

**Meeting of the SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM RESOURCE CENTRE
PROJECT TEAM held on 5 AUGUST 2009 at 3.00 pm in the School Room,
Saffron Walden Museum**

Present: Councillors K L Eden (Chairman) (Uttlesford District Council Member); and Mr D Haylock, Mr D Laing, Mr P Salvidge and Mr A Watson (Museum Society Ltd).

Also present: Tim Powter-Robinson (Cowper Griffith Architects), Roger Custance and Lizzie Rosewell (Henry Riley Consulting).

Officers present: Richard Auty (Head of Community Engagement), Maureen Evans (Visitor Services Officer), Phil Hunt (Engineering and Safety Officer), Sarah Kenyon (Natural Sciences Officer), Peter Snow (Democratic Services Officer), Adrian Webb (Director of Central Services), and Carolyn Wingfield (Curator).

MRC16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chambers, Morson and Schneider. Councillor Eden declared his interest as a member of the Development Control Committee.

MRC17 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2009 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

MRC18 HERITAGE QUEST CENTRE

The Director of Central Services updated the meeting with details of recent developments regarding the Heritage Quest Centre project. An approach had been received from Sainsbury's proposing an exchange of land to enable the company to proceed with a planning application to construct a retail outlet at Thaxted Road. A meeting had taken place last week to discuss this proposal in more detail. Sainsbury's had proposed to offer the Council an area of land in exchange for the land earmarked for the Heritage Quest Centre. The company's representatives had suggested a Section 106 agreement be entered into as a result of which Sainsbury's would undertake to build the Heritage Quest Centre to a specification provided by the Council. It was understood that outline details of the proposal would appear in the local press this week.

Present indications were that Sainsbury's would seek to submit a planning application by October and that the outcome of that application would probably be known by January 2010. If this timetable was met, it was likely that the HQC would be built by October 2010.

Members discussed this proposal in detail and asked a number of questions about how the project would continue. Advice was given by the architect and consulting engineers about the options open to the Council and the Museum Society. It was understood that some re-design work would be needed to enable the building to fit the alternative site now being offered and the architect was given general guidance as to how to proceed. The Curator gave advice about the position of the funding secured to date, both from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the other benefactors. She said that a new application to the HLF would not be required but that further discussions and referral to the HLF East of England December committee meeting may be needed to endorse the revised plan.

Members were generally receptive to the proposal received and agreed that it should be explored fully. In the meantime, steps to proceed with the tendering process for the scheme already agreed would be put on hold to allow for more detailed discussions to take place.

The Museum Society representatives commented that they could not commit the Society to an alternative course of action without due consideration, likely to involve some consultation of the Society's membership. They would explore ways to achieve this objective immediately following this meeting.

The Chairman suggested that a timetable was needed to provide some certainty as to the process to be followed although he recognised that this would depend in large measure upon the nature of forthcoming discussions. In progressing this matter, it was recognised that any additional costs incurred in altering the project would have to be covered as part of any agreement, and that best value would have to be demonstrated.

Subject to detailed agreement being secured in due course, members were generally happy to endorse the principle of the Sainsbury's proposal and it was agreed to proceed along the lines discussed.

RECOMMENDED that:

1. agreement in principle be given to the proposal made by Sainsbury's to exchange land at Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden to enable the construction of the Heritage Quest Centre on the alternative site identified at the meeting;
2. officers be authorised to negotiate with Sainsbury's to secure an agreement to enable the project to proceed as quickly as possible and to draw up a timetable of actions for approval;
3. the architect be instructed to prepare a detailed specification for the Heritage Quest Centre to

- accommodate the land in question and any other changes required; and
4. the Museum Society be invited to take immediate steps to decide whether to endorse the proposed changes and to participate, where appropriate, in any discussions.

MRC19

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed not to decide the date of the next meeting at this stage as the timing would depend on a number of factors as described in the previous minute.

The meeting ended at 4.15 pm.