

Cabinet Member for Heritage and Arts, Governance and Support Services

Cllr Stuart Wheeler

Heritage and Arts

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Archaeology Store

Purpose of Report

1. To Grant fund the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum Trust, the Trust body for an independent accredited museum, Salisbury Museum, towards the purchase of a property for suitable storage and public access of archaeological finds and archives on behalf of all museums in the county and for the people of Wiltshire.
2. The proposal is aligned with Wiltshire Council priorities to boost the local economy and to support and empower communities to do more for themselves. This includes the Business Plan 2014-17 outcomes (1) Wiltshire has a thriving and growing local economy; (2) People in Wiltshire work together to solve problems locally and participate in decisions that affect them; (3) Everyone in Wiltshire lives in a high quality environment; (5) People in Wiltshire have healthy, active and high-quality lives.

Main Considerations for the Council

3. Inadequate storage of archaeology finds and archives has been identified as an area of concern by local people and museums, developers and archaeological contractors, the local planning authority and planning inspectorate. The requirement for an archaeology store has been identified in the Wiltshire Core Strategy (*ref. Wiltshire Core Strategy, Infrastructure Delivery Plan, IDP2 WC015, Appendix A Wiltshire Strategic, Regional and General, 2011-2016*).

The considerations for the council are therefore:

- To facilitate improved and sustainable public access to archaeological finds and archives within the county of Wiltshire.
- To enable local museums, the local planning authority and developers to more effectively discharge duties under the National Planning policy Framework guidelines:
http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/policy/achieving-sustainable-development/delivering-sustainable-development/12-conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment/#footnote_30
- That there is a robust business model put forward by Salisbury Museum and its partners for the future maintenance of a Collections Resource Centre (archaeology store) and the promotion of access to it

Background

4. Wiltshire Council does not provide a museum service, but supports local independent and Town Council museums through grant funding and officer support via the Library, Heritage & Arts service, Conservation and Museums Advisory Team. Officers, museum trustees and curators have identified inadequate storage of archaeology finds and archives as an area of concern both for the local heritage sector and for the planning authority in four key areas:
 - I. Current storage for Salisbury Museum is on site and is unsuitable in both size and environmental conditions, increasing the risk of lasting damage to archaeology archives.
 - II. Archaeological objects, reports and other records are inaccessible to the general public, academics and curators, inhibiting the understanding of our heritage and environment.
 - III. Current storage takes up prime space needed for gallery improvements and expansion, which is needed to develop wider audiences and enhance the local Wiltshire tourist economy.
 - IV. Preventing the discharge of responsibilities with regard to developer-funded excavations under the National Planning Policy Framework. These issues have also been cited at planning inspections and by a government minister responsible for planning decisions.
5. Wiltshire Museum currently rents an offsite storage facility at a cost of £6,000 per annum. Consolidating the collections of both museums into one storage facility will save on costs for both museums.
6. The development of an off-site Collection Resource Centre will enhance the museum offer across the entire county. The facility will enable museums to review the collections, assess the condition and exhibition value of materials that have rarely, if ever, been seen by the public, and to arrange for the loaning of materials between institutions. The sharing of resources will enable smaller museums to deliver higher impact exhibitions and generate additional visits at multiple sites simultaneously.
7. Salisbury Museum has identified a suitable building for a Collections Resource Centre, available for purchase at £300,000 freehold. The Grim's Dyke Barn is over 350 square metres in size, with an area outside in excess of 500 square metres. The building has the potential to not only accommodate all of the backlog material and archives stored by Salisbury Museum, but also Wiltshire Museum. There is scope inside the building for further expansion.
8. Officers have reviewed Salisbury Museum's business model and are satisfied that matched funding is in place and that there is a robust plan in place for funding the continued maintenance of the store. Libraries, Heritage & Arts Officers are also satisfied that the valuation of the property is within market expectations; the property title permits use for the approved purposes; and that the building is fit for purpose.

[See Appendices A - E]

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

9. N/A

Safeguarding Implications

10. There are no implications for safeguarding. The Collections Resource Centre will be managed by Salisbury Museum and will be subject to their internal policies and plans.

Public Health Implications

11. The creation of an archaeology store will release much needed space for local independent museums, notably Salisbury Museum and Wiltshire Museum in Devizes. This will allow for gallery extensions and improved heritage activities. Such activity, which also includes volunteering, has a positive impact upon well-being, community identity and a sense of place.

Procurement Implications

12. There are no procurement implications. Wiltshire Council is grant funding a local independent museum to enable local people to come together to provide a solution to an issue that is of concern to local museums and developers.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

13. A low equality risk score (1) has been calculated in all areas against a risk matrix and a full impact assessment is not required. The Collections Resource Centre will be managed by Salisbury Museum and will be subject to their internal policies and plans. Salisbury Museum will undertake any reasonable adjustments required under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure the facility is accessible.
14. There is likely to be a longer term positive impact upon equalities as space released in museums will enable leverage of external grant funding for gallery expansion and improved heritage activities for diverse and disadvantaged communities and individuals.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

15. The Collection Resource Centre will be situated in an existing building, Grim's Dyke Barn, located on Cranbourne Chase about 15 minutes drive from Salisbury Museum and is easily accessible. It is a detached barn of steel construction with concrete floor. The total ground floor area 350 square metres. The current proposal does not extend the building's footprint on the landscape and any potential future expansion would be subject to the planning process.
16. The landscape immediately adjacent to the proposed Collections Resource Centre is one rich in archaeological sites. Much of Salisbury Museum's archaeology collection – including the Pitt-Rivers collection – is from this landscape. The resource centre will therefore represent a unique opportunity to reunite this collection with the landscape it comes from through events and activities.

Risk Assessment

17. There are three key risks to be considered with the decision to grant fund Salisbury Museum:
 - i. The Collection Resource Centre has a change in use (i.e. no longer an archeology store) or is let or sold by Salisbury Museum. Wiltshire Council intends to register a charge on the property to mitigate this risk, whereby a change in use will cause the grant to be repaid, while the Council will also be paid a share of the net proceeds at full market value should the property be let or sold.
 - ii. Failure to provide a store for developer funded archaeological finds and archives may prevent developers and local museums from properly discharging duties under the National Planning Policy Framework. This will have a consequence upon our future understanding of Wiltshire's historic environment and its communities. It will be mitigated by assisting local museums through a one-off grant to purchase and create suitable storage and a continued, but amended, partnership agreement between Wiltshire Council and Salisbury Museum
 - iii. Existing archaeological finds stored in local museums are at risk of lasting damage if they remain stored in inadequate environmental conditions. This will be mitigated by the provision of a suitable storage facility.

Financial Implications

18. This will be added to the 2016/2017 Capital Programme and financed by capital receipts.

Legal Implications

19. There is a low risk that this grant could constitute state aid. This is mitigated by claw back provisions in the grant agreement but as always there is a risk that these could be resisted as the claw back would potentially require the sale of the property.

20. The Cabinet Member for Heritage is able to give authority to enter into the grant agreement under the terms of the Wiltshire Council constitution below:

Grant Expenditure

12.2.1 The financial limits for approval of grant expenditure are dealt with in the Chief Finance Officer's scheme of sub delegation. The following delegation of authority applies to the approval of awarding grants to an external body:

(b) Above £50,000 and up to £250,000 – Cabinet Member(s) in consultation with Corporate Directors, Chief Finance Officer and the Corporate Procurement and Commissioning Board

21. Wiltshire Council Legal Services officers have considered all the relevant documentation that has been supplied by Salisbury Museum, including a property survey and agreements with third parties. Legal Services have had sight of the relevant HMRC Land Registry copies in respect of the property and can confirm that it is owned by the vendor. Legal Services has not yet had sight of a report on title and therefore cannot advise on any potential issues with the use of the land but have sought undertakings from the Museum Trust's solicitor that the land is fit for the purposes of the archaeological storage project. A clause providing a warranty from the vendor that the land is fit for purpose has also been included in the grant agreement. Having viewed the Articles of Association of the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum Trust, officers are satisfied that this body is properly constituted to enter into an agreement and to receive grant funds.

22. It is proposed that Wiltshire Council will enter into a formal agreement with Salisbury Museum to provide a grant towards the purchase of a property for the storage of existing archaeological finds and archives relating to the whole of the historic county of Wiltshire; future archaeological finds and archives resulting from development-led and research-led archaeological fieldwork and chance discovery in the historic county of Wiltshire; and for the people of Wiltshire.

23. In addition, an existing partnership agreement between Wiltshire Council and Salisbury Museum will be amended to include protocols for the maintenance and reporting of environmental conditions of the store and free access to storage space for any Wiltshire Council owned archaeological objects and associated archives.

24. The grant will be paid on the day of completion of the sale between the vendor and Salisbury Museum. A charge on the property will be registered in favour of Wiltshire Council that will be invoked should Salisbury Museum default on the agreement i.e. the property ceases to be an archaeological store and / or the property is let or sold.

25. It is proposed that Wiltshire Council, via Libraries, Heritage and Arts, Conservation and Museum Advisory Team, will monitor the Collections Resource Centre through its existing and amended partnership agreements with Salisbury Museum and Wiltshire Museum.

Conclusions

26. Wiltshire Council provide a £200,000 grant to Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum Trust towards the costs of purchasing a property suitable for storing archaeological finds and archives.

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Appendices

Appendix A: The Salisbury Museum Collections Resource Operating Model.

Appendix B: Building Survey Report on behalf of Salisbury Museum: Grim's Dyke Barn, Blandford Road Coombe Bissett, Salisbury, SP5 5RL; Stephen Linard Chartered Building Surveyors; 17 March 2016.

Appendix C: Letter from Garfield Weston Foundation confirming grant funding to Salisbury Museum

Appendix D: Agreement between Salisbury Museum and Wiltshire Museum to fund an archaeology store

Appendix E: Partnership agreement between Wiltshire Council, Heritage Services and Salisbury Museum

Background Papers

None

Representations made during consultation

Comments were provided by the Associate Director of Economy and Planning seeking clarification on the implications for Development Control, notably with regard to the wording in Salisbury Museum's Business Case suggesting that obligations upon developers to pay box fees should be "built into the planning consent". The Director of Salisbury Museum has agreed to remove the wording in the business case and seeks only to ensure that their storage fees are transparent to developers and archaeological contractors. Salisbury Museum currently charges box fees directly to developers or their archaeological contractors. The proposal is to continue such transactions, but to set fees at a level for realistic cost recovery.

For further clarification, some text within the body of this report has been amended.