

Lowestoft Town Hall Project – Report for Annual Assembly 2024

The Town Hall project will restore and extend the Grade II listed building on the historic High Street. Empty since 2015, it was transferred to Lowestoft Town Council in 2017.

The project has been running since winter 2020, when consultations with the public identified what local people wanted to see in the building. We have incorporated as many as possible of the top items from the consultation in our designs, and so the Town Hall will include a Heritage Gallery linking to all the museums in town, space for the Town Council, Lowestoft Registrars' offices, a café, and meeting and events spaces for community groups, along with a courtyard garden.



1 The restored Council Chamber

The project team includes architects, engineers, cost consultants and museum designers as well as heritage and project management. Everyone has been busy working up designs (the images throughout this report show how we expect the building to look), obtaining planning permission and, importantly, securing all the funding needed for this huge undertaking. We have support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, East Suffolk Council, the Towns Fund and of course, Lowestoft Town Council itself.

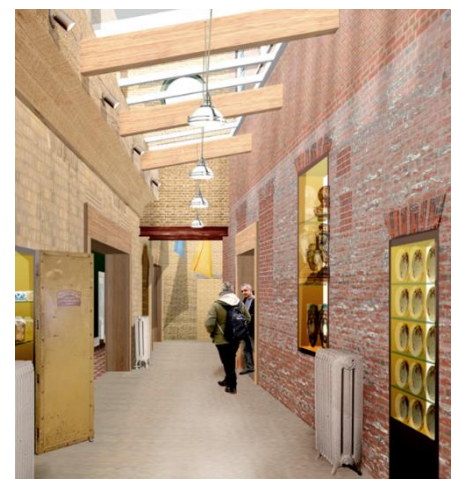


2 Entrance hall and 'yard'

The fabric of the building will be restored – there are lovely Victorian tiled floors, cornicing in the principal rooms and sash windows all to be preserved, as well as the amazing Council Chamber itself, where weddings and civil ceremonies will be held in future. Elsewhere, we will incorporate an existing inner gap between the two buildings to become a glazed 'yard' that lets people circulate freely around the building.

The Town Hall will be accessible throughout, with lifts to the first floor, ramps to access the garden, and a Changing Places room alongside the main toilets on the ground floor. Meeting rooms and the Council Chamber will be equipped with induction loops, and good visual contrasts and clear signage throughout will insure the building is easy to navigate for all.

In the Heritage Gallery, exhibitions will link to four key themes identified by residents as most important to them: Changing Fortunes; Stories from the Sea; Leisure and Entertainment;



3 The 'yard'

Witches and Superstition. We've worked with groups of local people to understand better how they want to interact with exhibitions and what stories they want to include, and we'll continue this through our activity plan for this stage (see below).

Outside, on the Mariners Street side, we'll build a new events space, where parties, wedding receptions and events can be held, and community groups can meet. This will lead into a courtyard garden for all to enjoy, whether attending an event, using the café, or just enjoying the sun.

We've now reached a very important milestone: we are ready to go out to tender for the main construction contract, which should start in September this year! If all goes to plan (and it very often doesn't when you're restoring a big building in such poor condition!) the Town Hall should open its doors to the public in Spring/Summer 2026.



4 Events space for parties & groups



5 Courtyard garden and events space

Our activity plan, which is where the community can really get engaged, ran through most of the last two years, and now we're kicking off the next stage of it. For the next five years, ie throughout the construction project and then once the Town Hall opens, we'll run lots of different activities where people can participate in workshops, learn how to make films, develop a digital archive or contribute to the first exhibitions in the Town Hall.

We have just appointed our new Heritage Manager, who'll look after all of the activities, and will be managing two heritage traineeships, one starting this year – so if you're interested in a career in heritage, keep a look out for the adverts in the next month or two.

If you'd like to find out more about the project, follow us on Facebook ([Facebook.com/LowestoftTownHall](https://www.facebook.com/LowestoftTownHall)) or look at our page on the Council website.

Sheila King

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30 April 2024