth information on cultural attendance, demographics, employment and qualifications to help tailor activities to the needs of specific audiences. When taken together, the cultural engagement profile, based on Audience Agency Spectrum data, is as shown in the chart below.

As can be seen here, the target audiences for activities in the heritage area across all Lowestoft and its surrounding hinterland fall into five dominant groupings: 'Home & Heritage', 'Trips & Treats', 'Up Our Street', 'Supported Communities' and 'Frontline 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 'Frontline Families' dominating the audience segments, alongside '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' 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 concessionary ticketing and free activities. These have been built into our detailed Audience & Activity Plan, and the cost of reducing the financial impact for those in need is included in the financial model for the Town Hall, covered by the commercial income from general uses.

Town Hall Heritage Gallery and Exhibitions – Activities

As a result of learnings from the evaluation of development stage activities, we have amended our target groups. The activity and audience plan contains an action grid detailing a wide range of inclusive activities designed to attract maximum participation, especially from these groups:

- Older people including those from lower socio-economic backgrounds
- Families including those from lower socio-economic backgrounds
- Young people aged 11-16 & 17-24 including those from lower socio-economic backgrounds

Additionally, children and adults with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are a key cross-cutting audience for the Town Hall activities and interpretation. Those from lower socio-economic backgrounds are strongly represented in the Local and Residents area 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 'Supported Communities' 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 postcodes in the Local and Resident areas.

Activities are split over the different stages of the project, with extensive early engagement having been conducted during the development stage, then further engagement during the delivery project, some of which will lead into live running.

The development stage activities helped us to plan how to build the capacity for the new venture and have been important in helping us understand the challenges of engaging with key local audiences. Piloting different activities, and going out to the community, have a) enabled the identification of those activities and approaches that are most successful and b) allowed time to identify and work with partners to build up audiences. Evaluation throughout the stage has identified what has been successful and what could have been done differently, so the learning could be built into plans for the next stage.

Running from development through to live, '*Your Lowestoft Memories*' takes a Memories Boat filled with props out to different locations around town – streets, beach, community groups, schools – capturing local voices and creating a well-received video poem '*All in a Day's Work*' that will be used as part of the interpretation once open. Copies of the oral histories will be deposited at Suffolk Archives with originals retained locally.

During the development stage, three part-time student placements were implemented in partnership with East Suffolk College. These roles were intended to develop a marketing plan but in fact were focused on the arts and design side of the programme, reflecting the interests of the students.

In the delivery stage, prior to construction 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. This will culminate in the inaugural exhibition 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 and audience plan is the long-term employment of a full-time Heritage Manager, to work with other museums and the community to co-curate exhibitions, as well as to deliver new and engaging activity. The Heritage Manager will also supervise the development of a Heritage Trainee, who will be given the opportunity to work towards a BIIAB Cultural Heritage diploma qualification (assuming a suitable provider can be found for this course).⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Norfolk Museums Service is an accredited assessor of this course and has provided advice to the team.

6. GOVERNANCE AND LEGACY MANAGEMENT

Governance Options

In this plan, 'governance' refers to the overall legal framework in place to control the strategic and operational direction of the Town Hall. It is also important to consider the operational management structure, if the building were to be operated directly by the Council. This is covered later.

In determining the optimum governance structure, several key aims and objectives have been considered:

- Residents of Lowestoft, from all areas and backgrounds, must feel this is *their* building, and that it is open and welcoming to them at all times.
- Grant funders must be certain that there is clear accountability for the delivery of outcomes that are conditions of the grant, and for meeting any other terms and conditions of the grant.
- Anchor tenants must be able to use the building as their business needs dictate and to have priority access to key areas, eg Council Chamber.
- VAT on the capital project must be fully recoverable, ie the ultimate governance structure must not prevent its recovery.
- A maintenance and renewal reserve must be generated from operational activity, so any third party operator must either take direct responsibility for achieving this or have a legal mechanism to return funds to the Council.
- There must be sufficient flexibility to enable the Town Hall to respond to changes in markets or demand levels.

Four main options for the future governance for the Town Hall have been considered. These are:

1. Establishment of a charitable trust.
2. Creation of a corporate charitable business to oversee the Town Hall
3. Appointment of a third party organisation
4. Direct governance by Lowestoft Town Council

The first two options relate to the establishment of charitable bodies, of different legal forms. Whilst a local authority can set up a charity, and it is permissible for it to do so to carry out statutory duties, it is illegal to do so simply to benefit from charitable status. The charity must be independent, ie it cannot simply be set up to carry out the policies or directions of a governmental authority and it cannot be dependent on a governmental authority for funding in a way that enables the authority to control or make decisions about services to be provided. It is clear that in this case, the charity cannot be owned by LTC.

Proposed Governance

Lowestoft Town Council will take direct responsibility for governance and management of the Town Hall. The Town Clerk will have a Town Hall 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 will ensure that Lowestoft Town Council retains control over its largest asset, whilst at the same time ensuring that there should be no risks relating to VAT recovery on the capital project that could have arisen from some of the other options.⁵⁰

A governance paper is included in Appendix F.

Operational Management

A Town Hall Manager, reporting to the Town Clerk, will be responsible for the Town Hall's overall financial performance, 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. Some of the general administration, such as payroll, will be carried out within the existing Council infrastructure. Bookkeeping would be outsourced to a professional visiting weekly.

Reporting to the Town Hall Manager (THM) will be an assistant manager, whose main role will be to provide extended coverage for the long opening hours of the building (in partnership with the THM). The assistant manager will also oversee a Business Administration apprentice and coordinate the work of caretakers/concierges and cleaning staff.

A catering manager will look after all aspects of the café, bar and catering for in-house events, as well as bidding for 3rd party events/bookings in the building. Work placements will be provided for local young people (see Café Management, next section, for more details).

A full time Heritage Manager will be responsible for running and managing the heritage area and gallery, organising exhibitions in liaison with other museums and co-curation groups in the community, organising activities and managing outreach into the community. The Heritage Manager will also oversee the work of the heritage trainee (a two-year position working towards a Cultural Heritage diploma). This position will be renewed at the end of two years, and thereafter it will be revaluated to determine whether to continue, or to change this to a Heritage Engagement only role, reflecting the maturity of the collection.

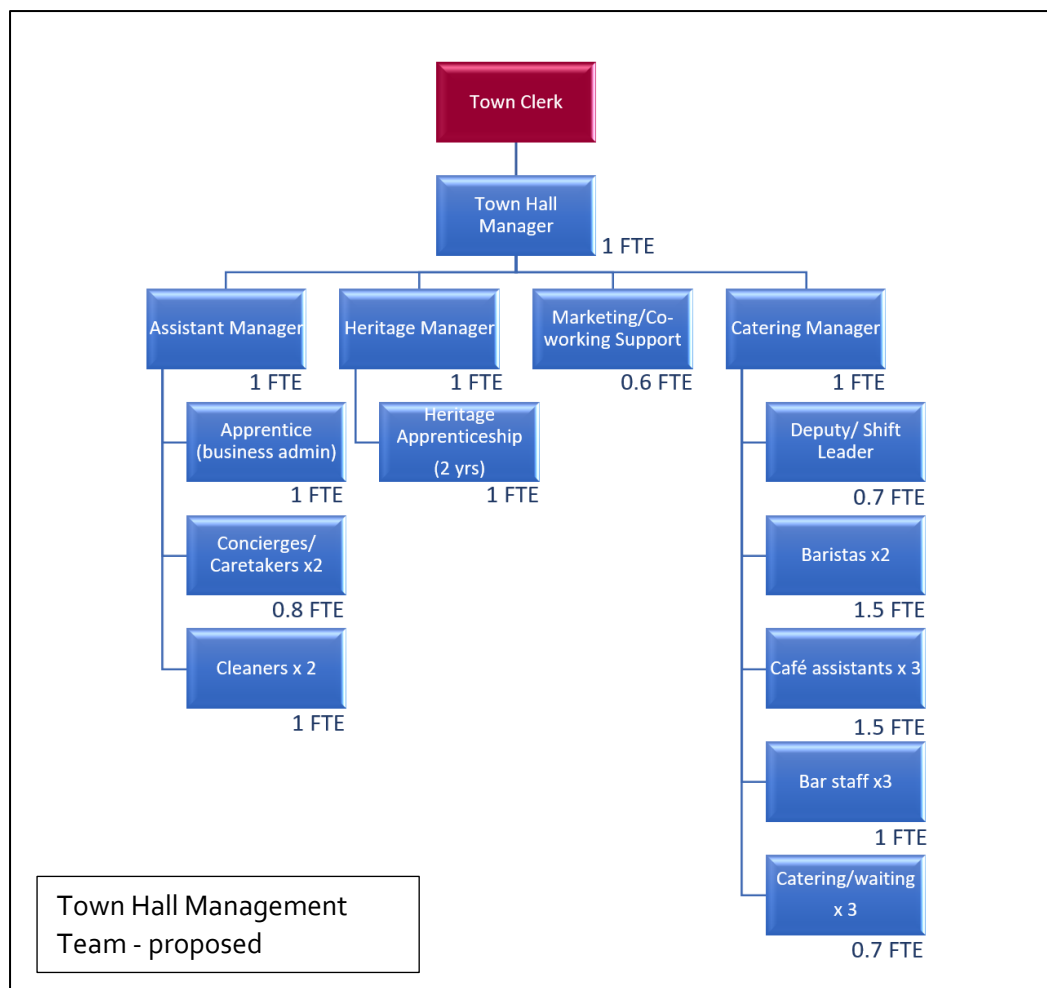
The decision to make the Heritage Manager a staff role from the outset was taken in order to ensure continuity through the project; it is now full-time, reflecting the concerns that over-reliance on volunteering is a risk, given the drop-off in volunteering that has been seen nationwide since the pandemic.⁵¹ This move also reduces the risk of competition with other heritage destinations in the town for scare volunteers.

Finally, a Marketing/Co-Working Support person will promote the Town Hall, including on social media etc, and support and promote the Co-Working Hub, including organising monthly networking events. Our research into successful co-working sites found that those that were more successful created a 'club', where individuals felt that they belonged to something unique. Networking events help this, along with skills development opportunities. A key element is to ensure that the co-working site has its own personality and does not feel simply like office space in a standard office building.

The structure chart below shows the Town Hall team structure.

⁵⁰ This means that the Town Hall must charge VAT on its services (where applicable).

⁵¹ According to the *Time Well Spent 2023* report (May 2023), commissioned by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, those volunteering to support activities has dropped by 52% since Covid-19, from 14% to 7%.



Café Management

Two models were considered for the running of the café: run directly by the Town Council, appointing their own staff etc or leased to a café operator. In our first round application, we adopted the latter model, leasing the café and catering to a 3rd party operator.

However, although the risk is somewhat higher than working with an experienced partner, on balance it has been decided that a directly run café is a better option. This is because the Council can then control the quality/offer rather than relying on a service level agreement and is able to take all the profits rather than simply the lease income. This also has the benefit of creating a much larger number of direct employment opportunities.

An experienced catering manager will be hired to run the café, catering for events, and the bar in the events space. A team of assistants, including baristas, café assistants, bar staff and catering/waiting staff will be hired. In total, taking the café 'in-house' creates a further direct 6.4FTE employment opportunities (for at least 13 individuals).

Four café work placements per year, each entailing an 18-hour week for nine weeks will be offered to local young people aged 18-20 who are struggling to get into work. Again, this is easier to manage as the café operator, rather than including within a lease arrangement with a third party. Placement staff would acquire a level 2 Food Hygiene qualification, and would gain experience in customer service, barista work and general café food preparation.

The cafe will be open six days a week in winter (with the occasional Sunday) and seven days a week in high season. In addition, special café events will be run on Friday evenings, and co-working events monthly on Thursdays, both of which will generate additional income. The café will bid for catering for private bookings in the event space; it is assumed that it will secure approximately 30% of bookings.

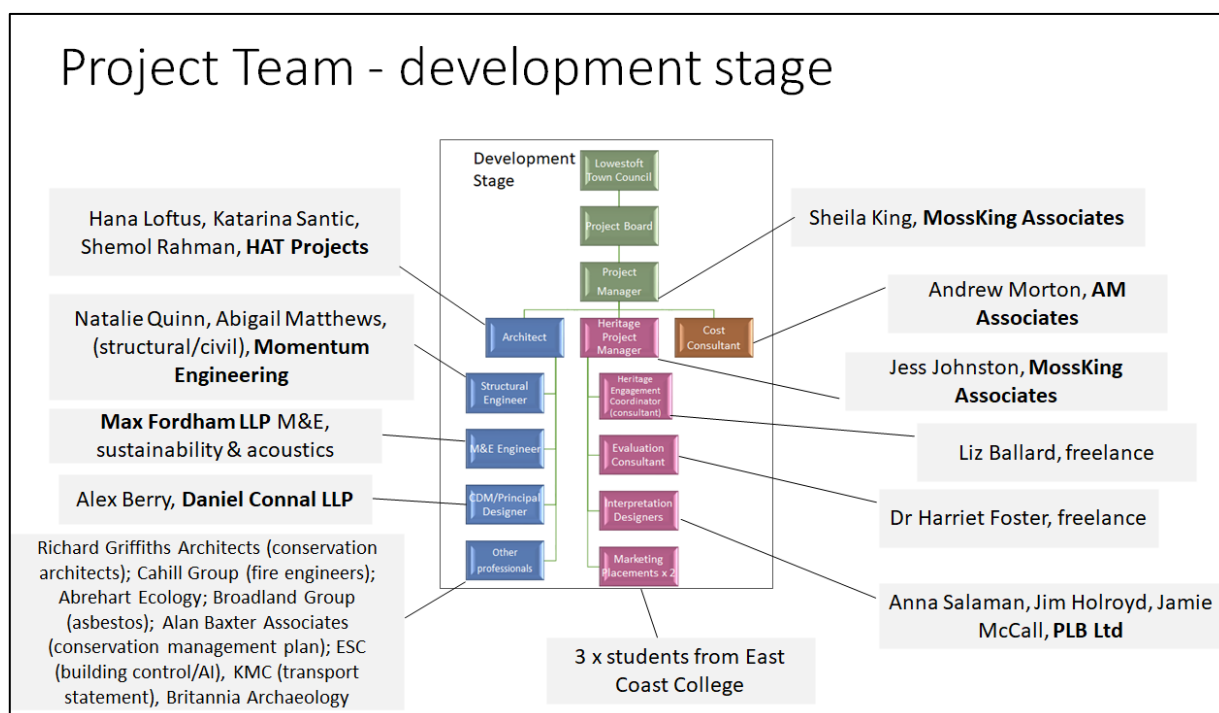
Project Structure

The capital project is being delivered in two stages (as required by NLHF): a development stage and a delivery stage. Continuity across the stages was deemed preferable as it would lead to a faster implementation overall by avoiding the need to procure twice, as well as ensuring that those who were designing and/or developing in the first stage were responsible for delivering their designs.

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

The 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 continued 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 also provides advice on where enhancements can be made to the project and participates in its evaluation.

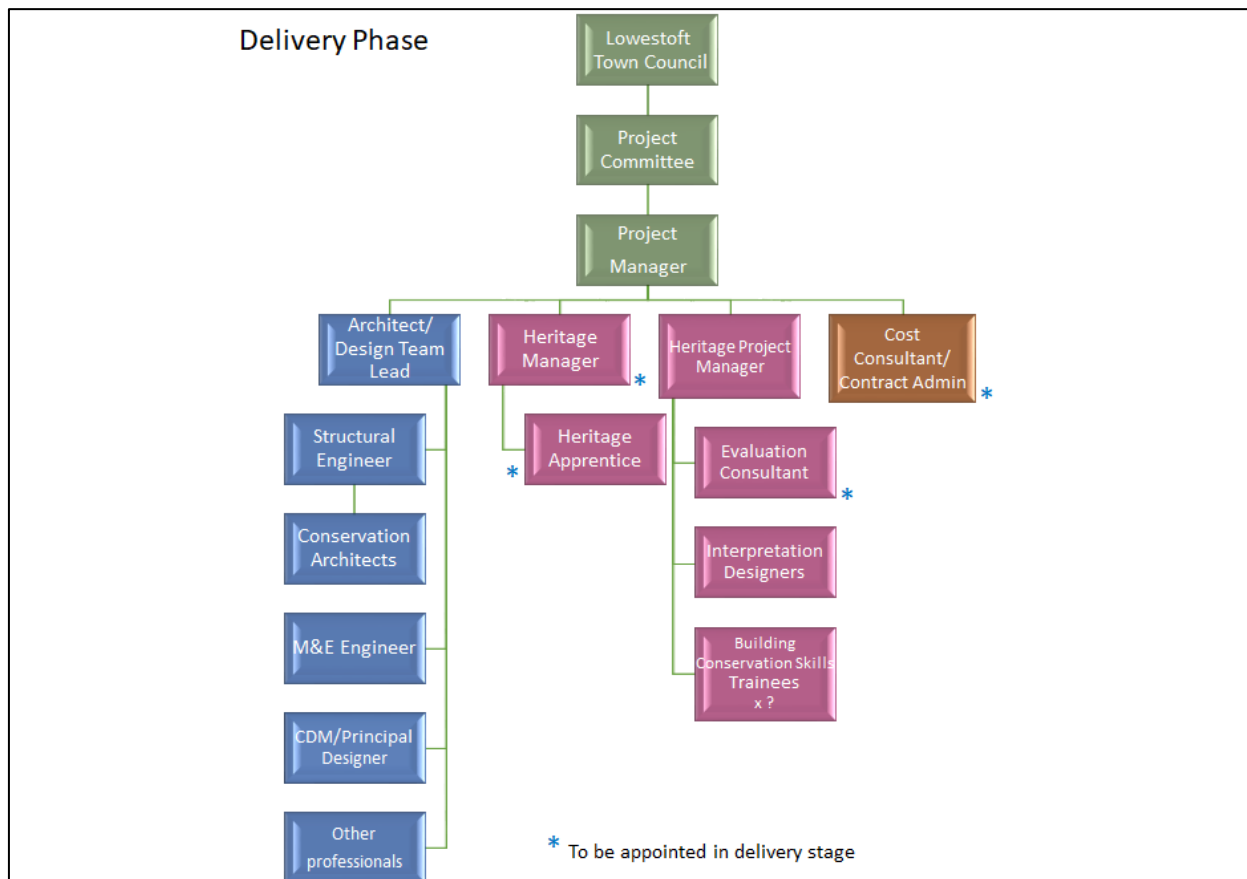
The Project Board comprised the Town Mayor, six Councillors and the Town Clerk (or Deputy Clerk) plus East Suffolk Council's Culture and Heritage Programme Manager and Funding Manager as well as Historic England's Historic Places Advisor. Councillors represented many of the council's committees, including Finance and Governance, as well as the Council's links to the HAZ and Place Board.



For the delivery stage, a Project Committee will be chaired by the Mayor and comprise a minimum of six Town Councillors, with two additional non-councillor members. The Project Manager and Town Clerk

(or Deputy) also attend, support and advise meetings. Day-to-day control of the project sits with the Project Manager under the overall direction of the Project Committee.

A full professional team has been procured; a break clause between stages is included in those contracts that continue, with the option, but not the commitment, to continue through to delivery stage. This covers all bar the cost consultant, evaluation and the heritage manager.



The project is led by Sheila King, of Moss King Associates Limited, whilst the design team, including all the sub-consultants, is led by Hana Loftus, of HAT Projects.

The delivery stage project structure will be much the same as development, with the team leading capital work through construction to completion. A QS will have to be procured for RIBA4 onwards as will contract administration and evaluation.

A Heritage Project Manager will look after all of the activity plan delivery, interpretation design, and collections conservation, supervising the work of the Heritage Manager. They will also bring on board a Heritage Trainee, and work with the design team to identify opportunities for hands-on building craft skills experience on the Town Hall project itself, in partnership with East Coast College. This will be built into the contract with the main contractor for the construction project.

On the activity side, the Heritage Manager, which will now be a full-time role reflecting the complexity of organising activities across the town with multiple partners and providers, will be a staff position. They will deliver the programme detailed in the Audience & Activity Plan under the guidance of the

Heritage Project Manager. This role will require a separate recruitment process with functional reporting to the Town Clerk and project reporting to the Project Manager.⁵²

Evaluation remains a core component of the project, with evaluation consultant(s) providing ongoing monitoring, evaluation and review of both the activity plan and the overall project, so that lessons learnt can be channelled into future activities. For further details, please see Section 12.

Transition from Project to Live

Transition from the project team to the operational team will require careful planning during the delivery stage project to ensure that there is a smooth handover, and that the Town Hall management team are able to hit the ground running.

The Town Hall manager will be recruited during the delivery project well in advance of opening, to be involved in developing operational processes and business documentation (including pricing, policies etc), and preparing for the recruitment of further team members. Although the manager will report to the Town Clerk, they will be seconded to the project until live running, with other Town Hall staff reporting to them as they are brought on board, to ensure that they operate as a cohesive unit.

The Town Hall team will function autonomously from the Council admin team, because of the public facing community/commercial nature of their role. However, secondment of an existing Council administration staff member to the project could be a means to ensure that the linkage between the core team and Town Hall management is smooth, with overarching policies and processes in place to allow the Town Hall to operate independently but within a Lowestoft Town Council framework.

This aspect of the project will be developed further during the early stages of delivery, ready for implementation well in advance of live running.

⁵² The exact Town Hall Team structure, and interim reporting for the Heritage Manager, will be confirmed with the LTC Admin team and agreed by Full Council, in the next stage.

7. FINANCIALS

Capital Project Costs & Funding

The total cost of the delivery project, including 24% contingency & inflation provision, plus three years of activity and activity-related staff costs during live running, is ~£10m. Costs have risen significantly over the Stage 1 estimates, because of inflation in the construction sector and the condition of the building, as well as the building being 15% bigger in gross internal floor area than originally drawn in the previous stage.⁵³ We have also increased the Heritage Manager role to full-time and have allocated additional professional fees to cover delivery of workshops and activities. This is in response to our learning from the development phase and to ensure we are not over-reliant on volunteers, whose numbers have reduced since the pandemic, nor competing with other heritage destinations in the town for scarce volunteer resources.

Live running costs to be covered within the project budget include the Heritage Manager, a heritage trainee position (started during delivery stage with a new appointment for a further two years during live) as well as activity costs, including professional fees, evaluation and equipment and materials. These costs would be grant funded for the first three years of live running, then, with the exception of the heritage traineeship, continued permanently, supported by the income from the commercial activities of the Town Hall. The future of the traineeship will be considered during the third year of live running, to assess the feasibility of funding these from operational income and to decide whether there is sufficient activity and external supervisory structure to support the same format of traineeship.

VAT is excluded from the costs in the summary cost plan as we have been advised that it will be fully recoverable.⁵⁴

Project funding has four principal potential sources: The Towns Fund, East Suffolk Council, 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 represented 29% of the project costs, but with increased capital forecasts, this has dropped to 20.0%. Similarly, the original NLHF grant of £2.23m for this stage would have decreased proportionately to 24.0% from 34.4%, but our new request for increased funding, at £3.257m, brought this back up to 35.1%. East Suffolk Council has supported the project by granting £900k and discussions are underway with renewable energy companies regarding their financial support for the many renewable energy elements and sustainable M&E solutions within the design.

Lowestoft Town Council committed in principle in March 2023 to contribute to the project via a Public Works Loans Board loan up to £4m, if required. This is an increase over the previously agreed in principle loan commitment. LTC has confirmed that it will seek this loan to fill the funding 'gap', subject to the necessary approvals, now that the NLHF grant has been secured (September 2023). The cost of servicing the loan would be covered from the existing precept, ensuring no increase in council tax bills as a direct

⁵³ The 15% increase is mostly due to a more accurate assessment of the space required for services (toilets, kitchen, circulation, plus plant, storage etc) as well as accommodating Lowestoft Town Council, which was incorrectly sized previously.

⁵⁴ Report for Lowestoft Town Council, *VAT Advice on Lowestoft Town Hall*, Parkinson Partnership (March 2023)

result of this project and this is a key condition controlling the size of the loan that will eventually be taken out.⁵⁵ This contribution represents 43.1% of project costs, compared to 29.7% previously.

With the support of East Suffolk Council, the direct funding gap has reduced, but it is intended to maintain the PWLB target at £4m to provide further contingency. The current inflation in the construction market has been built into our budgets, but we believe there still remains an inflation risk. Similarly, the condition of the building continues to deteriorate, and it has been concluded that it would be prudent to retain the additional funding headroom, but only drawing down if absolutely necessary. This would therefore avoid the need to fund any shortfall from the Council's annual budget.

Delivery Project Cashflow

With a PWLB loan of £4.0m, in combination with the Towns Fund £1.86m, cashflow management throughout the main construction project is straightforward, although there will be a deficit after capital works complete, peaking at -£310k in the latter stages of the project until the final NLHF payment is made. NLHF retain 10% of their grant until successful completion of the project, and a completion report being lodged. The reserves building in the operational business should help offset the cashflow deficit (with both maintenance and general reserves building from the outset) and it is expected that LTC would also provide cover until the final grant payment is received.

The £4.0m arising from the Council's PWLB loan will be deposited in the Council's reserve, and in addition, a percentage of the Towns Fund will be paid over at Permission to Start, with further payments at specific milestones in the project.⁵⁶ Clearly, any additional funding secured for the project would ameliorate the negative cashflow position yet further.

Operational Income and Expenditure Calculations

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

- rental, from tenants and individual bookings
- café/ bar & catering
- merchandise & commissions
- grants, donations and sponsorships

Income is calculated initially using Moss King's 'eight-week plan' model, which maps out potential use of the building's spaces daily, and analyses income from the various bookings, multiplying them up to 50 weeks, allowing some downtime and contingency in the overall income forecasts.

The plan considers different periods of the year, such as school holidays, Christmas seasons etc, as well as recognising constraints in use of the building, such as concurrent, adjacent activities that may not be compatible. Finally, by creating a visual plan, there is the opportunity to test the credibility of the projections, which are more difficult to discern from a spreadsheet list alone.

⁵⁵ Interest rates are higher than when the loan was originally modelled. The exact amount to be taken out, and duration of the loan, will be determined by servicing costs – the commitment to ensure that loan repayments do not in themselves create an increase in council tax is non-negotiable.

⁵⁶ The exact milestones that trigger payments from the Towns Fund will be confirmed when the next stage agreement is signed, but the principle is that the funds will be paid over in advance. This further offsets the cashflow issues that would otherwise arise from NLHF funding being paid in arrears.

A sample of the eight week plan is here. The full plan and a key to the usage codes is at Appendix E.

Week 2	standard term-time week																				
	Monday			Tuesday			Wednesday			Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday		
Room	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve
Council Chamber								LTC						CC			CC	EV			
Meeting/Green Room 8 people					LTC									CCG							
Events space			ComBB			ComBB			ComBB				WP			Lcomm		PP	Sale		
Messy Space 20			WSC			Y		WSC	Y			WSB				HA	HA		WSE		
Meeting Rm Sth 15 people		subBB		subBB				BB					Comm	subBB							
Meeting Rm Nth 15 people	Comm		Comm				Comm				LTC										
Café & Garden																					
Gallery	Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex		
	Fitness class in events space (weekly);Adult weekly craft workshop (messy room); Knit & Natter north room; co-working meeting sth rm; monthly wellbeing club nth rm. Heritage-related exhibition in			LTC working group in green rm. Weekly Slimming Club in events space; Youth activity eve (Young carers/similar); co-working booking of meeting room sth.			Council committee meeting late pm; Youth group in eve. Business booking of meeting room sth. Weekly ballroom dancing class in events space. Community art/craft demonstration in messv.			Adult commercial craft course in evening. LTC committee meeting MR nrth			Civil ceremony with green room, wedding reception. community group using meeting rm sth; co-working use of meeting room			Civil ceremony (only) in chamber; Recital in council chamber; Community fundraiser in events space daytime; Private party in events space; Heritage Activity for families in messv			Craft Fair/Antiques Fair in events space; CAFÉ OPEN for event. One off adult craft course (jewellery, stained glass, Christmas wreath with catering package etc); events space being cleared		

Cost/income 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. Year 3 cost/income workings (the first 'mature' year of operation) are used for our income and expenditure five-year forecast, years 1 & 2, and years 4 & 5 are teed off this baseline.

Because of the recovery of VAT on the capital project, it is our understanding that VAT would then be charged once operational. In the following cost/income statement, VAT is netted out where it is known to be wholly applicable (so, for example, merchandise income and costs are both ex-VAT).

Where VAT has to be charged it is offset with input VAT on supplies, but several areas of expenditure in the Town Hall either have low rates of VAT (eg utilities) or VAT is not applicable, such as on staff costs. We therefore assume a liability of 11% VAT *could* be payable, but specialist advice will be sought.

At this stage we have not conducted a full calculation of what the VAT burden would be (as noted above, café/catering/bar income is already expressed net of VAT) and specialist advice will be needed to help develop a full pricing model. However, if it were decided there is insufficient price elasticity to allow an increase in rates to cover all of the VAT burden, then there would be a reduction in net income.⁵⁷ This could be partially offset in the earlier years, when business is still building up, by reducing the contributions to the maintenance fund. This is not sustainable long-term, however, as it is crucial to develop an adequate fund to continue maintaining the building into the future.

Summary Income/Expenditure Sheet

The spreadsheet overleaf shows the forecast income and expenditure for the first eight years of operation (thus covering five years after the funding from NLHF ends). It is based on Year 3 predictions,

⁵⁷ There will be price elasticity in elements such as the wedding room hire, but community bookings are more likely to have a 'cap' on what is affordable for them, in which case the VAT burden would be borne by the business.

which are then scaled back for years 1 and 2 (~70% and 50% respectively). Café income is reduced in year 1, 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 lesser extent, as many costs are fixed, or relatively so, eg with the exception of some catering staff, most staff would be brought on under contract for fixed hours.

Note that event/bookings-related income is based on the eight week plan, scaled up to cover 50 weeks. Whilst this provides for some contingency on income, it is also a slight understatement. In contrast, the majority of costs are based on a full year. More detailed cost and income assessments will be undertaken as the business model is further refined, and pricing plans set, during the next stage.

Since the last stage, we have taken into account the impact of VAT on the café (which is now run directly), doubled our utilities costs reflecting both increases in rates and the café usage, and increased our staff costs to cover both an additional part time role (marketing/co-working assistant) and the Heritage Manager working full time.

LOWESTOFT TOWN HALL - OPERATIONAL FINANCIALS YR 1 - 8 (five years post funding)												
	Oct - Sep 2023/24	Oct - Sep 2024/25	Oct - Sep 2025/26	Oct - Sep 2026/27	Oct - Sep 2027/28	Oct - Sep 2028/29	Oct - Sep 2029/30	Oct - Sep 2030/31	Oct - Sep 2031/32	Oct - Sep 2032/33	Oct - Sep 2033/34	Oct - Sep 2034/35
Income	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
Bookings/room hire	50,590	90,261	128,944	135,391	142,160	149,269	156,732	164,569				
Events - ticket sales & fees	20,860	30,574	42,230	44,342	46,559	48,887	51,331	53,897				
Café, bar & hospitality	155,634	217,888	311,269	326,832	343,174	360,332	378,349	397,266				
Rental	114,310	127,054	146,170	149,356	152,701	156,214	159,902	163,775				
Merchandise	6,300	9,800	14,000	14,700	15,435	16,207	17,017	17,868				
Miscellaneous grants & donations	52,620	63,558	64,683	20,988	16,187	16,396	14,116	14,347				
Total Income	400,314	539,134	707,295	691,608	716,216	747,304	777,447	811,722				
Expenditure	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
Staff & volunteers	238,520	294,408	347,857	356,842	374,684	393,418	413,089	433,743				
Other costs	79,630	99,976	131,381	140,534	147,561	154,939	162,686	170,820				
Overheads	133,029	138,208	143,685	152,119	155,725	159,512	163,487	167,662				
Total Expenditure	451,179	532,592	622,923	649,495	677,970	707,869	739,262	772,225				
NET POSITION	£ (50,866)	£ 6,541	£ 84,372	£ 42,113	£ 38,246	£ 39,435	£ 38,185	£ 39,496				
Operating profit (ie before cont to maint reserve)	£ (10,866)	£ 36,541	£ 108,372	£ 68,513	£ 64,646	£ 65,835	£ 64,585	£ 65,896				
Cumulative position (net of maint reserve)	£ (50,866)	£ (44,324)	£ 40,048	£ 82,160	£ 120,406	£ 159,841	£ 198,026	£ 237,522				
Annual contribution to maintenance reserve	40,000	30,000	24,000	26,400	26,400	26,400	26,400	26,400				
Use of reserve for longer term/major maintenance*			(4,333)		(48,250)		(4,333)					
Cumulative balance of maintenance reserve	£ 40,000	£ 70,000	£ 89,667	£ 116,067	£ 94,217	£ 116,283	£ 142,683	£ 169,083				
*(refer to Management & Maintenance plan for details)												
Net 'cash in the bank'	£ (10,866)	£ 25,676	£ 129,714	£ 198,227	£ 214,623	£ 276,125	£ 340,709	£ 406,606				

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.⁵⁸ A costed management and maintenance plan has been developed during this stage of the project (see separate document), covering the building and interpretation, and this has been used to inform the operational financials.

⁵⁸ 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. Renewal, to attract repeat visits, is also essential. Similarly, some items that are used by children/young people may have a shorter life expectancy than other exhibits. PLB's RIBA3 interpretation plan identifies maintenance, and the likely timescales and costs for renewal/replacement, so that budgetary provisions can be made.

Within these financials there is an allocation annually to a maintenance reserve, taken from the residual balance from the operational maintenance and consumables budget, initially set at £40k pa. 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. This will enable a reserve to be built for larger maintenance and repairs: by year 8, taking into account maintenance and renewals that occur less frequently than yearly, there should be a £170k reserve fund to support more major maintenance.

There is also an operational reserve fund that will accumulate through annual surpluses (net of contributions to the earmarked maintenance reserve). This will provide necessary reserves for business continuity but could also be used as a source of funding, subject to retaining sufficient funds to cover at least a quarter's operating expenses, to contribute towards major renewals, replacements and development.

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 £84k. However, it should be noted that within this figure is £51k of grant income that will end in that year. This funding covers the operational costs of activities, including a manager to lead activities, two traineeships, professional fees and materials. Therefore, it is effectively from year 4, when that funding ceases, that a truer picture of the financial performance can be seen.

In year 4, there is a forecast net profit of £42k. This arises partly from the potential termination of the heritage traineeship role (although the Heritage Manager role is retained, and activities continue at previous years' levels). The opportunity to continue the heritage traineeship 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.

8. 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	13.5 FTE	2.6 during delivery stage; + 8 at start of live operations; 13.5 total by end of Yr 3 of operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Payroll data from Town Council identifying new appointments
	Construction jobs FTE	73	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	Register of businesses using hot desking facility on a regular basis (ie members or regular booking at least twice monthly)
	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 (assumes c. 20k today)	60,000	25,000 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 2024? See footfall forecasts in appendices
	Increased tourist numbers on High Street	20,000 pa on High Street	10,000 by end yr 1 live 20,000 pa end yr 3 live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitors to the heritage area/TIC, measured by sample clicker counts Enquiries at TIC (register)
	Increased visitors at other museums	10% increase other museums		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased visitors at local museums (their counts) Baseline: existing other museum entry figures
	New floorspace created	490m ²	Start of year 1 of live operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation of completion of build
	Individuals Supported	50	By end year 2 of live operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported via the co-working hub (evidenced by register of users)

Outcome	Output/ Indicator	Target Measure	By When	Monitoring Approach /Evidence/ Baseline where applicable
	Private businesses supported indirectly	25 supplier contracts set up 10 local businesses report improved performance 20 local businesses more confident	25 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 2023) 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 2023) Count of vacant shops
	Public sector funding leveraged	~£4.0m+	End of construction project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LTC's expenditure records for the project/PWLB loan documentation
	Apprenticeships in place	3	Yr 2 of project: heritage trainee 2 yrs, repeated; Yr 1 live operations: admin apprentice running, for 2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trainees started*, payroll evidence plus college registration confirmation Heritage (1x2 years, repeated) and business admin (1 x 2 years)
	Job Placements (hospitality/ catering)	12	4 in yr 1 of live operations, repeated yrs 2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Café payroll Number of placements gaining Level 2 Food Hygiene certificate Feedback from job placements' exit interviews
People will have developed skills	Apprenticeships x 3	3	1 heritage in development; repeat in live running. 1 x business admin in 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 Potential evidence of qualification/training completion (subject to individual's performance).
	Conservation skills	10	Year 2 of delivery (construction project)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation from main contractor Experience in conservation skills eg lime plastering.

Outcome	Output/ Indicator	Target Measure	By When	Monitoring Approach /Evidence/ Baseline where applicable
	Volunteers trained	50 people trained	10 in project stage and 40 in live yrs 1 - 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteers trained in heritage area support, collections management, activity support, film making, TIC etc Volunteer attendance records
	Brownfield land developed	0.13ha	Start of year 1 of live operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building and land ready for occupation Courtyard garden planted
	Increased local pride/positivity	20% increase in positive feedback	End of year 5 of operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local people report they feel more positive about their area Baseline: Thinking Place research Baseline: local survey of attitudes; focus groups? Advice from evaluation consultant when appointed.
Local area will be a better place to live, work or visit	People from lower socio-economic groups participating in activities	2,491 instances of participation	171 in development stage; 720 delivery stage; 750 yr 1 live ops; 800 yr2 live ops; 800 yr 3 live ops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instances of participation per activity stream (FISH activities, employment skills programme, work placements) Sample evaluation surveys Data from engagement partners' records
A wider range of people will be engaged in heritage	Under 25s and over65s in larger intergenerational projects – social cohesion	2000 instances of participation	By year 1 live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instances of participation for each age group participating in <i>Your Lowestoft Memories</i> and <i>All Day and All of the Night</i> intergenerational projects Data from community engagement partner
Wellbeing – people will have greater wellbeing	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
Heritage will be identified and better explained	Town Hall heritage gallery & secondary interpretation delivered LTC collection digitised Temporary exhibition programme delivered, showcasing local history and artefacts	Feedback that people have learnt new information from exhibitions/on line content	Heritage Gallery By live yr1 LTC Collection- by live yr3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heritage gallery and secondary interpretation installed All LTC digitised and available online Sample evaluation surveys

Outcome	Output/ Indicator	Target Measure	By When	Monitoring Approach /Evidence/ Baseline where applicable
People will have learnt about heritage leading to a change in ideas and actions	People who haven't previously or rarely visit heritage attractions visit TH	200 300 400	Yr 1 live Yr 2 live Yr 3 live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sample evaluation surveys
A positive environmental impact has been made	New greenspace created	180m ²	End of construction project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New courtyard garden, pond and planting installed Baseline = zero currently
	Passive design	Natural lighting & ventilation in design	Design approval RIBA4; End of construction project End of construction project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation from architect /QS Shown in RIBA 4 designs and tender docs. Native garden plants and shrubs, sourced from bio-secure certificated nurseries (receipt evidence)
	Active design	High-efficiency electrical & mechanical systems in place		
	Renewable energy	PV panels; air source heat pumps; mechanical ventilation with heat recovery		
	'Green' materials and finishes	Environmentally responsible suppliers		
	Landscaping	Native garden plants and shrubs		
	Water management	Pervious surfaces where applicable		

9. BUSINESS & PROJECT RISKS

During the development stage, a wide range of surveys have been undertaken in order to understand better the building's structure and condition, and therefore to reduce risk for the main construction project.

The surveys undertaken to date include:

- Full measured building survey
- Asbestos R&D survey
- Ground penetrating radar (GPR) to determine the below ground layout and the location of services. (These are essential to inform the structural design for the building work to be undertaken on the currently vacant land.)
- Roof drone survey to determine exact structure and condition including rainwater management
- Degradation survey, with short term action plan
- Preliminary ecological assessment
- Opening up works to identify underlying structure and condition within the building
- Ground investigations, including boreholes to identify ground make up down to 30m, soakaway testing, contaminated land assessment etc
- Drainage survey including CCTV and jet-washing
- Detailed UXO assessment

The information arising from the work has informed the design process and has therefore reduced many of the risks and given greater cost certainty.

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 and reported to the Project Committee, as they have been during the development stage. At each stage of the project, each risk is allocated to an owner, who will be responsible for monitoring and managing that risk.

All risks will be scored and reported monthly – or more frequently, if problems begin to arise. A risk will be escalated 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.

Any risk that moves to a high impact combined with high likelihood (ie score of 16 or greater) 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 two sections: 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.

Delivery Project Risks

RISK	PROB.	IMPACT	SCORE	EXISTING CONTROLS/ACTION REQUIRED
PROJECT RISKS – DELIVERY STAGE				
Tenders come back higher than budget	3	5	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a good contingency budget allocated to the capital works elements, part of which is to cover some of this risk. - Additional funding will be sought prior to PTS, with the aim of reducing LTC's contribution, and increasing the financial contingency fund. - A value engineering exercise would be undertaken with the lowest tender looking at ways to source cheaper alternative materials, sub-contractors etc. This would cause a delay to the start of the project.
Construction project takes longer than planned	4	3	12	<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 separate risk) or changes to requirements (which should be mitigated by full client signoff before tender).
Delays to decision making result in programme delays and contractual issues	3	4	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the current project 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 could add significant cost. - If delays to decision making impact on the main contractor's ability to deliver the project on time, significant contractual issues could arise. - Will be essential to delegate implementation of the project to the Project Committee, within the scope of works and budget previously approved by Full Council and enable the project manager to manage the project day-to-day without constant referral back to the Town Council. - A similarly streamlined approach will be required for timely settlement of invoices within the contractual period.
Capital costs overrun the budget	2	5	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elemental cost plan developed by QS, reviewed by architect and by experienced capital project manager so risk reduced

RISK	PROB.	IMPACT	SCORE	EXISTING CONTROLS/ACTION REQUIRED
PROJECT RISKS – DELIVERY STAGE				
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 24% contingency and inflation provision included in budget - 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.
Site issues, eg archaeology, contaminated land, asbestos, UXOs	2	5	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contingency in capital budget to cover these. - Most key surveys have been undertaken in development stage, reducing the risk. No evidence of contaminated land. - UXO medium/high risk. Mitigation strategy in place. - Major impact would be a delay to the project, with archaeology having the highest time delay, but medium risk. However, no archaeological finds were detected during the surveys conducted in May/June 23. - If archaeological, little can be done bar negotiate the time allocated for investigation and use as further community engagement exercise
Harder to reach groups do not engage as intended (lower levels, some groups absent)	2	4	8	<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. - Development stage has identified some of the challenges and new ways to address this will be used during - Risk more likely to arise re casual use of Town Hall. - Engage with partners/stakeholders to understand causes. - Introduce more attractive pricing/offers/concessions if barriers are financial - Review programming of events, groups to increase interest - If barrier = 'not for likes of us' (as identified in development stage) work with partners to stage free events/give-aways to get people to enter building
A shortage of key skills or staff	2	4	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Majority of team running delivery stage are external consultants, reporting through a project manager to the Committee. - Project Committee/Council will appoint based on tender responses, which should identify suitably experienced/qualified staff - Staff appointment at delivery stage is Heritage Manager and Heritage trainee; if unable to appoint

RISK	PROB.	IMPACT	SCORE	EXISTING CONTROLS/ACTION REQUIRED
PROJECT RISKS – DELIVERY STAGE				
				staff, would increase 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.
VAT liability is incurred on some/all of the project	1	5	5	- Specialist advice has been taken, and option to tax will be invoked. - In the unlikely event that VAT is incurred, the Council would have to fund the gap

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 Town Hall manager along with the Town Clerk, and raised to Full Council once they reached a certain risk score (to be agreed by Full Council).

RISK	PROB.	IMPACT	SCORE	EXISTING CONTROLS/ACTION REQUIRED
OPERATIONAL RISKS				
Café fails to perform	3	5	15	- An experienced café manager should be hired to run the inhouse service - Main impact would be financial (ie reduced income, potential inability to reduce costs to sufficient degree). - Quality issue would be problematic, esp if it is hygiene related, and would reflect badly on Town Council. - Option may remain to outsource (lease) café to a third partner (VAT permitting) which might result in lower income but would pass risk to third party. This will depend on whether it is permissible within subsidy control regulations.
Operating income is lower than anticipated	3	4	12	- Reasonable spread of income generators (parties, weddings, co-working, room hire, café etc) reduces risk - 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. - Some costs are volume related, so impact of lower income would be mitigated to an extent/costs could be saved. - Marketing/promo required to address footfall issue

RISK	PROB.	IMPACT	SCORE	EXISTING CONTROLS/ACTION REQUIRED
OPERATIONAL RISKS				
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Council support for cashflow would enable a longer period to be tolerated (assuming this does not infringe subsidy control regulations). - Alternative uses for some parts of building to be sought – eg longer term office rental
Operating costs are higher than projected	3	4	12	<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? - Seek sponsors to support events and activities.
Demand for key income generators is lower than predicted, or demand has changed/gone by the time project goes live	2	3	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Predictions via 8 week plan are generally modest and achievable hence lower risk. - Alternative uses for designated spaces would be sought, eg designer/makers occupy messy space; co-working space or meeting room rented out as office - Reassess pricing to ensure this is not a barrier/offr better incentives to regular bookers. - Reduced income would need to be offset by reduced costs (some are variable linked to activity anyway)
Registrars do not move into the building	1	5	5	<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 and footfall. - Now a low probability, because Registrars have specified their exact requirements and have had them met in the designs. - Key element will be agreement on acceptable pricing for rental plus contribution to overheads/services. - Additional marketing undertaken 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 co-working, to which it is adjacent.
Those groups under served by heritage do not engage as intended (lower	1	4	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategy for activity-related engagement with underserved groups is sound, involving partnership working in most cases, with experienced partners who already have relationships/customer base.

RISK	PROB.	IMPACT	SCORE	EXISTING CONTROLS/ACTION REQUIRED
OPERATIONAL RISKS				
levels, some groups absent)				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - During the delivery stage, work will have been continuously evaluated, and lessons learned so probability is reduced from that in delivery risks - Risk more likely to arise re casual use of Town Hall. - Continue to engage with partners to understand barriers and work to remove them - Introduce more attractive pricing/offers/concessions if barriers are financial - Review programming of events, groups to increase interest
Management responsibility for TH is not adequate	1	4	4	<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 >£600k by year 3 is not necessarily within a Town Clerk's expertise/skill set and is not within their job description. - Governance review identified need for experienced venue manager to run Town Hall, with assistant and marketing, plus full support team. - Skills review will be undertaken prior to opening to identify any specific training needs or capacity gaps

10. 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, Monitoring & Measurement

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.⁵⁹

During the early part of the delivery stage, work will be undertaken to repeat some of this work (eg this might include People & Places' business/town centre research, for the High Street). Additional 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 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

In the development project, Dr Harriet Foster was appointed to undertake evaluation of the pilot activities. Her report is appended to our audience and activity plan. Her expertise has helped to refine the plans for evaluation in delivery and into operations. In particular, the development stage work demonstrated that it is helpful to have evaluation closely integrated with activities, as a core part of delivery, as it enables changes to be implemented rapidly if issues are detected. This approach will be replicated in the next stage.

⁵⁹ 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*.

Building on the learning from the development phase evaluation, we will procure an external project evaluator to create evaluation tools to assess the overall impact of our project against heritage, community, and economic outcomes.

The evaluator will look at how the following intended outcomes have been delivered:

- The project involves a wider range of people.
- Heritage will be in a better condition.
- Heritage will be identified and better explained.
- People will have developed skills.
- People will have learned about heritage, leading to change in ideas and actions.
- People will have greater wellbeing.
- The local area will be a better place to live, work or visit.
- The local economy will be boosted.

As part of the project, we aim to engage with underserved communities, and we will be looking to appoint an external evaluator that has demonstratable experience and awareness of making evaluation as accessible as possible. The evaluation will also be presented in a visually accessible way at the end of project utilising media such as infographics, pictures, and video.

Through a competitive procurement process we will be looking for an external evaluator that has previous experience of working on a NLHF funded project and is familiar with local government processes.

The external evaluator will conduct a mid-term review to monitor the project and impact against the intended outcomes, to confirm what has been achieved to date, identifying what has been particularly successful, difficulties which have been faced, areas where delivery has not been achieved in line with expectations and an assessment of value for money. This will allow us to modify our approach as necessary, should we find that there are areas where we are falling short of our targets.

The external evaluator will engage participants, Councillors, staff, Project Committee, and volunteers in the evaluation process through workshops and regular communication regarding the benefits of effective and creative evaluation as well as its intended outcomes.

The end of project evaluation will examine the extent to which the vision, aims and objectives of the project have been realised, where the original ambitions and targets have been met (or exceeded), and where (and why) there may have been a shortfall. The evaluation will tell the stories of the impact of the project at an individual and at a community level. The report will provide LTC and the Project Team learning opportunities in terms of whether things should have been done differently and areas of success that could be developed further forming part of project legacy.

A Town Centre Baseline Report was undertaken by People and Places in December 2019 that looked at occupancy, foot fall and business confidence in Lowestoft High Street. Our plan is to repeat this survey again to measure the impact of Town Hall project during the capital phase into delivery. Furthermore, there is a Benefits Cost Ratio analysis of the Town Hall as part of the Towns Fund.

Learning and end of project impact will be shared with other local stakeholders through our Place Board, Ambassador programme, Coastal Communities Network and Towns Hub and other strategic

groups. We will have a communications plan that will set out how we share our learning to different audiences and stakeholders. The evaluation will be presented as a report for stakeholders, and an accessible version for communities.

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
- 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.

Review and Action

As noted above, in the development stage, where a range of pilot activities were run⁶⁰ (some flowing through into delivery and live) specific evaluation was undertaken by the independent project evaluator, Dr Harriet Foster, to understand what works and what does not, in terms of engaging with the hardest-to-reach groups. The lessons learnt have been used to inform and improve the engagement offer in the delivery stage. Input will continue to be received during delivery from project partner and incorporated into assessments.

In delivery, and subsequently in live running, the project, and then 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 Committee. 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.

⁶⁰ See activity & audience plan for details.

11. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Our high-level timetable for the overall project forecasts a live opening date during the autumn/winter of 2025 based on a 16-month construction period. This is assuming that enabling works are commissioned early on, in advance of the main contract, thus increasing cost certainty and reducing the overall main construction period.

Note that this allows no time for value engineering, or for issues ranging from structural/design problems, below ground archaeological or UXO discoveries etc or supply delays, and therefore is a best case.

OVERALL PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN	
MILESTONE	WHEN
• Stage 2 grant awarded	September 23
• Procure QS, contract admin	December 23
• Enabling contract awarded, strip out and demolitions underway	February 24
• Permission to Start (PTS) signed off	February 24
• Activity action plan begins	January 24
• Procure evaluator; advertise Heritage Manager role	January 24
• RIBA4 drawings complete	March 24
• Tender process underway	May/June 24
• Tender decision, main contractor appointed	June/July 24
• Work begins onsite	July/August 24
• Works complete * depends on contractor's timescale	September/October 25
• Interpretation installation complete	October 25
• Final fit out (fixtures), soft operation of TH	November 25
• Open	December 25

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - BIBLIOGRAPHY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

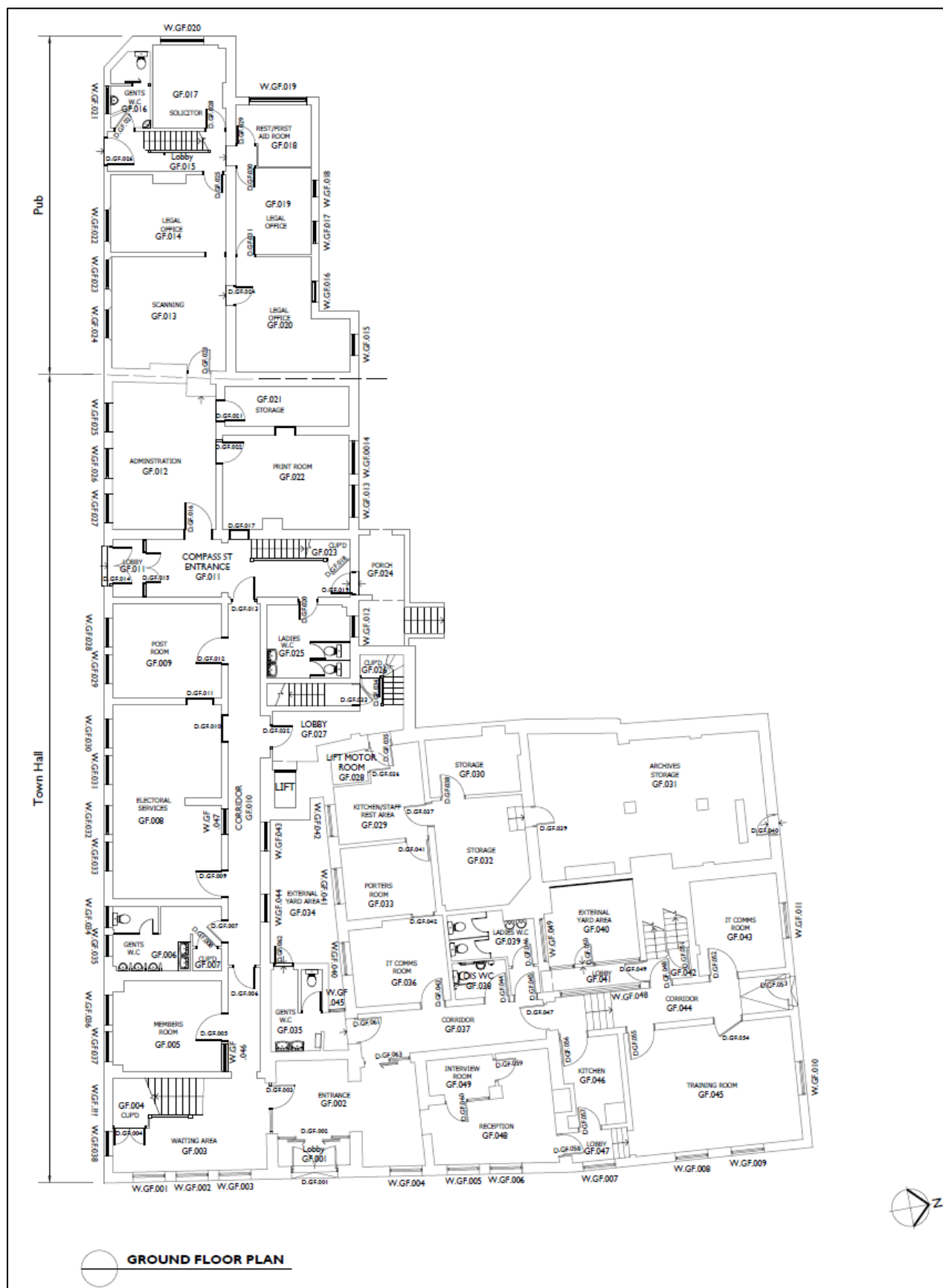
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 Tricolor Associates, *The Ness: Activity and Audience Plan* (June 2019)

The following individuals and organisations have contributed to our research and/or to the development of this business plan. We are grateful to them for their time, expertise and enthusiasm.

Access Community Trust	John Ellerby, Most Easterly Community
Alan Baxter Associates (CMP)	Joshua Freemantle, Sunrise Studios
Alan Green, Lowestoft Town Council	Keith Patience, Lowestoft Town Council
Andrew Morton Associates, QS	Laura Williams, Architectural Heritage Fund
Andy Pearce, Lowestoft Town Council	Melissa Mathews, Suffolk Libraries
Benjamin Porter, East Suffolk Council	Nicole Andrews, Suffolk County Council
Christopher Meek, Lowestoft Town Council	People, Landscape, Buildings (interpretation plan & design)
Colin Butler, Lowestoft Town Council	Patricia Day, Association for Suffolk Museums
Connie Burchell (catering consultant)	Phil Aves, Lowestoft Rising LCEP
Darren Newman, East Suffolk Council	Richard Ainslie (wedding venue advice)
East Suffolk Council	Sarah Foote, Lowestoft Town Council
Edward James, Historic England	Shona Bendix, Lowestoft Town Council
HAT Projects (architects/design team lead)	Sonia Barker, Lowestoft Town Council
Dr Harriet Foster (evaluation)	Wendy Brooks, Lowestoft Town Council
Helen Johnson, East Suffolk Council	
Jayne Knight, Suffolk County Council	

APPENDIX B - EXISTING LAYOUTS

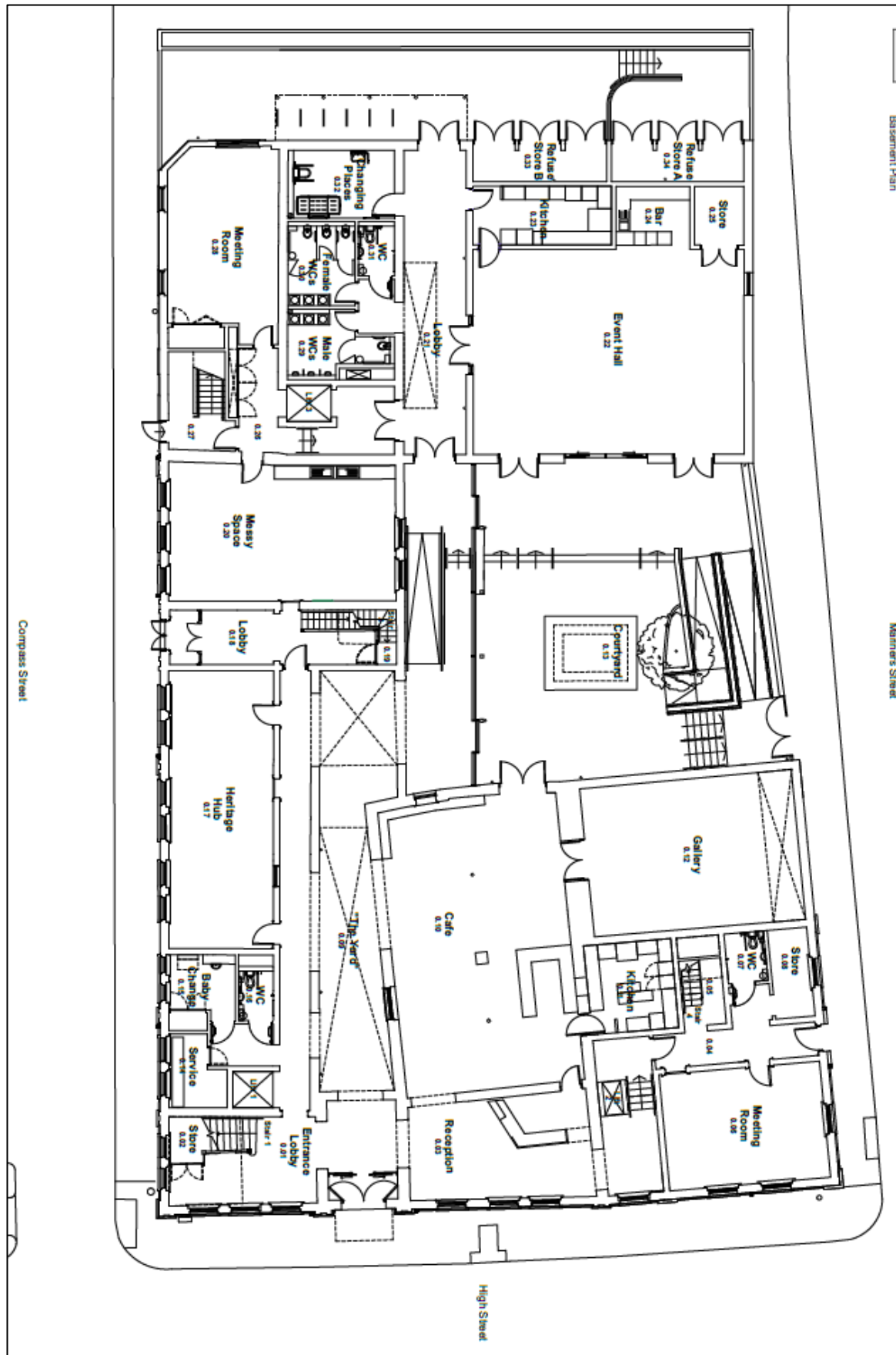
The current layout of the Town Hall shows a complex network of small and subdivided rooms, a record of the changing requirements of the users of the building, particularly in more recent years.

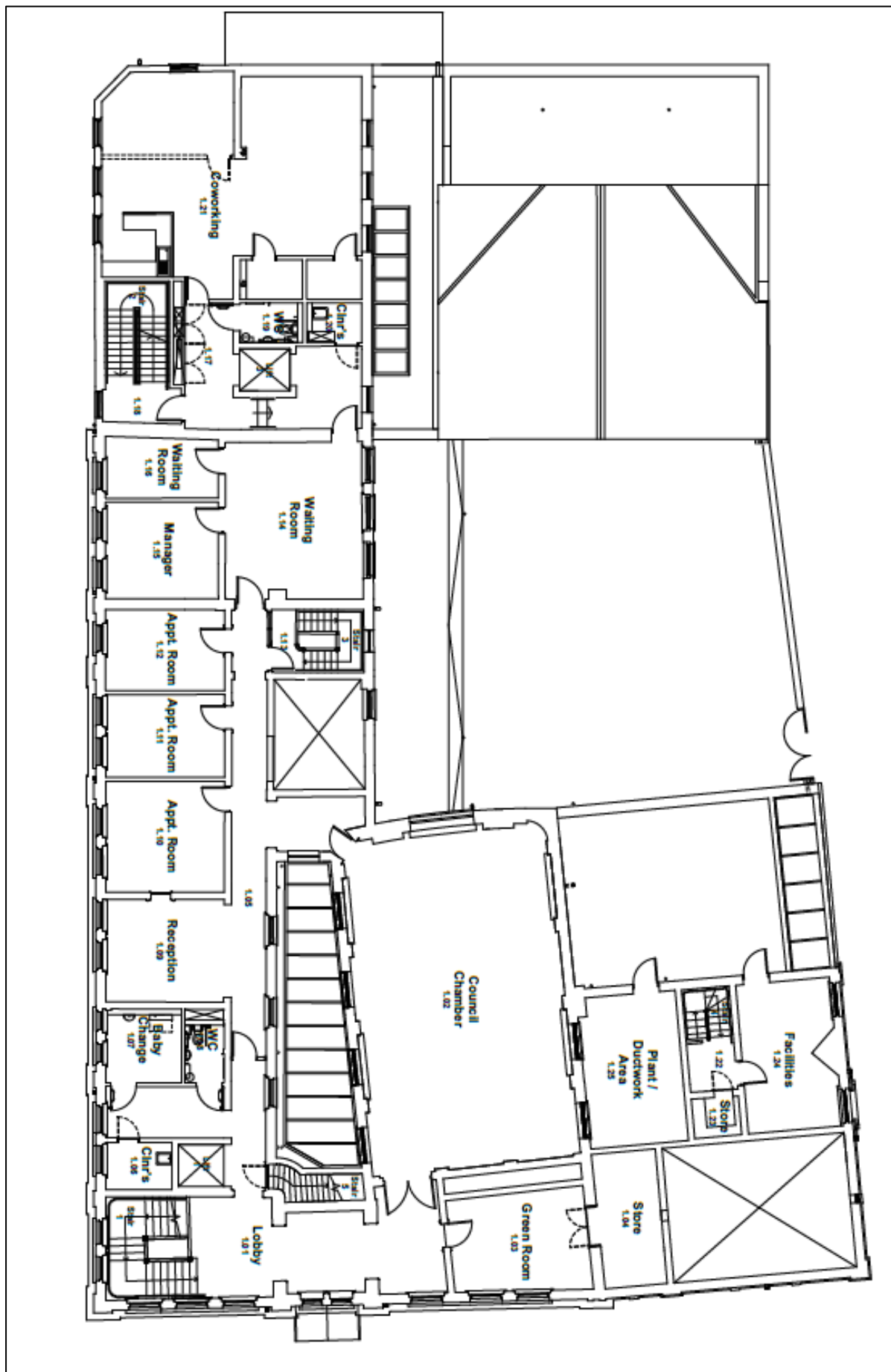


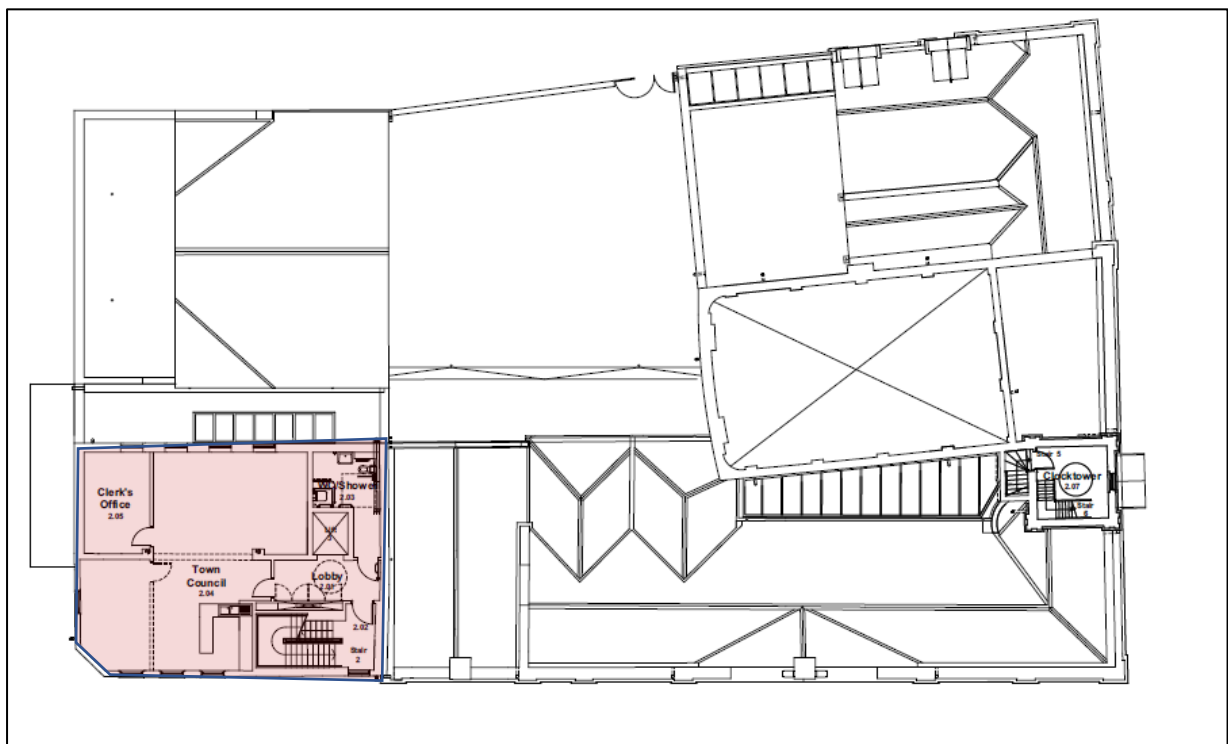
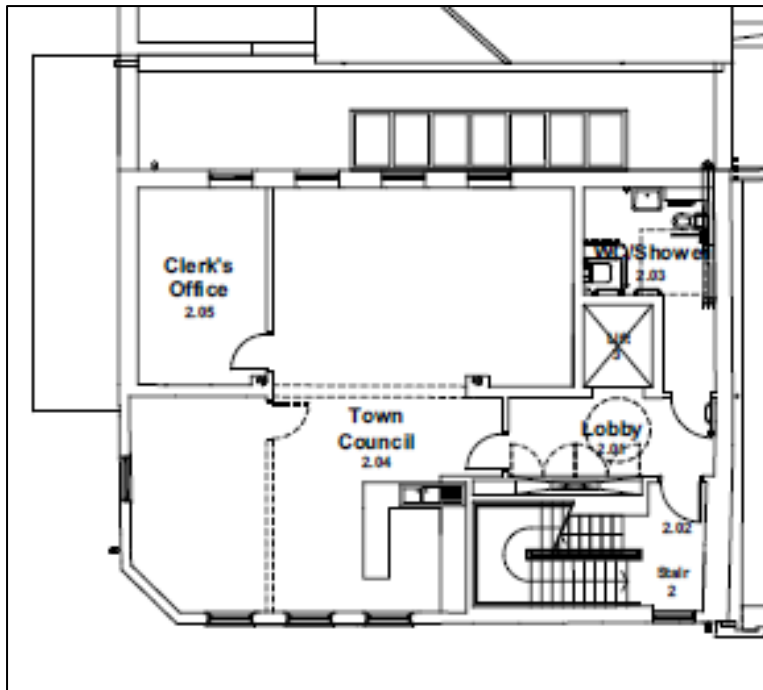


APPENDIX C- PROPOSED LAYOUTS

These simplified floorplans show HAT Projects' proposals for the ground, first and new second floor.







The top cropped image shows the 2nd floor (Lowestoft Town Council offices), which is the only occupied section of the building at this level. Its location on the south-west corner, can be seen on the image beneath it, highlighted in red.

APPENDIX D - FOOTFALL PROJECTIONS

Footfall projections are calculated using the 8 week plan, multiplied up to 50 weeks, averaging the number of attendees per session. Note that these are NOT unique visitors but are an estimate of the number of people who come to the building each day.

FOOTFALL PROJECTIONS					
Taking year 3 list of events, and allocating average number of attendees per event.					
		Avg number/ session	Total visitors p/a		
Income from Hire					
Small Community Groups/Clubs	175	5	875		
Large Community Groups/Clubs	56	25	1406		
Business bookings for community	150	20	3000		
Workshops for community	138	15	2063		
Commercially run workshops	75	15	1125		
Special Workshops eg Xmas, Easter	13	15	188		
Business/Commercial Bookings	106	8	850		
Large business booking	38	30	1125		
Subsidised business booking	69	3	206		
Conference	6	60	360		
Private parties	31	70	2188		
Funerals	13	60	750		
Wedding Reception	6	60	375		
Extended Wedding Reception	13	60	750		
Midweek wedding reception	6	50	313		
Civil Ceremony	44	40	1750		
Civil Ceremony midweek	25	40	1000		
Green room for civil ceremony	31	0	0		
Citizenship ceremonies	2	30	60		
Heritage Activities	75	15	1125		
Events	38	50	1875		
subsidised events	13	40	500		
Sales/Fairs etc	19	200	3750		
Special Sales	6	300	1800		
Youth	119	15	1781		
LTC meetings	144	10	1438		
Café evening events	12	40	480		
Café run beer/gin fest/similar	1	600	600		
Free sessions	12	15	180		
Community Exhibitions	38	15	563		
Heritage Exhibitions/Museums	330	60	19800		
Registrars' general appointments	2500	2	5000		
Council general meetings	60	2	120		
Shop/TIC only	300	15	4500		
				61,894	
Footfall relating to permanent users					
Council	230	10	2300		
Registrars	230	11	2530		
Co-working space			3975		
Café staff	340	3	1020		
				9,825	
Café (general)	340	50	8500		
				8,500	
					80,219

APPENDIX E - 8 WEEK PLAN

The 8-week plan maps a variety of activities to test spatially what is feasible/reasonable. This is then multiplied up to 50 weeks, to give an approximate annual use, for income and footfall calculations.

Week 1 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		Conf			CCM						CC							
Meeting/Green Room		LTC															CCG							
Events space			ComBB			ComBB	Conf	ComBB								WPX								
Messy Space			WSC	WSC		Y			Y	WSB	WSB		WSC	Free		WSC								
Meeting Rm Sth		BB						BB																
Meeting Rm Nth	Comm		Comm				Comm		Comm	LTC														
Café & Garden															CafEv									
Gallery		Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex				
	LTC working group in green rm: Fitness class in events space (weekly); Adult weekly craft workshop (messy room); Knit & Natter north room; business booking meeting sth; monthly book club nth; monthly wellbeing club nth; Heritage-related exhibition in gallery for 3 weeks			Business booking in Chamber, daytime, catering. Full Council in Chamber eve. Weekly Slimming Club in events space; Community craft workshop am; Youth activity eve (Young carers/similar) messy space.			Business conference in Chamber & events space; Youth group in eve. Business booking of large meeting space. Heritage group (community) in evening. Weekly ballroom dancing class in events space.			Midweek civil ceremony in Chamber pre commercial fortnightly art class in messy space			Community Arts workshop am, events space being set up for wedding party; free arts/craft workshop focused on wellbeing/loneliness; Evening Café event in café & garden			Extend wedding party booking (Fri eve to Sun am). Ceremony in Chamber; Green Room booked for bride. Garden partially closed to public outside events space			CAFÉ CLOSED (winter/offpeak)					
Week 2 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								LTC						CC			CC	EV						
Meeting/Green Room 8 people					LTC									CCG										
Events space			ComBB			ComBB			ComBB					WP		Leomm	PP	Sale						
Messy Space 20			WSC			Y		WSC	Y			WSB				HA	HA		WSE					
Meeting Rm Sth 15 people		subBB		subBB				BB					Comm	subBB										
Meeting Rm Nth 15 people	Comm		Comm				Comm				LTC													
Café & Garden																								
Gallery		Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex				
	Fitness class in events space (weekly); Adult weekly craft workshop (messy room); Knit & Natter north room; co-working meeting sth; monthly wellbeing club nth; Heritage-related exhibition in			LTC working group in green rm. Weekly Slimming Club in events space; Youth activity eve (Young carers/similar); co-working booking of meeting room sth.			Council committee meeting late pm; Youth group in eve. Business booking of meeting room sth. Weekly ballroom dancing class in events space. Community art/craft demonstration in messy.			Adult commercial craft course in evening. LTC committee meeting MR nth			Civil ceremony with green room, wedding reception, community group using meeting rm sth; co-working use of meeting room			Civil ceremony (only) in chamber; Recital in council chamber; Community fundraiser in events space; Private party in events space; Heritage Activity for families in messy			Craft Fair/Antiques Fair in events space; CAFÉ OPEN for event. One off adult craft course (jewellery, stained glass, Christmas wreath with catering package etc); events space being cleared					
Week 3 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					Leomm			LTC				CCM					CC							
Meeting/Green Room 8 people																	CCG							
Events space	Leomm			ComBB		ComBB		SubEV	ComBB							WPX								
Messy Space 20			WSC			Y			Y	WSB	WSB		Free			WSC	WSC							
Meeting Rm Sth 15 people					BB			LTC		subBB	subBB													
Meeting Rm Nth 15 people	Comm		Comm			LTC		Comm																
Café & Garden																								
Gallery		Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex				
	Local Historical Society talk & meeting in Chamber. Fitness group in events space; Adult weekly craft workshop (community) messy space; Knit and Natter; local community group meeting in meeting			Large LTC committee council chamber; Youth; Slimming Club; business booking in meeting rm sth; LTC committee.			Monthly tea dance (subsidised); Ballroom dancing class; Youth in messy space; LTC committee meeting rm sth.			Fortnightly adult art class; business booking in meeting room			Free arts/craft workshop for older local residents; Business booking in chamber; business booking in small room. Extended wedding - events space set up in eve.			Extend wedding party booking (Fri eve to Sun am). Ceremony in Chamber; Green Room booked one-off arts/craft workshop (community) in messy space			CAFÉ CLOSED (winter closing); wedding party access to clear up.					
Week 4 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									LTC			EV		CC			CC							
Meeting/Green Room 8 people										LTC														
Events space		PPF	ComBB			ComBB			ComBB						PP	Leomm			PP					
Messy Space 20	WSC		WSC			Y			Y	HA			Y			HA	HA							
Meeting Rm Sth 15 people								LTC				Comm	subBB											
Meeting Rm Nth 15 people	Comm			BB	BB		Comm	subBB			LTC													
Café & Garden												Cowork												
Gallery	Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex		
	Funeral in events space; Knit & natter; Children's creative workshop, messy space am; Community exhibition in gallery for two weeks.			Slimming Club; Youth; business booking all day in mtg rm sth			LTC Extraordinary meeting in CC; Weekly ballroom dancing class; Youth group in evening; LTC committee; co-working use of meeting rm nth.			Event in Council chamber - eg talk by local expert, historian, celebrity etc. Community heritage activity messy space. LTC committee meetings in green rm & meeting rm nth.			Midweek civil ceremony; Youth all day/evening activity in messy room. Private party events space. Coworker use of meeting room sth.			Civil ceremony only. LCEP/similar conference in main events space; Heritage activity for families in messy room (school holiday);			Private christening party afternoon; CAFÉ OPEN					

WP/PP/WW/PP	Wedding Reception/ Extended Wed/midweek rate	Special = 2 day event, big rms & outside
CC	Civil Ceremony	
CCG	Green room use for ceremony	
CCM	Civil Ceremony Midweek rate	
Comm	Community Group Booking	
Leomm	Large Community Booking	
Com BB	Community benefit business	
WSB	Arts/Crafts Class/Workshop (Business)	
WSE	Arts/Crafts Class/Workshop (Community)	
Free	Arts/Crafts Workshop with catering package	
subBB	Subsidised business booking (coworking)	
BB	Business Booking	
PPF	Funeral	
PP	Private Party	
BBX	Large business booking (20+ delegate)	
Conf	Conference (Chamber for meeting, eve)	
LTC	Council Meeting	
EV/SubEV	Event/subsidised event	
Y	Youth	
HA	Heritage activity	
Hex	Heritage exhibition	
Com Ex	Community (or Commercial) Exhibition	
CafEv	Café evening event in café & garden	
Cowork	Coworking network event	

	Monday			Tuesday			Wednesday			Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday		
Room	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve
Council Chamber						LTC			BBX			CCM						CC			
Meeting/Green Room 8 people																		CCG			
Events space	Loom		ComBB			ComBB			ComBB					PPF						Sale	
Messy Space 20			WSC	WSC		Y			Y	WSB	WSB		WSC	Free		WSC				WSE	
Meeting Rm Sth 15 people																					
Meeting Rm Nth 15 people	Comm	BB	Comm				Comm	BB	Comm		BB										
Café & Garden															CafEv						
Gallery	Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex		
	Fitness class in events space (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			Full Council in Chamber eve. Weekly Slimming Club in events space; Community craft workshop am; Youth activity eve (Young carers/similar)			Business booking of large meeting space. Heritage group (community) in evening. Youth group in eve. Weekly ballroom dancing class in events space.			Midweek civil ceremony in Chamber pm; commercial fortnightly art class in messy space; business booking in pm.			Funeral in events space; Community Arts workshop am; free arts/craft workshop focused on wellbeing/loneliness; Café evening event in café and garden.			Ceremony in Chamber; Green Room booked.			One off adult craft course (jewellery, stained glass, Christmas wreath with catering package etc); Postcard & print collectors sale in events space. CAFÉ OPEN		
Week 6 standard term-time week																					
	Monday			Tuesday			Wednesday			Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday		
Room	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									CC			
Meeting/Green Room 8 people																					
Events space	Loom		ComBB			ComBB			ComBB			EV			EV		Loom	PP	Sale		
Messy Space 20	Free	Free	WSC			Y			Y			WSB				HA	HA				
Meeting Rm Sth 15 people	Comm	subBB			subBB				BB												
Meeting Rm Nth 15 people			Comm		LTC		Comm					Comm	BB	BB							
Café & Garden																					
Gallery	Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex		
	Monthly health/wellbeing support group in mtng rm sth; weekly Knit & natter; Adult weekly craft workshop. Free workshops daytime			Business booking in Chamber, daytime, catering. Weekly Slimming Club in events space; Youth activity eve (Young carers/similar)			Council committee meeting late pm; Youth group in eve. Business booking of meeting rm sth. Weekly ballroom dancing class in events space.			Adult commercial craft course in evening; drag bingo night in events space; community group monthly meeting eve			Event (60s & 70s music night!) in events space; business booking all day meeting rm nth.			Civil ceremony (only) in chamber; Private party in events space; Heritage Activity in events space; large community use events space eg jumble sale pm			Craft Fair/Antiques Fair in events space; CAFÉ OPEN		
Week 7 standard term-time week																					
	Monday			Tuesday			Wednesday			Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday		
Room	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve
Council Chamber			Loom									CCM		BBX	BBX						
Meeting/Green Room 8 people		LTC			LTC							CCG		BB	BB				EV		
Events space	Loom		ComBB			ComBB		SubEV	ComBB			mWP									
Messy Space 20			WSC			Y			Y	WSB	WSB		Free			HA					
Meeting Rm Sth 15 people								LTC					subBB								
Meeting Rm Nth 15 people	Comm		Comm	BB			Comm					BB									
Café & Garden																					
Gallery	Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex			Com Ex		
	Local Historical Society or equivalent talk & meeting in Chamber. LTC Working Group in green rm; Fitness group in events space; Adult weekly craft workshop in messy space; Knit and Natter; local community group in meeting room.			LTC committee green room; Youth; Slimming Club; business booking in morning.			Monthly tea dance (subsidised rate). Weekly ballroom dancing class in events space. Youth; LTC committee; weekly community group in meeting rm nth			Ceremony & midweek wedding; fortnightly adult art class; business booking in meeting room			Business booking in chamber with green room for breakouts; Free arts/craft workshop for older local residents;coworking use of mtng rm sth.			Heritage activity in morning; Clairvoyant event in events space; green room used by performer.			CAFÉ CLOSED (winter/offpeak)		
Week 8 school holiday																					
	Monday			Tuesday			Wednesday			Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday		
Room	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				SpecialSale			SpecialSale		
Meeting/Green Room 8 people																					
Events space			ComBB			ComBB			ComBB						PP	SpecialSale			SpecialSale		
Messy Space 20			WSC	WSC	WSC	Y	WSC		Y	HA	HA	WSC	WSB	WSB		HA	HA		Y	Y	
Meeting Rm Sth 15 people	Comm				BB			LTC				Comm									
Meeting Rm Nth 15 people		BB					Comm				LTC		subBB	BB							
Café & Garden												Cowork									
Gallery	Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex			Hex		
	Fitness class in events space (weekly); Adult weekly craft workshop (night);Knit & Natter small room; business bookingmeeting rm nth; mthly book club meeting rm sth.			LTC committee (eve); Youth in messy room (Young Carers); Slimming Club; business booking south room; children's school holiday arts club in messy			Youth group in evening; LTC committee; Weekly ballroom dancing class in events space. Kids' workshop in messy room			LTC committee meeting in meeting room and council chamber. Event in Council chamber - poetry night; community art workshop; heritage activity for school holiday. Coworking			Art workshop (commercial) in Messy Space. Private party events space . Business bookings (one subsidised) in lge mtn rm			Annual 2 day craft fair in Council Chamber & Main events space and in the courtyard; heritage activity for families in messy room.			Annual 2 day craft fair in Council Chamber & Main events space and courtyard (Food Fair weekend similar); youth takeover messy room. CAFÉ OPEN		

APPENDIX F – GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Governance & Management Options



28 February 2023

Version 2.0

Prepared by MossKing Associates Limited, 2023

1. INTRODUCTION

This governance and management document was prepared **for decision by the Lowestoft Town Hall Project Board** by MossKing Associates Limited. It describes the options available both for governance and for operational management of the Town Hall, once restored.

The Town Hall, which has been vacant since 2015, has been in the ownership of Lowestoft Town Council since 2017. 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. An NLHF-supported development project has been underway since Spring 2022 and is due to submit a second round bid in May 2023. Governance is a key issue in the grant funding decision process, and this document is therefore an important input. The options are discussed in section 5.

In addition to governance, by which we mean the overall legal framework in place to control the strategic and operational direction of the Town Hall, it is also important to consider the operational management structure, if the building were to be operated directly by the Council. This is covered in section 6.

2. ORGANISATIONAL 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 team of ten professional staff 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's precept income for 2023/24 is £1,975,790. Having been in existence for just six years, the Council faces considerable challenges in managing its large asset portfolio, some of which were inherited in an aged and dilapidated state.

The ten staff are the Town Clerk (and Responsible Financial Officer) who reports direct to Full Council, the Deputy Town Clerk, the Asset Management Officer, the Committee and Project Clerk, the Committee Clerk, the Finance and Information Officer, the Office Administrator, the Communications Officer, the Facilities Maintenance Officer, and the Parks and Community Officer. During 2023/24, the Council will complete its work to bring grounds maintenance in-house, adding a further 5 – 10 staff.

3. FUTURE USE OF THE TOWN HALL

The Town Hall will be occupied by two 'anchor tenants', Lowestoft Town Council itself, and Lowestoft Registrars. The remainder of the building will have public/community use at its heart, with multiple areas welcoming people on an ad-hoc basis:

- A café, operating mostly during the day, providing coffees, snacks and light lunches for visitors to the building and tenants.
- A co-working space where entrepreneurs and businesspeople can rent desks by the day and use meeting facilities etc
- A heritage area that will interpret the history of the town and the Town Hall and signpost visitors to other heritage destinations in the town.
- A gallery staging both heritage-related and other exhibitions, including national touring exhibitions.
- Meeting rooms used by both tenants and members of the public, bookable by the hour.
- A messy space, used for art and crafts workshops, and for youth activities.
- A multi-use events space, for weddings, parties, community group activities and events.
- The Council Chamber, used for council meetings, civil ceremonies and other events.

The Town Hall is likely to be open up to six days a week in the winter and daily in the summer. General 'office hours' will predominate, but many events and meetings will take place out of hours.

With the above usage, it is predicted that an annual footfall in the region of 80,000 – 90,000 would be achieved, in addition to anchor tenants.

Income will be generated from a combination of rental from tenants and occasional users; café, bar and catering operations; directly organised fundraising events; private bookings for weddings, parties and events; merchandise; grants & donations.

4. KEY AIMS & OBJECTIVES

In determining the optimum governance structure, several key aims and objectives will need to be met:

- Residents of Lowestoft, from all areas and backgrounds, must feel this is *their* building, and that it is open and welcoming to them at all times.
- Grant funders must be certain that there is clear accountability for the delivery of outcomes that are conditions of the grant, and for meeting any other terms and conditions of the grant.
- Anchor tenants must be able to use the building as their business needs' dictate and to have priority access to key areas, eg Council Chamber.
- VAT on the capital project must be fully recoverable, ie the ultimate governance structure must not prevent its recovery.
- A maintenance and renewal reserve must be generated from operational activity, so any third party operator must either take direct responsibility for achieving this or have a legal mechanism to return funds to the Council.
- There must be sufficient flexibility to enable the Town Hall to respond to changes in markets or demand levels.

5. GOVERNANCE OPTIONS

Governance Options

There are four main options for the future governance for the Town Hall. These are:

1. Establishment of a charitable trust.

2. Creation of a corporate charitable business to oversee the Town Hall
3. Appointment of a third party organisation
4. Direct governance by Lowestoft Town Council

The first two options relate to the establishment of charitable bodies, of different legal forms. Whilst a local authority can set up a charity, and it is permissible for it to do so to carry out statutory duties, it is illegal to do so simply to benefit from charitable status. The charity must be independent, ie it cannot simply be set up to carry out the policies or directions of a governmental authority and it cannot be dependent on a governmental authority for funding in a way that enables the authority to control or make decisions about services to be provided. It is clear that in this case, the charity cannot be owned by LTC.⁶¹

The four options are described in detail below, with an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of each.

1. Establishment of a charitable trust

A charitable trust⁶² would be formed, with representatives of the town and Council as trustees. The trust would be given a peppercorn lease on the Town Hall, for a period of at least 20 years, to give the trust sufficient stability to be able to plan the long-term future of the building. The terms of the lease would need to ensure that grant funders' terms and conditions were met, and that the commitment to achieving outcomes was incorporated into the charitable trust's objects and strategy. Major funders would need to approve the details of the lease.

The Council would appoint the chair of the trustees, and have several representatives, but not a majority, on the board. Deficit funding would be required from the Council/project in the initial years of the trust, although this would be the same in any model.

The trust would be responsible for determining how best to deliver two of the core functions that require specific expertise, the café and the co-working hub.

Advantages

- Residents and town organisations would have control over 'their' Town Hall.
- As a charitable trust, grant funding would be available to the Town Hall for which the council itself would not be eligible.
- Provided a peppercorn rent lease were implemented, the lease would be considered 'non-business' for VAT purposes, meaning that the VAT on the capital project should be recoverable.⁶³
- A charitable trust would be entitled to 80% discount on business rates, with the potential for the remaining 20% to be discounted, at the discretion of East Suffolk Council.
- No corporation tax would be payable on any profits generated by the trust.

⁶¹ There is case law to evidence this risk, where Croydon Council wished to invest in Fairfield Halls, and to appoint trustees to ensure their investment was protected. The Charity Commission ruled against this proposal, saying "it would have effectively meant the takeover of the charity by the local authority in a way that allows the authority to influence decisions made by the charity in its own, rather than the charity's interests."

⁶² In practice, this may be an unincorporated charitable association as opposed to a trust, but the pros and cons are broadly the same, so 'Trust' is used here.

⁶³ If this option were to be considered, independent advice from a VAT specialist familiar with the Council's VAT position, should be taken, before it is pursued.

- Although the trust would have its own organisational structure to manage the Town Hall, it could outsource elements to others, including LTC.
- A trust would be focused solely on the successful operation of the Town Hall.
- Both officers and members of LTC could be representatives on the trust; however, they would have to carry out their responsibilities solely in the interests of the trust, not as a delegate of LTC, or independence would be lost.
- A trust at arm's length from the administrative functions of the Council would reduce demands on officers' time, leaving their focus on the core role of managing the town's portfolio of other assets and services.

Disadvantages

- A trust, as an unincorporated body, would place risk on the individual trustees, that, given the scale and value of the activity involved, would be unacceptable.⁶⁴
- As a charitable body, there are restrictions on the degree to which non-charitable trading can be undertaken. Care would be needed in the establishment of the trust's governing document to maximise this potential and thus avoid the need for a separate trading arm, although given the size of predicted turnover of the Town Hall, a trading subsidiary seems almost inevitable.⁶⁵ However, by moving trading activity into a limited company, this could reduce some risk for the unincorporated parent.
- Representation on the trustee body would need to be carefully managed, to ensure that active leadership resulted – many trusts suffer from over-representation of the 'great and the good' in the local area, who although well-meaning may not have the time to dedicate to the trust's activities. At the same time, tight control of trustees could be perceived negatively by the wider public.
- Although the Council/project would provide deficit funding for the early years, control over its use would be by the trust.
- Achieving the outcomes for the project would be the responsibility of the trust. If they were failing, the ability for the Council to intervene would be limited, and terminating the lease could be similarly tricky.
- To enable the trust to have the flexibility to operate both the café and the co-working hub in the way that suited it best, the lease would need to allow sub-letting and/or rental out to third party partners. This would present a further layer of complexity on the formation of the lease document, and on ensuring outcomes were being achieved.
- There is no opportunity for cross-subsidy and limited opportunities to achieve any economies of scale (eg regular maintenance contracts).
- The trust would be required to set up and manage its own back office systems, such as payroll & HR, which under a direct management function would be already in place.
- As tenants of its 'own' building, the Council would need to pay for its use of facilities such as meeting rooms etc; ensuring that its needs took priority over commercial interests could be challenging.

⁶⁴ We have been unable to identify any non-incorporated charitable body on the Charity Commission website that runs a Town Hall with turnover exceeding £30k.

⁶⁵ Non-primary purpose is limited to 25% of turnover, up to a fixed £80k ceiling. Above that level, a trading arm will be required, or the trading ceased.

- The current grant recipient is Lowestoft Town Council (for both the Towns Fund and National Lottery Heritage Fund). Given the ongoing funding post-live from NLHF, it is probable that the grant recipient would need to change, in that it is the charitable trust that would be employing staff and staging events part-funded by them. This is an additional layer of complexity that would require investigation.

2. Creation of a corporate charitable business to oversee the Town Hall

This option is similar to that of the charitable Trust, except that an incorporated body would be established, meaning that risk to individual trustees would be significantly reduced. A Charitable Incorporated Organisation would be the preferred route, as it is a tried and tested corporate charitable structure that does not require registration and separate reporting via Companies House, as a charitable company limited by guarantee would. The Council would again retain ownership of the Town Hall, but lease it to the CIO on a long-term, peppercorn basis. The terms of the lease would need to ensure that grant funders' terms and conditions were met, and that the commitment to achieving outcomes was incorporated into the CIO's objects and strategy.

A CIO can have either a foundation or association model, the difference between the two being that the former only has trustees as voting members, and the latter can have an extended membership, voting on strategic decisions. This report assesses the association model, ie with extended voting membership, on the assumption that it would be adopted to ensure that residents had a say over the operation of the Town Hall.

Advantages

- A CIO does not require registration at Companies House, reducing cost and complexity of reporting.
- The CIO would offer much greater protection to its trustees than an unincorporated charitable trust but would retain the benefits of charitable status.
- The Council could retain interest in the CIO by establishing it so that a majority of the trustees would be officers or members. As with the trust model, they would have to carry out their responsibilities solely in the interests of the CIO, not as a delegate of LTC, or independence would be lost.
- Provided a peppercorn rent lease were implemented, the lease would be considered 'non-business' for VAT purposes, meaning that the VAT on the capital project should be recoverable.⁶⁶
- A CIO would have access to third party funding and grants for which the Council would be ineligible; this could be particularly useful for future projects, events and activities.
- No corporation tax would be payable on profits, and at least 80% mandatory relief on business rates would be achieved, with the potential for the remaining 20% relief to be granted by East Suffolk Council.
- Some work, eg maintenance, could be outsourced to the Council, meaning costs could potentially be kept lower.
- Decision making about the Town Hall's activities and operation would be separated from the Council thus demonstrating the independence of the Town Hall to residents. This would be enhanced by the voting rights of members from the wider town and its organisation.

⁶⁶ If this option were to be considered, independent advice from a VAT specialist familiar with the Council's VAT position, should be taken, before it is pursued.

Disadvantages

- Whilst a CIO can undertake non-charitable trading, but it is limited to the same degree as a charitable company and would almost certainly require a trading subsidiary (limited company).
- Although the Council/project would provide deficit funding for the early years, control over its use would be by the CIO.
- There is no opportunity for cross-subsidy and limited opportunities to achieve any economies of scale (eg regular maintenance contracts).
- Members' voting could lead to the Town Hall taking a direction that is not supported by the Council; whilst this could be limited to an extent by the conditions of the lease, which in turn would reflect grant funders' constraints, it is not watertight.
- Similarly, achieving the outcomes for the project would be the responsibility of the CIO. If they were failing, the ability for the Council to intervene would be limited, and terminating the lease could be complicated and time consuming.
- To enable the CIO to have the flexibility to operate both the café and the co-working hub in the way that suited it best, the lease would need to allow sub-letting and/or rental out to third party partners. This would present a further layer of complexity on the formation of the lease document, and on ensuring outcomes were being achieved.
- As tenants of its 'own' building, the Council would need to pay for its use of facilities such as meeting rooms etc; ensuring that its needs took priority over commercial interests could be challenging.
- As with the charitable trust model, there is a risk that the grant recipient may need to switch during the project, which is a difficult thing to achieve. An alternative would be to provide staff and funding from the Council (funded by NLHF) to the third party, but this could complicate the lease conditions yet further.

3. Appointing a 3rd party to manage the Town Hall

The council could appoint a commercial third party to manage the Town Hall. This could be on the basis of wholly outsourcing the business to a third party, giving a long term lease and handing over strategic control of the building, or it could appoint an operator to run the building under Council control, on a renewable contract. The latter is related more to operational management of the building under Council control, than it is to governance, and so it is discussed separately later.

The lease again would be long-term and would need to ensure that the aims of the Council and the needs of grant funders were incorporated into it (or an underlying service level agreement). However, this time the lease would be commercially based, given that the profits of the operation would accrue to the for-profit operator.

It is likely that only a minor repairing lease would be acceptable to an operator; the lease cost would therefore have to reflect the Council's need to build up a maintenance and renewal fund over time.

Advantages

- An experienced operator could be awarded the contract, ensuring that the Town Hall operates effectively from much earlier.
- Much of the Town Hall activity requires creativity, innovation and a commercial outlook, all attributes that are more likely to be present in a commercial operator than in council staff. Sorry.

- The Town Hall would be subject to full business rates, which would accrue to East Suffolk Council, potentially benefiting the local area (although representing a cost to the Town Hall itself but this is covered by the operator, hence it is seen as an advantage).
- The Council would have a reliable income from day 1, and could start building a maintenance fund immediately, so in theory there could be ample funding when major works were required.

Disadvantages

- The commercial lease may well impact the ability to recover all VAT from the capital works. If this option were favoured, this would need immediate investigation.
- The Council would need to discuss whether this was acceptable with funders and allow them to review the details of the lease agreement and underlying SLAs.
- Service level agreements, particularly for community use, would have to be set out very clearly from the start.
- There would be limited flexibility to enable a change of direction to ensure outcomes were achieved.
- Council would have very little control over the operation of the building.
- Lowestoft residents could easily conclude that the building was no longer 'theirs'.
- In theory, business risk would transfer to the operator, rather than remain with the Council; however, in practice the operator could cease trading in the event of a major adverse event, and the Town Hall would revert to the Council.
- Should the third party operator fail to meet the SLA relating to outcomes, it could still be difficult to terminate the lease.
- Relinquishing control of a Council-asset to a third party operator may be a risk that the Council is unwilling to take.
- The Council would need to retain the NLHF-funded activity-related budgets and staff and somehow integrate them into the third party, as the funding could not be handed over to the commercial operator.

4. Direct management

Lowestoft Town Council would take direct responsibility for the Town Hall. The Town Clerk would have either 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. Alternatively, the Council could appoint a third-party operator to take care of some or all aspects of the building, on its behalf. These are discussed below.

To ensure that the wider town was represented, an advisory committee could be established, with residents and town organisations as members, alongside council officers and members. Funders would not be members of the committee, as it would be highly unusual to have monitoring of post-capex projects at this level of detail/frequency.

Advantages

- This has the benefit of simplicity and would ensure that Lowestoft Town Council retained control over its largest asset.
- Funders are already expecting this type of arrangement, and although there it will be necessary to ensure that the operational management structure meets the needs and delivers against outcomes, there are no arm's length arrangements or lease agreements to be scrutinised.

- There are no complexities surrounding, nor constraints (other than budgetary) linked to the amount of deficit funding that could be provided for the early years of operation.
- Should elements fail to delivery against outcomes, direct monitoring will mean earlier detection. There is flexibility to change swiftly and to try out new ways of working, without negotiations with arm's length organisations.
- VAT should be fully recoverable on the capital works (advice is currently being taken on this as part of a wider VAT review but is expected this is the case).
- Residents should feel that the building remains 'theirs', although this might be enhanced by the introduction of an advisory committee (subject to previous caveats on having representation from individuals who can devote time to actively support and drive forward the Town Hall, without politics, or local factions, getting in the way).
- As an anchor tenant directly governing the Town Hall, the Council could ensure that its needs are met.
- There is considerably less complexity than would be required to set up a charitable body or develop the contractual arrangements for a commercial operator.

Disadvantages

- All business risk lies with the Council. However, it also has direct control, so is in a better position to manage it.
- The Council has no experience of governing a multifunctional commercial business and so the risk profile is higher.
- VAT will have to be charged to users, if VAT on the capital spend is to be recovered. However, given the turnover level, it's likely that VAT thresholds would be exceeded in any case, unless key elements are hived off to third parties.
- Business rates will apply, and there will be no opportunity to access rate relief as the operator is not a charity/small business. Although this will accrue to East Suffolk Council, and could benefit the local area, it will reduce the operational surplus. Note too that rateable value will increase significantly once the building is restored and has commercial activity.
- Regardless of the day-to-day management structure implemented, a directly run Town Hall will still impact significantly on the workload and responsibility for the Town Clerk.

6. OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT

The operational management of the Town Hall is only applicable if Lowestoft Town Council directly governs the Town Hall in future, ie if option 4 in the previous section is the preferred way forward.

There are two main ways in which LTC could manage the Town Hall:

- Direct management, ie add staff to the admin team and run the building accordingly
- Outsource management of some or all of the operational activity.

1. Direct operational management by LTC Admin

In this model, a Town Hall Manager (THM) would be employed, reporting to the Town Clerk. A number of additional staff, reporting to the THM, would cover all aspects of managing the café and bar(s), the

venue hire business, including wedding receptions and civil ceremonies, the co-working hub, and delivering the heritage-related activity plan. Responsibility for achieving outcomes – and evaluating results - would rest with this team, as would the financial performance of the business.

The Town Hall management team would be responsible all staff and volunteers, marketing & promoting elements of the Town Hall, taking bookings and invoicing accordingly, organising and running events, liaising with the public, and ensuring that the operation runs smoothly in all respects.

The café would require a manager, reporting to the THM, along with staff to deliver services both for the day to day café operations, and also to provide catering for bookings of meeting rooms. In addition, the café would be one of the bidders for catering related to private bookings in the events space. The café manager would take responsibility for running any bars necessary for events, as well as in the café itself, which would be licensed.

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. Part of their role could be to work with the THM to support the co-working hub that, to flourish, will need to appear to be a separate entity, with its own branding and personality.

A full time Heritage Manager would be responsible for running and managing the heritage hub and gallery, organising exhibitions in liaison 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/security 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 would caretaking/concierge/security.

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

Some of the general administration, such as payroll, payment processing etc, could be carried out within the existing Council infrastructure. Bookkeeping may be best outsourced to a professional visiting weekly, to cover the P&L, prepare management account data, and to separate the reporting of the Town Hall as a business from the Council's activities.⁶⁷

The reception area would be manned by staff from the Town Hall management team, directing visitors to the appropriate location and providing the outward customer-facing personality of the Town Hall.

Overarching the operation of the building would be a set of high level policies, safety procedures, risk assessments, prepared by the Council admin team, and put in place to enable simple, flexible and customer-friendly operation of the Town Hall.

Advantages

- All aspects of the Town Hall operational management are under the control of the Council.

⁶⁷ VAT will be complex, because of the different rules applying to some of the commercial elements (eg a room booking does not attract VAT, but a room booking with a service such as tea/coffee has VAT applied to all elements). Similarly, the café operations will have output VAT on the majority of their sales, but very little input VAT to offset against it.

- Sharing of back office functions will simplify the Town Hall operation significantly (although it will increase workload for the admin team).
- The Council's facilities management team can continue to care for the Town Hall, ensuring that it remains in good condition and is well maintained.
- All risks, and rewards, are ultimately under the control of the Council.
- A directly run café and catering operation would generate significantly higher income than outsourced to a lease, although it would also mean that the risk profile was much higher too.
- Depending on the VAT structure implemented, for which advice would be needed, it might be possible to offset more of the output VAT against input VAT incurred by the Council.

Disadvantages

- The current LTC admin team has no significant experience of managing a commercial, customer facing venue of this complexity and in particular, a catering business. This increases risk.
- Allied to this is that the admin team is, rightly, risk averse, bound by regulation and keen to avoid reputational damage for the Council. It will be essential to clearly separate the Town Hall from the Council, to ensure that one is not synonymous with the other, and to enable the Town Hall operation to be fleet of foot, customer-orientated and market savvy.
- Managing a café and inhouse catering business directly could be complex and requires a very different set of skills to that of a venue manager.
- Managing a co-working hub to create an entity that is attractive to young entrepreneurs will similarly require a very different set of skills.
- The size of the Town Hall team could easily outnumber or at least equal the LTC admin team, which would add to the Town Clerk's workload in new and challenging ways.

2. Outsource some or all operational management

An alternative model is to outsource some or all elements of operations of the Town Hall to 3rd party commercial operator(s) contracted directly to the Council.

If all aspects were outsourced, it is unlikely that a single operator would come forward with the range of experience to deliver all aspects, and instead the best performance is likely to come from outsourcing elements to specific operators, eg a catering operator for the café/bar, a venue hire operator for the room bookings, weddings/parties etc, and a separate operator, perhaps one of the new national ones, for the co-working hub.⁶⁸ However, this would then mean that a fourth operator would be required to run everything else, servicing the building overall, including security, caretaking, cleaning, taking in rents from anchor tenants, and coordinating the work of the different sub-contractors. It's unclear how the heritage engagement activity, and volunteer effort, could function within such a model. Overall, this appears too complex to take forward for further consideration.

Instead, outsourcing one or two of the specialist operations could be beneficial. Firstly, this would be the catering operation, covering the café, catering for room bookings, and being the preferred provider

⁶⁸ Several new operators have emerged marketing co-working hubs under different national brands. The main barrier to use of such an operator is the small scale of the hub in the Town Hall, which would be about 1/3 of the size of those managed by such operators.

bidding for catering for private bookings, weddings etc. Secondly, the co-working hub could be outsourced too, as noted above.

The café itself would be fitted out as part of the capital project, but a catering partner would be engaged at an early stage to advise on specific requirements. Any leased equipment, other than that required by the operator specifically, would belong to the Council. In this way, termination of a lease, and switching to a new operator, would be much easier.

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 scales⁶⁹ and other measures to ensure the café is inclusive and affordable for all; however, it should be based on discussions with the operator to ensure it neither constrains their operations, nor fails to achieve what could be possible for the café.

A condition of the lease would be to support café work placements per year, each working 18-hour weeks) 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.

The annual lease could be partly-profit related, based on around 10% of turnover from daily operations,⁷⁰ catering and bars, as well as café events, but with a floor/minimum rate in the early years. The terms of the lease should allow termination of the contract should the performance be consistently below par, either in service levels or in income.⁷¹

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.

Advantages

- Outsourcing key elements, eg catering, would ensure that specialist knowledge/expertise was brought in where needed. This would reduce risk and reduce the overhead for the THM and the clerk.
- The Council would retain control of overall operations and would have the flexibility to change operators with the minimum disruption.⁷²
- A guaranteed minimum income would be achieved from outsourced elements.
- The majority of VAT complexity would be outsourced to the third parties.

⁶⁹ Pricing scales are not intended to hamper profitable operation, but rather to set some price points for affordability for those on lower income.

⁷⁰ Advice is being sought from the project's catering consultant on the correct rate and acceptable terms for a lease, likely income etc and general arrangements that would be required.

⁷¹ 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. However, the catering side, if well run, could achieve a very healthy turnover and be attractive to many operators.

⁷² Replacing a café operator would always entail disruption and would be a last resort.

- By outsourcing specialist areas, the Town Hall management team would be free to focus on the rest of the operations, including delivery of outcomes, the vast majority of which would still be under their control.
- Given the ready market available to the café, there is likely to be good interest in the lease, which should uphold a good annual income as a result.
- A café operator, working for themselves, albeit under a lease, is likely to 'go the extra mile' to make the café succeed, working longer hours etc, than direct employees, because they have the profit incentive.

Disadvantages

- A third party operator will always be working firstly for their own interests.
- Terminating a lease would be messy and time consuming, and the reputation of the Town Hall as whole could be affected. This would include negatively impacting other markets, such as the co-working hub, which will be a regular user of the café, and room/venue bookings which would routinely select catering from the café operator.
- Income to the Town Hall would be much less than if it operated a (successful) café directly, since profits would accrue to the operator.
- There would be increased complexity around billing clients for, say, a wedding reception, with venue and equipment hire coming from the Town Hall, and catering from the operator, but once a system was established it should operate well.

7. DECISION

Members of the Project Board discussed the options at a meeting on 20 February 2023, and agreed unanimously that the best governance option was to manage the Town Hall directly. Although this will create additional complexity for the Town Clerk and admin team and operational management will require a range of new skills to be brought on board, the advantages of using the existing administrative infrastructure, and retaining direct control, both strategically and operationally, of a building the Council owns, outweigh the disadvantages.

APPENDIX G – 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 area. 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 area 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.

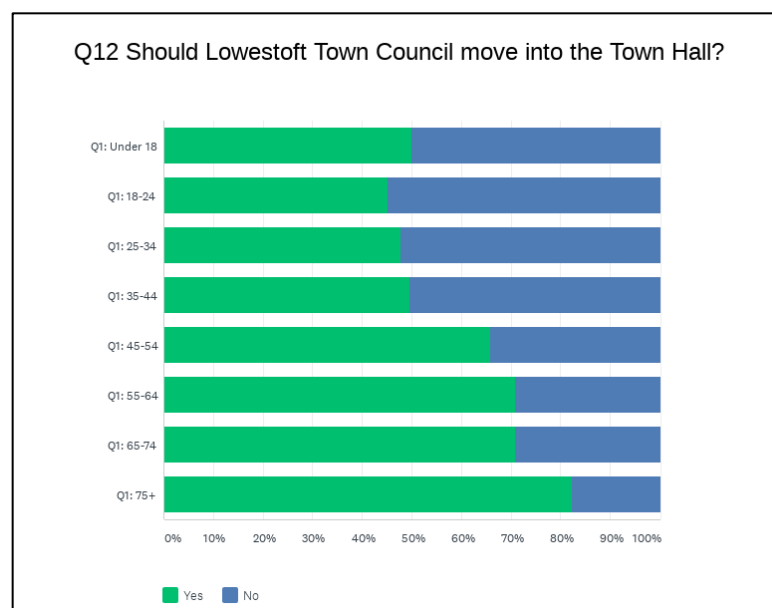
The first section of the survey, which established the demographic profile of the respondent, was compulsory. Thereafter, respondents not only had the option to skip questions but also to partially respond to a list of options within a question. Where one or more elements can be skipped, it is helpful 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’ scoring⁷³. 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.



⁷³ 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.

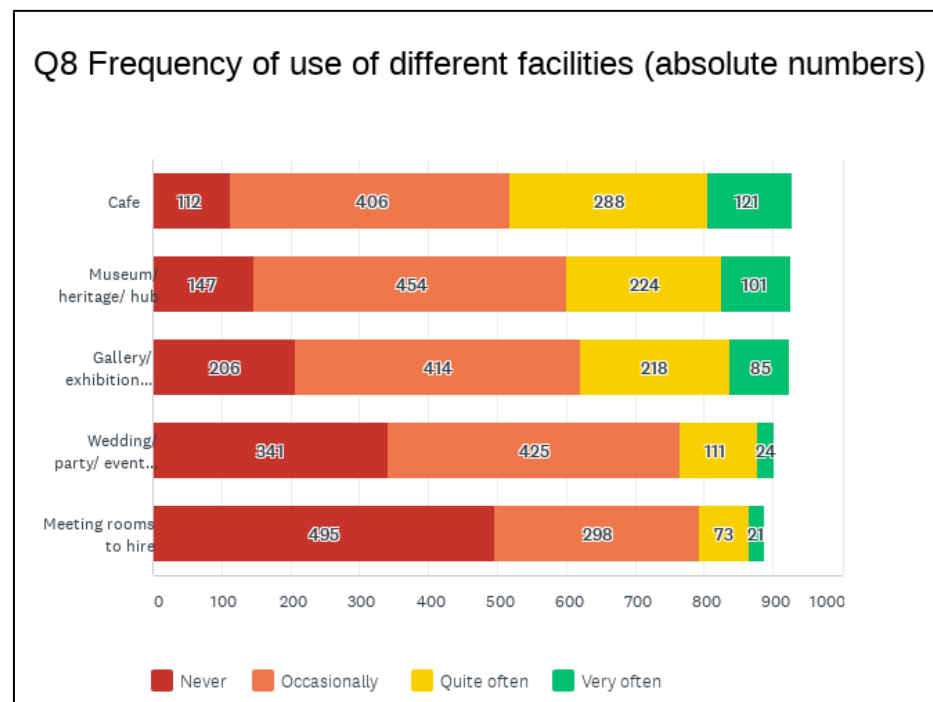
However, when analysed by age, there is a different picture, with approval of the proposal increasing by age – those under 44 are undecided or marginally against the proposal, whereas 82% of over 75s are in favour. This may reflect a lesser relevance given to the Council by younger people or that older 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 area, 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 area**, 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 area 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 area. This is key information to feed into audience planning with this group as a target underserved 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

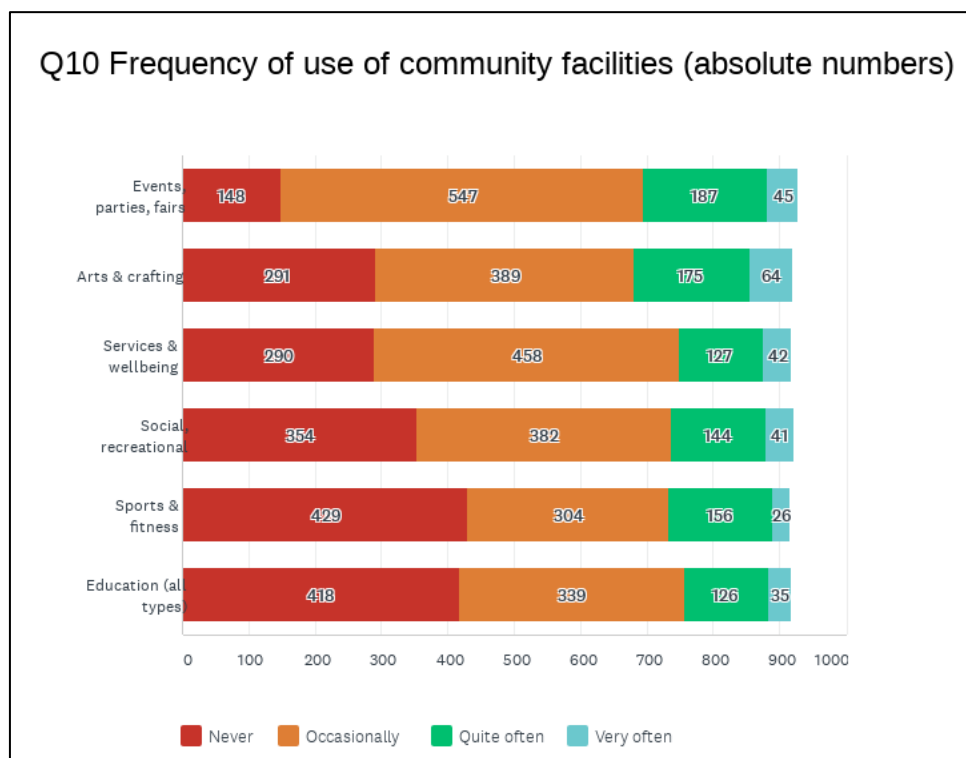
potentially be key users⁷⁴. However, meeting rooms tend to have regular/repeat users, and therefore widespread demand is not essential to justify their existence in some form.

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.

⁷⁴ 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.

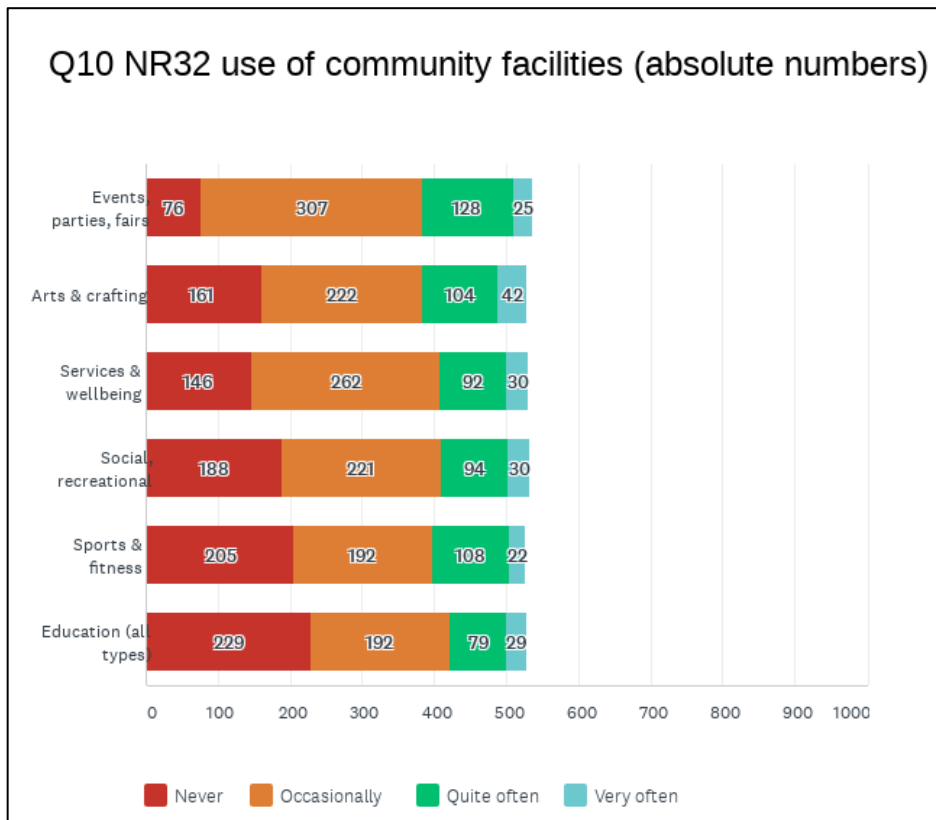
Gender plays a part in this question too. Across all bar the social/recreational option, females are much more likely to use community facilities than are males.⁷⁵ This is particularly apparent for arts & crafting, where 77% of females expect to make some use (occasional, often, very often) against 46% 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.

⁷⁵ 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.

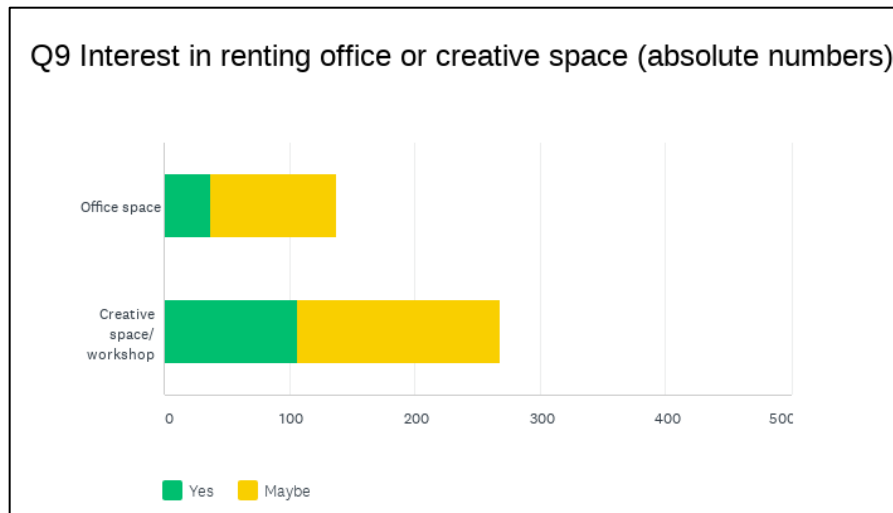
Disability does show statistically significant differences in this question, which is to be expected to some degree if disabled people are less able to travel longer distances – 62% of those recording a disability were in the N32 postcode. Although 38% of those who said they had a disability are over 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; Midlands (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.

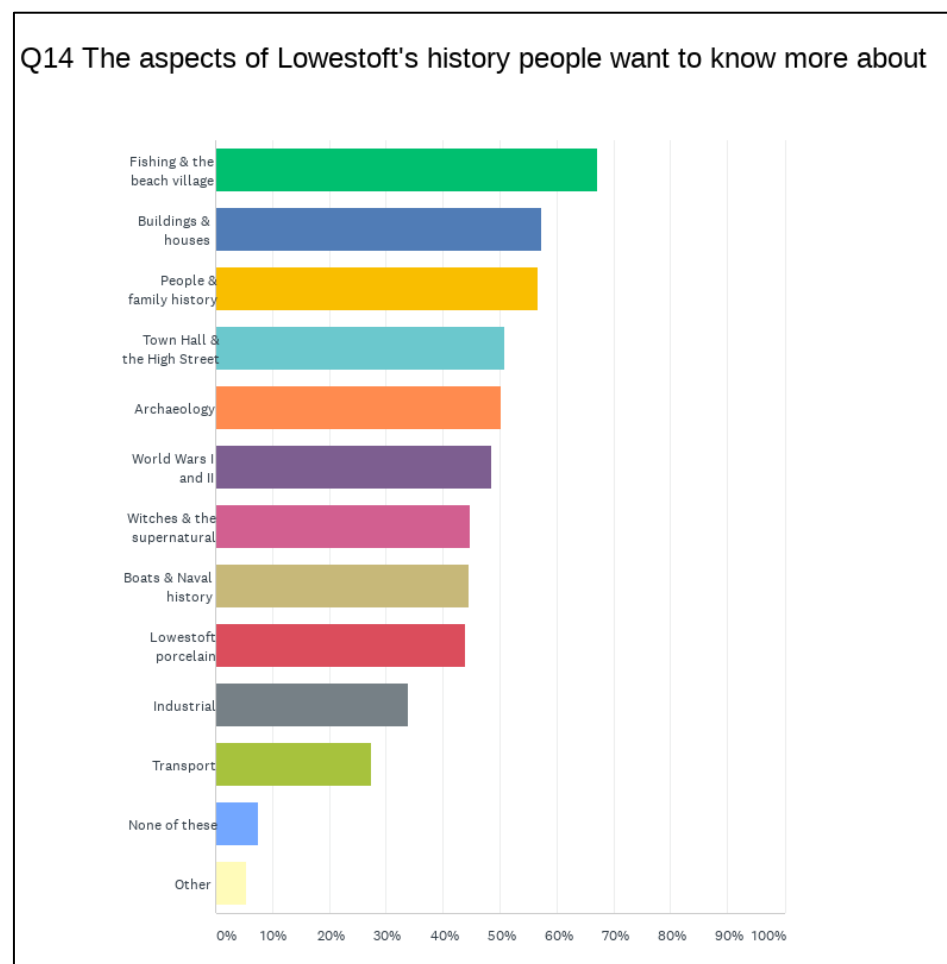
Knowledge of Lowestoft's history

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.



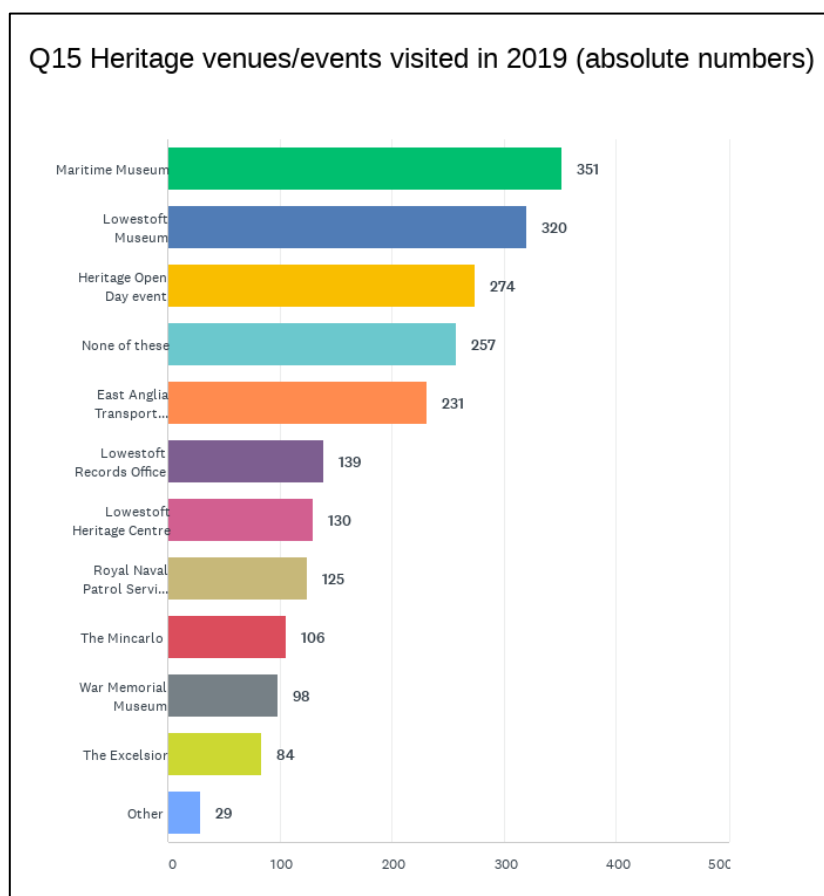
Overall, the history of **fishing and the beach village** was the top choice, with 578 respondents selecting it (67%). Encouragingly, the **Town Hall & the High Street**, as well as **buildings & people** ranked highly too, with more than half the respondents expressing interest in these. Surprisingly, **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.

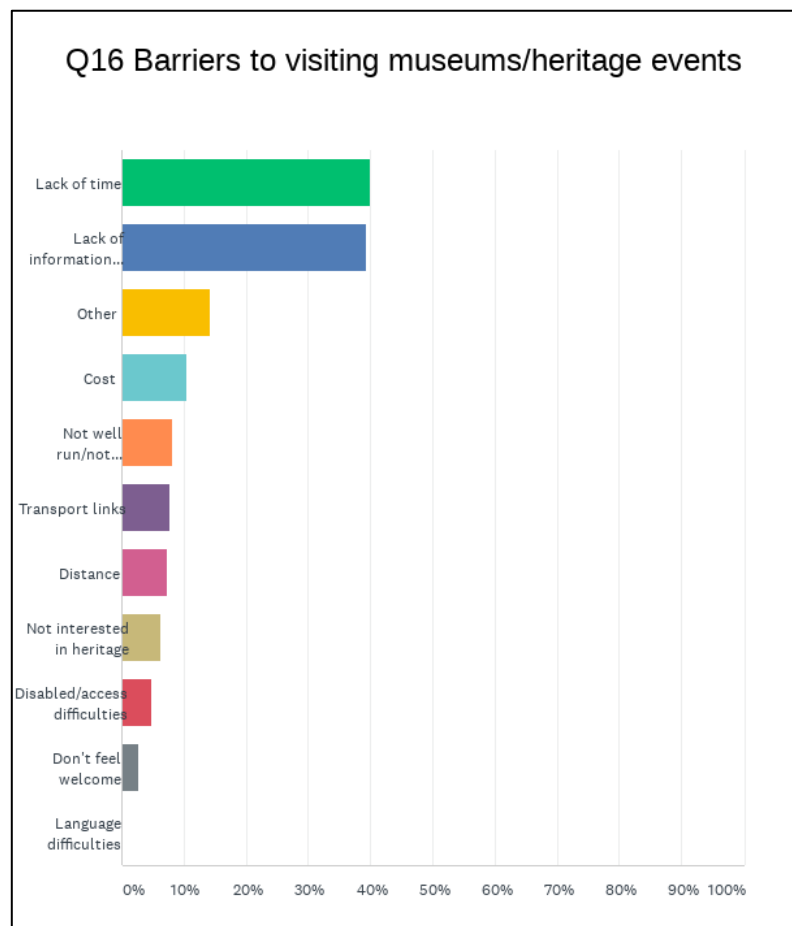
In total 29 people cited other events, in which First Light and an exhibition at the Parcels Office are prominent. More analysis will be undertaken on this shortly.

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 area 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.

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).

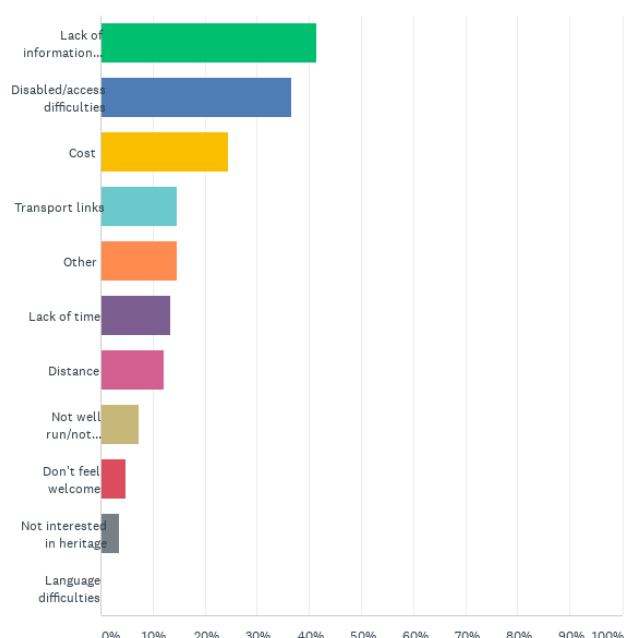
Note that, whilst no respondents cited language difficulties as a barrier, it must be acknowledged that people who might have language difficulties would be unlikely to be completing a written survey of this nature, and therefore in the longer term further research should be done to identify whether 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).

“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.”

Q16 Barriers for disabled visiting museums/heritage events



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 income⁷⁶ - 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, ie directly south of the town).

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%).

⁷⁶ 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.

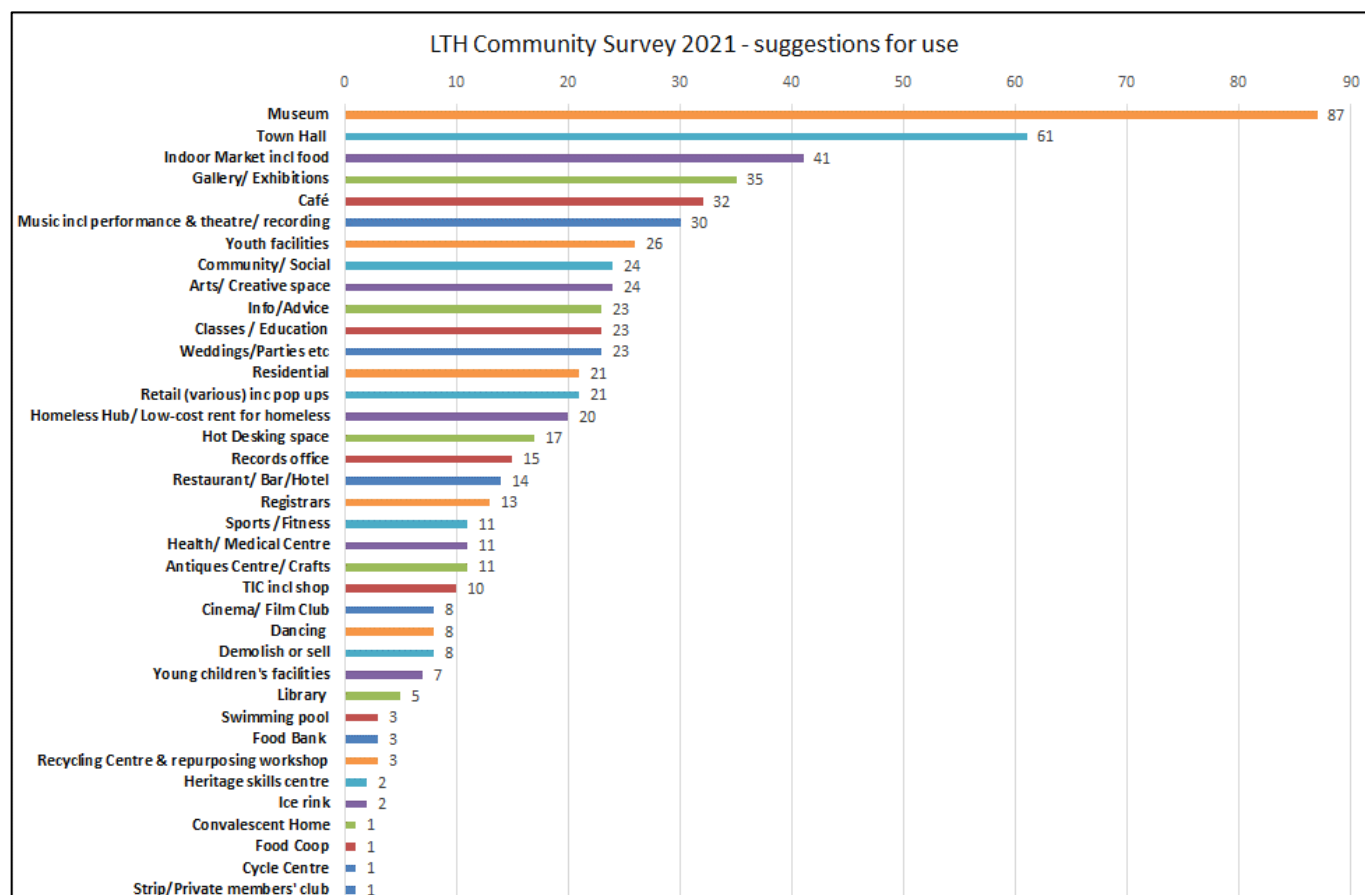
Youth facilities of varying sorts were also popular; this was often accompanied by a comment that there was a lot for young children to do, but very little for youth/teens. This is probably reflected in the lower ranking of young children's facilities, with only seven people suggesting this.

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.

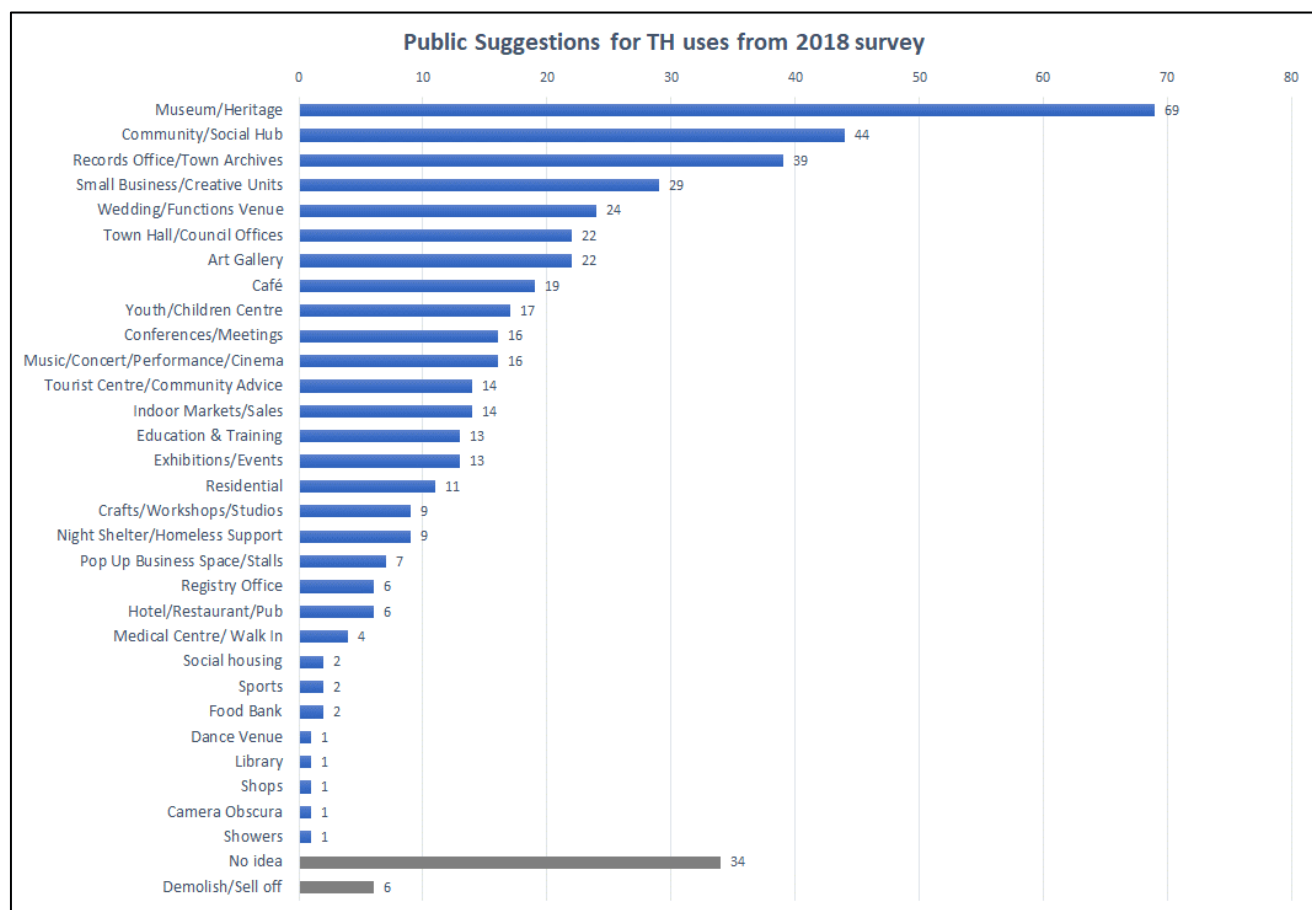
Hot-desking (including office space to be rented by the hour/day and for start-ups) was raised by 17 people (and by a further 7 in the office/creative space section). Notably, there was only one suggestion for an office for longer-term hire, perhaps because of the availability of space elsewhere in the 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. Overwhelmingly⁷⁷, 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.

⁷⁷ 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 ⁷⁸. 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

⁷⁸ 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 to the south, 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 disability⁷⁹ 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.⁸⁰ 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?

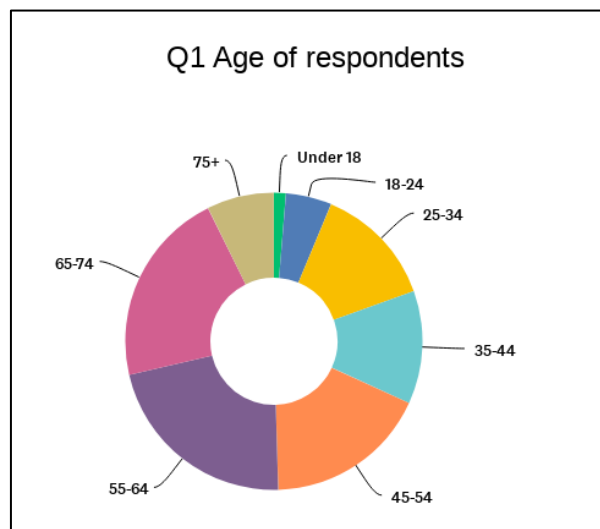
There is a good age spread of respondents, although, as is expected of surveys of this nature, there is a significant under-representation of young people under 18 (1.3%), and a slight over-representation of people 65+ (28.6% in the survey against overall population share of 24.8%⁸¹). There is an encouraging 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 segment⁸².

⁷⁹ Family Resources Survey 2018-19 (published Mar 2020), Scope

⁸⁰ 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.

⁸¹ Figures from the Lowestoft Town Investment Plan, based on ONS 2017 mid-year estimate.

⁸² 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?

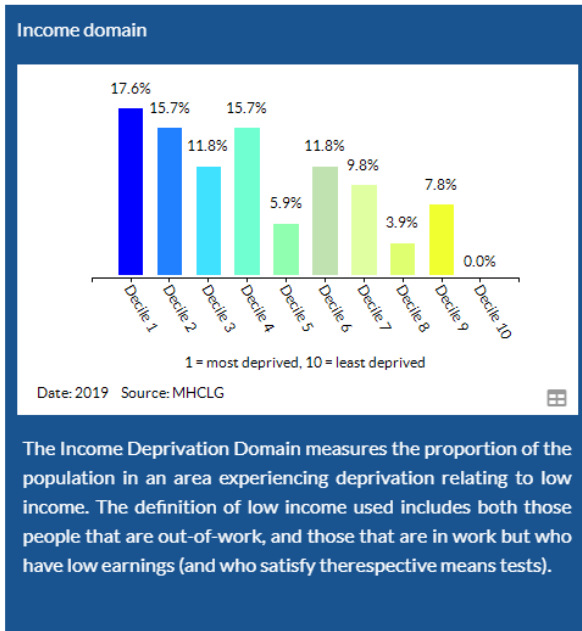
In our survey, 34.3% of respondents were in full time employment against 39% in the Lowestoft Town Funds demographic data. A similar shortfall occurs for part time employment (16.1% v 20%) and for self-employed (4.35% v 9%). In contrast (and to a degree, in explanation) 32.2% of those surveyed are retired 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 town⁸³. Furthermore, the 2016 data shows 20% of children in relative low income households⁸⁴.

⁸³ Source: MHCLG 2019 via Suffolk Observatory.

⁸⁴ HM Revenue and Customs - Personal Tax Credits: Children in low-income families local measure 2016.