



## **THE HISTORIC PRIORY & OLD LIBRARY, ORPINGTON**

### **OUTLINE PROPOSAL BY THE COMMUNITY GROUP<sup>1</sup>**

#### **VISION**

The vision of the Community Group is to ensure the future of The Priory as a community asset, and its conservation and restoration as an historic building, with increased public access

#### **PRIORITY OUTCOMES**

- to create a heritage and information centre which will enhance the building, improve the experience of visitors and residents, and signpost places of interest in and around Orpington;
- to enable educational opportunities for local schools and complement the services of Archives, Local Studies and the Central Library;
- for the property to be used for activities which strengthen the engagement of the resident and business community within Orpington;
- provision of exhibition and venue space for a programme of events that seek to showcase the culture and heritage of the area;
- to support an arts programme appropriate for a major town centre that can enhance and enrich the growing resident population;
- to feed into the local area plan for regenerating Orpington town centre and ensuring links throughout the high street increase footfall and encourage visitors to celebrate the conservation area as well as shopping and entertainment offers;
- for the facility to provide a focal point and service provision for those visiting the town centre's green space;
- to contribute to the important social space that the town requires, as part of its continued place-shaping agenda

---

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this document, 'Community Group' encompasses all those involved in the campaign to save The Priory from being sold.

# Potential Building Uses

<b>Large scale events</b>	indoor markets, trade fairs, awards & presentations, conferences, exhibitions, weddings, live event streaming, performance arts
<b>Corporate hire</b>	meetings, presentations, awaydays, training, CPD
<b>Hire to groups &amp; clubs</b>	pre-school, residents, holiday clubs, music groups
<b>Hire to the public</b>	children's parties, family celebrations
<b>Hire for community benefit</b>	remembrance sessions, conservation
<b>Community information amenity</b>	schools, commemoration, park users

- Events might be sponsored, chargeable or partner events, possibly organised by a third party;
- There will be a programme of events throughout the year, supporting more regular hires;
- Activity in the building will commence in phased stages, subject to the completion of the necessary renovations.

This proposal assumes Bromley Council will agree to a Community Asset Transfer, at nil cost or peppercorn rent, to a charitable organisation to be set up. Terms and conditions will be clarified through a legal agreement, including allowing time for the charitable organisation to raise funds to cover interim operating costs.

## **PHASE 1 – 18 months: Fundraising and applying for grant funding<sup>2</sup>**

The short term proposals for generating immediate revenue to cover running costs of the building and to increase footfall, prior to and during refurbishment, are:

1. Developing a management body in the form of a charitable organisation (building preservation trust, community interest company or similar), with a board of appropriately qualified directors
2. Submitting a bid plan for Heritage Lottery or similar funding (see [Funds for Historic Buildings](#)) to refurbish the building to a high standard to enable expansion of the heritage offer and to provide the facilities (toilets, catering) required in a quality venue for weddings, conferences, major events etc.
3. Exploring options for fundraising activities in order to carry out urgent remedial work, such as financial support from local businesses and individuals and crowdfunding
4. Establishing the hiring of rooms for regular bookings and specific events
5. Organising a programme of events, such as concerts and theatrical productions for fundraising purposes
6. Providing an initial 'heritage offer' which will enhance the building and can be developed as appropriate, through special exhibitions and activities, particularly a basis for school visits
7. Promoting The Priory through social media, local and national press, posters and banners
8. Creating a website to advertise the facilities available and support bookings
9. Promotion through local businesses, such as the new cinema complex and Premier Inn
10. Exploring the co-ordination of promotion with other attractions in the Orpington area – such as Crofton Roman Villa, Biggin Hill St George's Chapel, Shoreham Aircraft Museum
11. Developing volunteer input, particularly with the College
12. Seeking LBB support for improved street signage and local access (such as improvement of the footpath from Lych Gate Road/Dryden Way to Bark Hart Road)

## **PHASE 2: Restoration works and expansion of heritage offer and events**

In order to manage this enterprise in the long term, once adequate funding is in place, the management body will be responsible for:

1. Appointing competent staff to manage bookings, day-to-day running of the building and handle other activities as appropriate (such as fundraising and marketing)
2. Expanding and improving the existing programme of events
3. Ensuring staff and volunteers are appropriately trained
4. Managing funding streams already secured and ensuring financial viability
5. Planning the phasing of restoration works
6. Developing a timetable of continuing building maintenance works
7. Looking for new opportunities to expand events and uses
8. Exploring possibilities for projects suitable for further grants
9. Building relationships with local businesses and community groups to encourage new creative uses of the building

---

<sup>2</sup> Fundraising to begin as soon as a charitable organisation has been formed and the Council has agreed to an asset transfer, in order to raise enough to cover interim overheads once the transfer takes place



### **Pendle Heritage Centre**

(1 Colne Road, Barrowford, Nelson )

This historic farmhouse at Barrowford is a Grade II listed building, dating from 1461. It is now a local history museum, with cottage and 18<sup>th</sup> century historic gardens . Part of the Heritage Trust for the North West established in 1977.



### **Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre**

(10-13 Preston Street, Faversham )

Incorporating a local history museum, visitor information centre and heritage bookshop (no refreshment facilities). Part of the Faversham Society, a charity and company limited by guarantee formed in 1962.

## **CASE STUDIES**

### **The Alexander Centre**

(15-17 Preston Street, Faversham)

Impressive Victorian building used for local business, leisure activities, weddings, training courses, fairs and support groups. It includes Swale Council customer services. A government asset transfer in 2010 managed by a CIC trust.



### **Lytham Heritage Centre**

(2 Henry Street, Lytham, Lancashire)

Victorian Grade II listed building, built in 1899 for the Manchester and County Bank. It is now an exhibition centre, managed by an educational charity which was established in 1987.



Proposed uses are:

- Consistent with the Fourth Street review [May 2015];
- Supported by anecdotal evidence from Orpington BID that there is a commercial demand for room and venue hire within central Orpington;
- Supported by initial research results by the Community Group that local venues cannot currently meet the demand for hire;
- Consistent with current development in central Orpington (the Premier Inn planned for the Walnuts Centre does not have a function room);
- Consistent with relevant elements of the HLF bid.

## **FUNDING SOURCES**

The recent Fourth Street report identified that significant expenditure in the order of £1.7m is required to renovate the Priory.

Renovation costs will be split out into targets for specific amounts/items and funds obtained from a number of sources:

1. Grants from organisations promoting the conservation and sustainable re-use of historic buildings
2. Donations from local and national private individuals
3. Sponsorship from businesses
4. Community Share Issue (as successfully demonstrated by Hastings Pier)
5. Public Appeal / Crowd Funding / Fundraising Events

Operational costs are planned to be covered by:

- Hire revenues, corporate sponsorship and profits from events and exhibitions
- Subscriptions to a membership/supporters' scheme

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This proposal is the subject of ongoing development by the Community Group, to ensure it reflects:

- The community desire that the building continues to be accessible by the public, with a heritage offering;
- Local business requirements;
- The ability to phase development and activity over time;
- The needs of the planned population increase evidenced by the proposed residential developments in roads adjacent to Orpington High Street.