



Date: Thursday, 26 February 2026
Time: 10.00 am
Venue: The Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ
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COUNCIL

TO FOLLOW REPORT (S)

13 UPDATED - APPENDIX A - Report of the Shirehall Strategic Review - Council Task and Finish Group (Pages 1 - 16)

Report of the Strategy and Scrutiny Manager is attached

Contact: Tom Dodds Tel. 01743 258518

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Appendix A

Summary of evidence shared by witnesses that the Task and Finish Group heard from -

Morrow and Lorraine Architects and Don't Waste Buildings

The members of the Task and Finish Group heard first from Don't Waste Buildings about several examples of regeneration schemes relating to buildings similar to Shirehall as seen below -



Don't Waste Buildings also expressed the hope that a short pause now in deciding the future of Shirehall would allow time for a fully informed decision to be made. In their opening remarks the group said the following -

“We are a voluntary, non-political network of more than two and a half thousand individuals drawn from across the built-environment sector. Our members include developers, financiers, engineers, architects, sustainability specialists, planners and public-policy professionals. We are deliberately broad-church, because the future of our existing buildings is not a niche issue – it cuts across climate, economics, skills, place-making and community identity.

We originally came together out of concern about the huge amount of carbon embedded in existing buildings that is lost through demolition. But our work has evolved well beyond carbon alone. As part of that work, we have travelled the length and breadth of the country and have been continually amazed by what can be achieved with existing buildings. We have seen the beautiful – and the frankly quite ugly – transformed into fantastic, profitable and much-loved community assets. What these projects have in common is not the age or typology of the building, but a team of visionary people who understand that outcomes depend on how the question is framed. When the question is how can we reuse this asset, innovation follows. When the question becomes what evidence do we need to justify getting rid of this problem?, the outcome is often predetermined. The same project can produce very different answers – and it is the responsibility of groups like this one to ensure the right questions are being asked.

We also believe very strongly that refurbishment and reuse bring real economic benefits. Reuse is a different type of construction to new build. It is more labour-intensive, it supports local supply chains, it creates opportunities for apprenticeships,

and it provides sustained work for SMEs rather than concentrating value in a small number of large contractors. In short, reuse keeps skills, jobs and money local.

However, as the Shropshire case demonstrates, the biggest barrier to reuse is its financial viability. For the past two years we have been working to influence national policy precisely so councils like yours, who care about their heritage and understand the value of reuse, are not forced into demolition simply because it appears to be the least risky financial option.

There is a persistent misconception that the reuse debate only applies to historic or pre-war buildings. That simply isn't true. Buildings constructed in the last 20 or 30 years are already becoming obsolete and are being reused at scale.

To illustrate that, I want to give three very high-profile examples from London.

City Hall, opened in 2002 as a flagship civic building, is already closed and undergoing major refurbishment and reuse. The former GlaxoSmithKline headquarters in west London, also opened in 2002 and celebrated at the time as a building ahead of its era, has since been purchased and is being reused rather than demolished. And Broadgate Tower, completed in 2009 and one of the most recognisable office buildings in the City, is currently undergoing substantial refurbishment.

It is important to say this clearly and fairly: the people who designed and built these buildings did so in good faith and with the future firmly in mind. They were ambitious, well-resourced projects, designed to be flexible and long-lasting. And yet, despite their best efforts, the useful life of buildings cannot be guaranteed.

That matters, because it challenges the assumption that demolition followed by rebuild will automatically produce a better or more resilient long-term outcome.

The Shirehall tells a very different story. It has been an outstanding success. It has served Shropshire effectively for decades and, until 2024, was still fully operational. With a new approach to reuse – one that reflects modern expectations around adaptability, mixed use and intensification – there is no reason why the Shirehall could not still be here, serving the county, in another 50 or even 60 years.

We are fully understanding of the position the Council finds itself in. We recognise the pressure to realise a capital receipt or generate income at a time of acute financial stress. And we recognise that everyone in this room wants the best outcome for Shrewsbury.

Our request today is therefore a very specific and pragmatic one.

We ask that this Group recommends a six-month stay of execution – a pause that allows the Council to put the pin back in the grenade and properly test whether viable

alternatives exist, before a decision is taken that would permanently remove an important piece of Shrewsbury's civic history.

Since being invited to participate in this meeting, we have spent the last week examining the Shirehall proposals. We have found it extremely difficult to develop credible alternative financial scenarios, not because they do not exist, but because there is very limited information in the public domain to allow proper assessment.

That is not a criticism – it is simply the reality of trying to test viability at arm's length.

However, if demolition is paused, Don't Waste Buildings is ready to use our networks and expertise to help the Council explore options properly. That includes engaging developers, funders, operators and technical specialists who can assess what might genuinely work.

While we were unable, due to diary constraints, to have a developer present today, Tim Heatley of Capital & Centric has shared reflections with us which we hope will help stimulate thinking around alternative approaches to viability. I am also joined by JJ Lorraine, co-founder of Morrow + Lorraine Architects, a practice with deep experience in complex refurbishment and retrofit projects, who will be happy to answer questions during the Q&A.

Finally, we would note that several potential drivers of viability appear not yet to have been fully explored. These include density across the wider site, residential or mixed-use approaches, building above the existing structure, joint ventures with experienced development partners, and alternative uses such as later-living or retirement accommodation, which can be particularly well suited to robust civic buildings.

In closing, everyone around this table wants the best outcome for Shrewsbury. Our belief is simply that once the Shirehall is gone, it is gone forever. A short pause now creates the opportunity to make a better-informed decision – because, ultimately, the answer you get depends on the question you choose to ask.”

The Task and Finish group also heard from Morrow and Lorraine Architects that the demolition and remediation of the site could take as long or longer than finding a joint venture solution. The members of the Task and Finish Group understood that it could take up to 2 years to demolish and clear the site, in which time no income from the site would be achievable. It would cause huge disruption – dust, noise, damage to roads, to residents in the immediate vicinity

Both witnesses articulated the potential Shirehall could achieve in terms of economic benefits, community benefits, financial benefits, health reuse and service cohesion particularly citing the flexible nature of its interior walls which could be easily moved to change as need dictates.

The Managing Director of STAR Housing & Cornovii Developments

On hearing from the Managing Director of STAR Housing & Cornovii Developments the Task and Finish members heard that no plans had yet been confirmed to commence demolition of the Shirehall. Whilst structural integrity reports had been undertaken a dilapidation schedule had not yet happened. The Group heard that a number of requirements such as engagement with planners, risk assessments, a method statement and local consultation would need to be undertaken first.

The Managing Director of STAR Housing & Cornovii Developments explained that the site is a complex brownfield one with factors such as asbestos, rights of way, electrical cable convergence, proximity of the courts and Column all needing to be factored in whether the decision was made-to-demolish or rebuild.

The Task and Finish Group heard that a likely timescale for planning application, possible judicial review, site prep and demolition would be 2 years or more, and a further year following clearance of the site until first occupation of a new home would be possible. It is not unrealistic to assume that it could be 5 years before any return or social benefits such as housing accrue

The Task and Finish Group asked about the asbestos and whether this was only of concern if moved or interfered with and heard that it was common practise to remove it in any building, as well as replacing windows, improving all services such as heating, water etc, and making concrete/structural repairs as necessary. Further documentation regarding asbestos can be found at Appendix B.

Shropshire Council Head of Property and Development and the Estates Manager for Acquisitions & Disposals

On talking with the Head of Property and Development and the Estates Manager for Acquisitions & Disposals at Shropshire Council, the Task and Finish Group heard that a thorough reassessment of property needs across Shrewsbury is taking place to understand requirements necessary to properly support the delivery of public services, including the financial impact, environmental performance and broader economic benefits.

The Head of Property and Development confirmed that due to the fact that Shirehall had already been allocated for demolition it had not/is not included in the assessment.

This is the statement made by the Head of Property and Development as part of the witness evidence -

“Chair, Members of the Task and Finish Group, thank you for inviting me to speak this afternoon. I’m the Head of Property and Development at Shropshire Council, and I’m here together with the Estates Manager for Acquisitions and Disposals. We welcome the opportunity to set out the key evidence and context that has informed our work on the future of Shirehall.

Over the past year and a half, the Council has been engaged in a thorough reassessment of its property needs across Shrewsbury, reflecting changes in service delivery, staffing patterns, and the condition of the accommodation we occupy. This work has taken place against a backdrop of significant operational and financial pressures, as well as the earlier decision to vacate Shirehall due to its condition and safety constraints. That decision remains a central element of the picture: the building is no longer in active council use, and any long-term solution needs to address substantive structural, compliance and lifecycle challenges identified in previous reports.

In evaluating the options available, our approach has been centred on four core principles.

First, service and statutory compliance: ensuring that whichever route is chosen can properly support the delivery of modern, resilient public services.

Second, public value and affordability: understanding not only the capital cost of options, but also their revenue implications, lifecycle maintenance, and wider financial impact for the authority.

Third, environmental performance: recognising that the environmental condition of our estate matters, and that any long-term solution must address carbon, energy usage and sustainability.

And fourth, place and regeneration: identifying opportunities for broader community benefit, economic activity and social value in Shrewsbury.

These principles mirror the themes and conclusions of the Council's own strategic reviews.

Through this work, we have looked carefully at a range of scenarios. These include the potential refurbishment or reconfiguration of elements of Shirehall; the possibility of new-build accommodation linked to the existing Council Chamber; the ongoing use and adaptation of Guildhall; and wider redevelopment opportunities for the Shirehall site. Each scenario brings different implications in terms of space planning, cost, timescales, service convenience, carbon performance, and deliverability. Our aim today is to bring clarity to those implications so that Members can weigh them consistently.

A significant part of the emerging picture relates to environmental performance and whole-life carbon. Modern standards for public buildings are materially higher than those that apply to Shirehall in its current state. While refurbishment can improve environmental performance, it is constrained by the building's age and structure, whereas new-build approaches offer greater control over long-term efficiency and carbon outcomes. These considerations form a critical comparative factor in determining the most sustainable long-term solution.

We have also been exploring the potential for wider regeneration and service integration. One example is ongoing dialogue with the NHS regarding the suitability of the site for a future medical practice. Early planning feedback indicates that such a use is acceptable in principle, subject to access improvements and appropriate design responses. This reflects the broader point that Shirehall is not just a council accommodation question — it can play a role in meeting health, housing, and community needs in the town, and redevelopment options could unlock significant social value.

Additionally, we are working through the relocation requirements for the archive service and the telecoms infrastructure currently associated with the site. Both areas involve practical and logistical considerations, including the timing of moves, specialist handling requirements, planning processes and the sequencing of technical works. We will provide the Group with clear information on what would be needed to enable any transition.

Finally, we recognise that running costs are a key concern for the Group. Historical figures — particularly those relating to periods of partial occupation — are not directly comparable to the costs of maintaining an ageing, largely vacant asset today. Finance colleagues have been working to ensure that the figures you receive are consistent across the different datasets that have circulated. Our intention is that Members have clear, validated numbers so the financial implications of each option can be understood with confidence.

In summary my role as SRO has been to report into and advise the Council's Officer Leadership Board and to also coordinate and oversee the recommendations to both Cabinet and Full Council.

To conclude, our purpose today is to provide Members with a clear, structured understanding of the strategic, financial, environmental and regeneration considerations associated with Shirehall. We appreciate the time constraints of this session, and we have prepared information in a way that supports the Group's need to reach balanced, evidence based conclusions. We are very happy to expand on any part of this overview and answer your questions.

Thank you."

A range of scenarios have been explored for the Shirehall with the implications, running costs, timescales, and carbon factors of each taken into consideration.

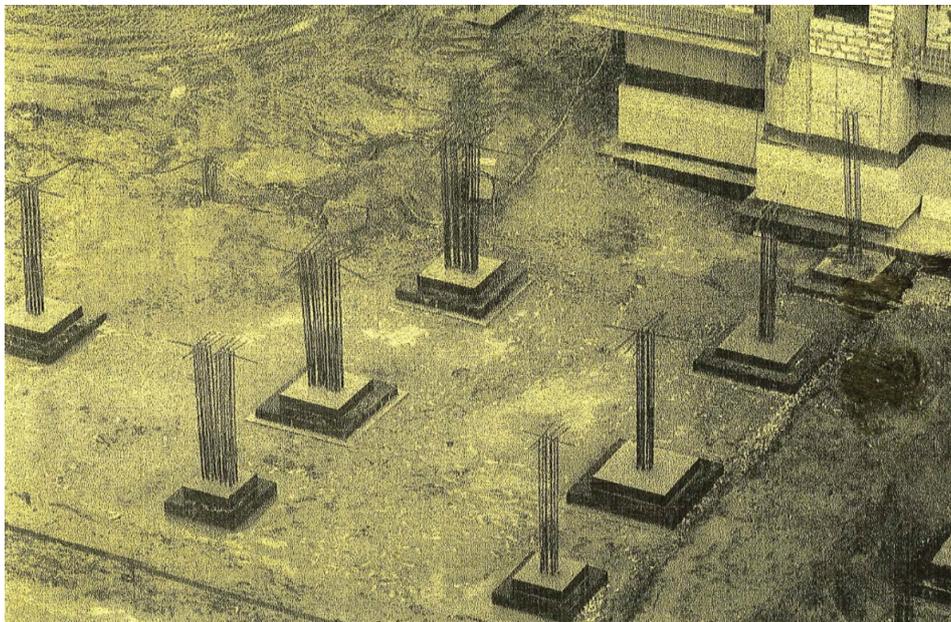
The Task and Finish Group heard that the Shirehall was declared surplus in 2022, by the previous administration, and since that time the focus has been upon preparing the Shirehall for disposal to achieve the maximum capital receipt, in order to achieve this planning permission needs to be in place. The Estates Manager added that with the certificate of immunity due to expire on 16.09.2026 there is a looming risk to

redevelopment, and on market disposal, and clarified that Cornovii would be required to bid on the open market alongside other potential buyers.

The Estates Manager for Acquisitions & Disposals was asked about private sector investment by way of a joint venture and stated that *“there is no ‘free money’ and for a JV scenario to materialise, the Council would need to take a lease back on the building at market or above market rents for a long period (at least 15 years) or alternatively provide funding and guaranteed profit margins to the private sector partner.”*

Shirehall Architect

During their discussions with one of the original architects of the Shirehall in the 1960’s the Task and Finish Group heard about the grid layout of piles underground on site, which are substantial groundworks created to support the upper structure, as shown in the following site illustration –



The architect explained how, in his opinion, the location of these could impact and potentially restrict future development. These piles are classed as ‘abnormals’ and the cost to working around these will decrease the land value. It was his conclusion that there is no open ground larger than 16 feet by 16 feet (the size of a double garage) under all of the office blocks. Original drawings evidence this. Due to the fact that conventional foundations would be difficult and therefore laying foundations more expensive and drainage runs made complex and expensive the site is less attractive for residential development.

Feedback from the architect included *“I have located all the main piles from the columns and have concluded that there is such a concentration of piles under the office blocks that there are only small areas on the outer edge of the blocks that can be excavated for a foundation. I estimate 16 feet 16 feet, less than a small house. Also to*

excavate a straight run for drainage without hitting piles is almost impossible. This is my research and mine alone and has not been shared with the other groups. If you decide to use it I would appreciate my name being brought forward as the author as I have enough technical information to counter any challenges that may arise.”

Shropshire Council Senior Mechanical Design Engineer

The Group heard next from a Senior Mechanical Design Engineer, within Property Services at Shropshire Council who explained that the Shirehall air conditioning was designed so that every square metre of every floor gets an appropriate amount of fresh air, preheated by air handling units in the plant room. 70% of the heating delivered is tempered air, suited for humidity as well. There is continuous heating in all the wings around the windows, and this can be tweaked to ensure a comfortable heating level to suit one side of the building to another.

However, the reconfiguration of many of the rooms over time, with moveable partitions, has meant that rooms are rearranged without the sensors or controls being reconfigured appropriately. These controls and sensors would need attention as would the perimeter heating, but in his opinion, this would be easy managed with regular cleaning and desludging of the pipes.

He added that the opening windows would need non opening secondary glazing to improve the thermal performance of the building appreciably, whilst there is already some secondary glazing on upper floors, completion of this throughout the building would address most issues of temperature. He confirmed that the fenestration was sound, and that double glazing would be a very expensive option, but with secondary glazing and attention to the heating system the mechanical and heating engineer felt that the building would be efficient, functional and comfortable, adding that there is a lot of natural light making it a pleasant bright working environment.

In his evidence to the Group the Senior Mechanical Design Engineer explained that Shirehall was a very advanced building for its time, and its maintenance costs over 60 years per square metre have been less than modern buildings.

When questioned on the heating system he confirmed that it is still functional but due to being switched off it would require recommissioning. The boilers only installed in 2012 are considered efficient.

When asked specifically about its functionality he said that it is more reliable than modern systems, longer lasting, more easily repairable and more flexible.

Subsequent to the witness session the Senior Mechanical Design Engineer sent through the following statement -

“The bulk of the options that are being discussed revolve around demolition and redevelopment of the site, or some kind of joint venture redevelopment. For a council

facing financial difficulties I, and many other staff, are astonished that the simplest, quickest and most long term cost effective solution of simply moving back to Shirehall is not being pursued. It is not too big even with homeworking because it would allow many scattered leased and maintained properties to be disposed of, or let to other organisations, while council staff are under one roof – the most efficient way of working. The message I would hope to get across is that Shirehall has been judged viable, for its original purpose, by technically qualified officers familiar with maintaining it, in the fairly recent past. Up until Covid 2021 Shirehall was a fully functioning building, albeit tired in places through neglect of maintenance. I'd like to bring up the quoted costs of refurbishing Shirehall which are very misleading and confusing. There has been confusion over what is meant by refurbishment and the conflicting costs quoted. This all goes back to 2015 when we were moving back into Shirehall from Guildhall The two main options being considered by the new leader Malcolm Pate at that time were a modest refurbishment and catch-up (which was investigated by surveyors in PSG, people who knew the building and could target only what needed to be done) which was costed at £3.8M and also a major refurb. I was involved in both which I guess is how my name came up here. The major total strip out refurbishment feasibility study was done by external architects and initially costed at £14m, then £25m then more - totally unnecessary but is still the basis of the current refurbishment cost quoted in December's Strategic review of £54M. It wouldn't cost this much in central London !. (The 2025 edition of Spon's Architects and Builders price book shows a total strip out and refurb of a civic office building the size of Shirehall in central London would cost on average £2900 per m2 or £35M in total and in Shrewsbury very much less). But it doesn't have to be so. In 2020 we internally produced a revised modest refurb schedule. Some work had been done by then (from the 2015 report) , and more priorities were added to address criticisms of comfort and safety and energy efficiency. There had been a critical fire safety report adding £900K and we addressed the single glazing and roof so the overall figure had gone up to about £4.7M but this report was not put forward because councillors had voted in July to vacate Shirehall regardless. Obviously another up-to-date review would be needed but importantly the works identified can be done progressively as finances allow without the delays and risks attached to redevelopment. We hear scare words like "asbestos" - yes, Shirehall contains asbestos, just like most of our schools, but like them it is managed. Shirehall was a very advanced building for it's day designed specifically for the sort of use and transport accessibility we need. It's maintenance costs over 60 years per square metre have been less than modern buildings. We would then have a wholly owned and paid for centre for the future, easily accessible from all over the county, with ongoing savings from re-lets and disposals."

Shropshire Council Service Manager for Economic Development

When the Task and Finish Group called the Service Manager for Economic Development to speak with them, they discussed mixed use opportunities for Shirehall, both as a

spacious offices with a hotel, conference centre, leisure facilities and general promotion of broader economic development benefits. They heard that there could be huge potential here, and a valuable economic opportunity, reflecting upon the existing 730,000 to 800,000 bed nights per year already in the Shrewsbury area, and the towns footfall of 10.5million visitors a year equating to the fact that two thirds of visitors only come for one day. Recruit a Destination Management Officer (2-year post) to promote Shirehall and Shrewsbury.

The Group also discussed further education and apprenticeship opportunities, business support programmes, and small business assistance.

It was felt that a full market assessment would help provide the insights required to fully understand the economic value and opportunities that could be realised, taking into consideration economic impact, what the market need is and what interest is out there.

The Twentieth Century Society

The Task and Finish Group also heard from the Twentieth Century Society who aim to protect post 1940's heritage, maintaining that the greenest and most sustainable buildings are those that already exist. In their discussions the Task and Finish Group heard how a joint venture partner might reimagine the Shirehall and bring it back into use, through creative reuse and retrofit. It was suggested that with appropriate upkeep, maintenance and repair, the design, craft, beauty, materials and history of the building could be reflected.

They showed a number of other projects that have been successfully completed and evidenced how Modernist structures can be attractively repurposed for contemporary uses bring economic and social benefits to their areas.

They also highlighted a number of far newer buildings that are already considered unfit for purpose and needing to undergo refit. They stressed that new is not always better, and made their case as follows -

“The Shirehall was built between 1963 and 1966 to the designs of the County Architects’ Department, led by County Architect Ralph Crowe, and working with the structural engineers Ove Arup and Partners. The Shirehall was described by the architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner in his guide to Shropshire as ‘The major monument to post-war Modernism in the county’.

As you all know the building is still subject to a COI which is about to expire later this year. And we have just been consulted on another COI for the building, if granted this would give immunity from listing until 2030. However, we strongly believe that, while unlisted, the Shirehall still has clear and strong heritage value and that this will only increase over time. The bar for listing Twentieth Century Buildings, and particularly post

war buildings, is very high. The number of listed buildings in England is estimated to be somewhere between 400-500,000 – approximately 2% of all building stock. The entire Twentieth Century accounts for just 3.2% of all listed buildings and about 0.2% relates to buildings built after 1945.

The Shirehall was built as one of several civic centres built in England in the post-war period. More civic offices were needed in the second half of the Twentieth Century as local authorities increased their share of the workforce from 6% to 10% between 1952 and 1972. They were often grand and imposing buildings and played an important role in conveying the identity and centrality of the local government.

But Post-war county halls and civic centres are now a threatened typology. In many cases, councils have decided that the buildings no longer meet their operational requirements—and, for many councils, their working habits have changed post-Covid—and/or the costs of necessary upgrades and maintenance are considered too high, making demolition and redevelopment an attractive option. This has resulted in the loss of several important post-war civic buildings. “

Quarterbridge Project Management Ltd

The Task and Finish Group also met with a joint venture specialist who had previously sent in a report to the members of the Task and Finish Group with an impartial commercial assessment of considered opportunities for a joint venture approach.

“A JV refurbishment offers the financial advantages of refurbishing and re-using the Shirehall building and delivering refurbished offices for the Council. This is preferable to the current proposal of demolition for residential redevelopment. It would also offer other benefits to the balance sheet from follow-on actions and support for wider policy objectives. A development agreement with a private sector would deliver development capital without the Council increasing its indebtedness to the Public Works Loans Board. It would help overcome the wider financial challenges faced by the Council and support its application for Extraordinary Financial Assistance when presented to the MHCLG. JV's are often used to deliver regeneration projects where the partner provides the development finance, delivers the project to an agreed specification and bears any cost overruns. In this case the design would include refurbished offices for Council use. The partner would hold a legal interest which enables it to retain income from space not required by Council and after moving into the refurbished offices the Council can rationalise its surplus offices to further benefit the balance sheet. Avoiding further indebtedness to the PWLB is a priority for Shropshire Council. It would demonstrate to MHCLG how it is adopting innovative strategies to resolve its challenges and can be used to support the Council's application for Extraordinary Financial Support. It would enable the Council to retain the freehold and release value from an existing asset protected by step-in rights as head landlord and through the agreement to safeguard the

Council's interests and keep open options to dispose of or borrow against its interest in the future. It would deliver four key strategic objectives:

- *Release value from an existing asset by attracting private sector finance*
- *Enable rationalisation of the Council's landholdings to boost the balance sheet*
- *Support the Councils application for Extraordinary Financial Support*
- *Provide refurbished offices for Council use at modest cost"*

Mindful of the financial crisis at Shropshire Council, and supportive of the endeavour to review assets the report advised that the building was well designed when conceived but doesn't meet modern standards, however, it stated a belief that Shirehall can be adapted. The joint venture specialist proposed that the Task and Finish Group should consider the joint venture route, setting a timetable for formal appraisal, but added that it could be a time consuming process likely to need external specialist assistance. This might include a dedicated project group, a project manager, and a quantity surveyor for length of project to approve on behalf of the Council what the partner is doing and keep very much on top of the very intense process.

Adding that with a well negotiated joint venture scheme the usual practice is that the costs would be subsumed by the private sector partner.

The Task and Finish Group heard that there was likely to be a good return both financially and socially to a joint venture scheme, and learned that in the first instance an offer prospectus would need to be prepared for soft market testing to get a shortlist of developers / interested parties for evaluation and narrowing down to shortlist. The Group heard that this was usual practice and would involve no commitment at this stage, as part of standard procurement practise.

There was some debate as to how a joint venture arrangement differed from a PFI one, whilst similar they are not the same and have evolved a lot over the years. He said that the Council could be a tenant and even act as landlord to other users. At point of income return in some arrangements income splits between Council as freeholder and the JV partner.

Save Our Shirehall

The Task and Finish Group asked whether Save Our Shirehall would be open to the joint venture approach as a way to save the building and were told that Save Our Shirehall believe it is critical to see the building refurbished, reused, and bought back to life, restoring the value of the building to the community as intended. The Save Our Shirehall witnesses understood that with a move towards hybrid working the building would not reach potential without partners but acknowledged that it has a wide range of uses including upward extension following its original stepped design.

The Task and Finish Group discussed how value of the Shirehall is showcased in the architectural features ahead of its time, good design, specialist materials, clear design aesthetic and spacious work areas.

By comparison Guildhall lacks desk space and no place for private meetings incurs travel inefficiencies, risks of car park flooding and lost parking revenue of £375k per year.

Save Our Shirehall believe that from a community engagement point of view the Shirehall is the better suited building in that it allows for public interaction with the democratic process.

Save Our Shirehall felt that a lack of vision had hindered Shirehall's future use,

“Demolition of Shirehall is divestment of a free asset which some in leadership team may see as a liability. We suggest this lacks vision and evidence based assessment of Shirehall cost/benefits compared with Guildhall particularly and new build.”

However, they added that the flexibility of construction in the original design and its adaptability would be an asset in bringing together disparate council functions into one unit and allow disposal of scattered leased offices on numerous sites. Adding that stilted housing on the rear of the site could be developed at no cost to parking space

“Shirehall should be considered in the context of the example in Shrewsbury of the recovery of the Market Hall into a vibrant civic facility for Shrewsbury and visitors which supports many small businesses.

For the Shirehall a presumption of exciting potential should replace the present presumption of negative ‘not fit for purpose’ clearly demonstrated by similar examples across the UK.”

Shrewsbury Civic Society

The Task and Finish Group members heard about the history and ethos of the Shrewsbury Civic Society and that in terms of heritage value and carbon cost it makes sense to reuse the building that the greenest building – is the one already in existence. Adding that if Shropshire Council truly believed Shirehall to be beyond economic repair, they would have taken the step to have the rates removed and save money, not doing so suggests that the Council believe the building is salvageable.

Shrewsbury Civic Society expressed the professional belief that current fire safety issues at Shirehall are manageable in their experience. The presence of asbestos in a building of this age is only to be expected and we haven't demolished every building containing it. The costs of asbestos removal were discussed in light of the briefing paper from Shropshire Council. This paper stated that removal of asbestos for demolition can be 2 to 4 times more expensive than works to deal with asbestos for

refurbishment. Asbestos is only dangerous when it is disturbed. There will of course be some structural repairs to a building this age as expected. Their structural engineer offered to read the technical reports in confidence at no cost to Shropshire Council to give his opinion. They explained that there is an assumption that new build is cheaper than retrofit, but without costings for either option it is difficult to make that assertion. They did highlight that costings included in the December Report to Council stated that the costs to refurbish Shirehall were calculated on £2,500m2 compared to £5,000m2 to build new. The Civic Society urged the Task and Finish Group to recognise the building as an asset rather than a liability, suggesting that market advice is sought in the form of an Architectural Competition, a bid for involvement, ensuring that the best professional people have input towards saving the site. This would involve little cost to the Council. They added that by looking after and valuing the building and asking for ideas, the market will come forward. Allowing the Council to design the brief and set the value. They suggested the concept of an 'urban village' encompassing economic and social value benefits and seeing its regeneration in the wider context of opening up the potential of Shrewsbury and wider Shropshire. They highlighted how the Market Hall was once derided but is now a much loved and award-winning part of the town.

Some of their suggested illustrations for the potential for the Shirehall were as follows -





The Shirehall, Shrewsbury: A future built on the past

Building a Vibrant Neighbourhood

The existing Shirehall buildings and spaces in between have the potential to become a vibrant neighbourhood that can be well integrated into the wider area. Our vision is to transform the site into a cohesive, sustainable, and thriving community space that respects the architectural legacy of The Shirehall.



Internal courtyard with community café



Heritage

Retaining the existing buildings will enhance any development. The Shirehall is a non-designated heritage asset. Retention and sympathetic reuse will assist with the site's transition, avoid the cost of demolition, and add continuity and maturity to the development.

"There is nothing else quite like it in the county...this is an excellent civic building, well-made and individual"
Owen Hatherley, Modern Buildings in Britain: A Gazetteer (2022)

Masterplan

Retaining the existing structures on the site offers significant environmental, social and financial benefits, as well as generating a future income stream.

A well considered masterplan for the site could incorporate the following brief whilst retaining the existing building:

- Medical practice
- Community café
- Council facilities
- Residential care facility
- Residential units
- Other uses (gym, nursery, pub)

This could be achieved in partnership with private companies looking to create a unique and characterful development.

NO DEMOLITION



Public square reimagined

Subsequent to the meeting on the 9th February the Task and Finish Group members have held a number of individual meetings to close gaps in evidence, these were with Shropshire Council Planning officers, Finance officers, Economic Development officers, and Unison.

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