

Hebden Bridge Community Association



Media release

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TOWN HALL DEVELOPMENT PLANS GO TO CALDERDALE TODAY

Detailed plans for the future development of Hebden Bridge's Town Hall have been given to Calderdale's planning department today by Hebden Bridge Community Association. The Association has also announced plans for an Open Day at the Town Hall on Saturday July 24th, when its plans will be available for inspection and discussion.

The submission of the architects' plans and reports, together with the necessary planning cheque of £7370, marks the beginning of the formal planning process for the long-heralded development proposals. As previously announced, Hebden Bridge Community Association has been developing plans for the past two years to provide a new entrance foyer for the existing Town Hall and to create business and community facilities in a new-build development at the rear.

The plans, as presented, reflect the input from the three public consultation days held in Hebden Bridge, in October, February and May. The proposal includes the creation of a new public courtyard beside the river Hebden, an idea which received strong support from local people during the consultation process.

"We've tried very hard to design a development which will complement the existing townscape, and which will rapidly become a key feature of Hebden Bridge community life," says Peter Hirst, chair of the Association's trustees. The new

buildings will be constructed primarily of stone, but opportunity is being taken to ensure high levels of environmental sustainability, including the use of renewable energy. The Association has also been working with local representatives of the disability community, to ensure that accessibility and disabled facilities are designed in from the start.

The plans and additional information submitted to Calderdale will be available for consultation on the council's website. However, to enable local people to access this information more easily, the full architects' plans and drawings will be available for consultation on a drop-in basis in the Town Hall on Saturday July 24th between 9.30am and 4pm. Association trustees and the architects will also be on hand to answer questions.

The Association has also arranged a series of half-hour question and answer sessions on particular subjects during the course of the Saturday. At 11am, for example, a session entitled Going Green will discuss the measures proposed to ensure that the building is energy efficient. At 11.45am, the focus is on the Design and Materials to be used, and at 12.30pm the theme is Access and Disability. A session at 1.30pm will look at the community facilities being proposed, one at 2.15pm considers transport issues and at 3pm the focus moves to plans for enterprise space for small businesses in the new development. The half-hour sessions begin at 10.15am with a general introduction to the project, when the trustees will be explaining the background to the proposal.

“At a time of doom and gloom in respect to public services, it feels like a leap of faith to be coming forward with plans to improve facilities for our town. But our planning bid represents a very long-term investment in an important public building. The existing Town Hall has served Hebden Bridge for the whole of the twentieth century. We're trying now to make the Town Hall site fit for the needs of the twenty-first,” Peter Hirst says.

Hebden Bridge Community Association is well advanced with funding bids for the £3.7m project, from the Community Builders investment fund and from the

European Regional Development Fund. “This is a particularly difficult time to look for funding, and there can be no guarantee, even if this very late stage, that the funds won’t suddenly be revoked. Nevertheless, we’re determined to seize the opportunity which we believe we have. If we don’t progress now, it’s likely to be many years before the chance comes again,” Peter Hirst says.

The Association expects its planning bid to be heard in September or October, and for its funding also to be confirmed in early Autumn.