

## **7. COMMANDERY DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS**

### **Recommendation**

**1. The Museums General Manager recommends that:**

- a) the development and business plan for the Commandery be received;**
- b) the development and business plan be referred to Worcester City Council for a decision on investment; and**
- c) the next steps to be taken by Museums Worcestershire (set out at paragraphs 9-11) be authorised.**

### **Background Information**

**2. In March 2015, the Joint Committee received a presentation from DCA, the Birmingham based company employed to produce a business and development plan for the Commandery (Minute no. 218 refers). DCA had been engaged to address a range of issues, including:**

- A review and distillation of all the reports commissioned to date
- An assessment of current visitor services and income generation with opportunities identified for change and growth
- A review of current plans for visitor flow and use of space
- A review of planned interpretation, opportunities for new display and linked interpretation in other sites around the City
- An analysis of the potential for high profile loans linked to the above
- An evaluation of the learning and engagement potential of the Commandery and any new offer.
- A profile of museum environments within the building and their suitability for different categories of collection
- A review of building services, security and energy efficiency plus proposals for improvement
- An assessment of the Commandery's potential in relation to other development projects in the immediate vicinity, including the Royal Worcester factory and museum and previous designs for Fort Royal Park, and
- An assessment of how the proposed investment will

contribute to strategic and corporate objectives, in particular the City and County's visitor economy.

The development plan should also include:

- Assessment of timescales from commencement to practical completion
- Outline costs of fitting out, infrastructure, works and fees
- Fundraising potential and grant aid, including the costs of developing applications to the required standard
- Proposals and costs for implementing marketing plans, and
- Concept plans and visuals of key spaces.

3. At the last Committee, members supported the principles of the development as outlined by the consultants (Minute no. 218 refers). Since then, further work has been done to model the potential impact of investment on expenditure and income, as well as to pin down the potential costs of building work identified in the first phase of the study.

4. The proposals and this additional work have now been confirmed in a draft of the final report on the building. It sets out the potential for reinvigorating the building and its visitor offer, summarised as follows:

1. Creating the new Battle of Worcester visitor experience;
2. Warming the spaces where the Battle of Worcester experience is sited and the Great Hall to an appropriate level;
3. Creating the interpretation for the Great Hall
4. Transforming the front window and foyer;
5. Giving the shop a makeover, sourcing new stock, improving visual merchandising;
6. Getting the cafe up and running;
7. Branding and visual identity development; developing a phased marketing strategy; implementing phase 1; and
8. Enhancing the Battle of Worcester Heritage Trail with on street way finding.

5. This would not include a display about the US Presidents' visit in the first phase nor would it provide a contingency to cover building works at the upper end of the estimates secured from the architects. However in view of their importance, the costs of adding these elements to a first phase have been included, with the additional costs set out in the capital plan at 7.1.

6. DCA have also provided a revenue plan (pages 38/39) based on estimates at the lower and upper end of the investment scale. The revenue plan includes changes to the pricing policy, based on a review of the pricing plan previously commissioned.

7. The income projections also include an assessment of the potential for increasing the return from retail, catering, events, weddings and other hires, together with a preliminary look at the possibility of the conversion of rooms for holiday lettings. The costs of the latter are substantial and need further investigation.

8. The report includes some visuals of both the new Battle of Worcester and the Great Hall displays for illustrative purposes. These are for illustration only and would be subject to further work to detailed design stage by an exhibition designer, working with the Museums Worcestershire team and other specialists, before the precise form, layout and use of media could be confirmed.

#### Next steps

9. The plan provides a route map for further investment and development at the Commandery. Its conclusions are supported by a range of research studies, commissioned with a previous round of Arts Council strategic funding, confirming both the potential for increased visits and use of the site and the wider value of the Commandery as part of a Civil War City package.

10. If the Joint Committee is content to approve the final report, the first step is to refer the plan to Worcester City Council for a decision on the level of financial support. If that is agreed, then the following work is required to move forward:

- a) Recruitment of an exhibition designer to produce detailed designs for the interpretation elements;
- b) Further work with property services to develop the approach to building issues set out in the report;
- c) Confirmation of the programme in readiness for a launch of phase 1 in 2016;
- d) Development of detailed budget, staffing and pricing proposals to be presented to the joint committee in a further report;
- e) Investigation of the potential scope and value of a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund; and
- f) Further discussion and consultation with the Battle of Worcester Partnership to ensure the potential of the Civil War City theme is fully realised.

	11. Subject to approval of the plan by the Joint Committee and a decision to proceed with the investment by Worcester City Council, members are requested to approve the steps in 10 a)-f) as part of the project plan to implement the scheme.
<b>Supporting Information</b>	Appendix - A Development and Business Plan for the Commandery (DCA May 2015)
<b>Contact Points</b>	<p><b>Specific Contact Point for this report:</b></p> <p>Iain Rutherford, Museums General Manager  (01905) 361827/361821  Email: IRutherford@worcestershire.gov.uk</p>
<b>Background Papers</b>	<p>In the opinion of the Museums General Manager the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:</p> <p>Agenda papers and Minutes of the Joint Museums Committee on 19 March 2015</p>