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Council

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DECISION NOTICE – COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BID

Reference: 2016.004

24 August 2016

Proposed Asset of Community Value – Higham Ferrers Library
Nominated By: Higham Ferrers Town Council - 29/06/16
Deadline for listing decision: 24/08/16
Current Owner – Northamptonshire County Council
Action Taken Prior to Decision <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Notification to current owner of nomination• Consultation with Chair of Policy and Resources Committee (Cllr R Lewis) and Ward Members for both Chichele and Lancaster Wards (Cllrs Saunston, Gell, Harwood and Whiting) as required under Council's Community Right to Bid Policy• Additional information sought from Northamptonshire County Council (owner)
Considerations <p><i>Does the proposed asset meet the definition of an asset of community value specified in Section 88 (1) paragraphs (a) and (b) of the Localism Act 2011 i.e. the main (i.e. non-ancillary) use furthers the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community, or has recently done so, and is likely to do so in the future (during the next five years)?</i></p> <p><i>History of the Site</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The property was originally known as St Mary's Parish Rooms and built in 1906 with money provided by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge and cash from town residents to provide the furnishings. .• It was occupied as a hospital during World War One and then was acquired by the Ministry of Defence during the World War Two for use as a base for the ambulance services. It was subsequently used for events such as a Civic Ball in 1966.• It was sold circa 1967/68/69 for £10,000 to Northamptonshire County Council where it has been used as a Library• Until very recently the building was also a Children's Centre and hosted Surestart, but the funding for this has been withdrawn.• The building has a large upstairs meeting room to hire and smaller downstairs meeting room as well as the Library.

Evidence of recent community use that furthers the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community provided by the nominator:

- The library acts as the local Tourist Information Point
- It provides community access to Computers, Broadband, Internet, Printer and Scanner.
- Activities for under 5s include Rhyme time, Play and Learn for the under 1's, Community Stay and Play, Mother and Toddler Group
- Adult Activities include an Adult Craft Group, IT Buddy in the Library, Knit and Natter, Classic Music Society, Material Ladies, Craft Fair near Christmas, Archaeological based Events
- In the past there has been sessions on Baby Health, Baby Massage, Baby Talk, Bedtime stories and sleep advice, Breastfeeding Support, Come and cook with us, Dads Matter, First Steps, Fit for your Buggy Walk, Lets Get Active, Little Explorers, Little Green Fingers, Mini Maestros, Outdoor Crafts, Small Talk, and Adult Painting Classes.

Evidence of Future Community Use

The nominator's intention is preserve the function/activities of the property as listed above if purchase of the property were to be successful.

Does the proposed asset meet any of the criteria for exemption specified in Section 88 (3) and associated regulations?

There is no evidence that the asset meets any of the criteria for exemption. The owner, Northamptonshire County Council has raised no objection to the nomination.

The views of the Chair of Policy and Resources Committee and Ward Member

Cllr R Lewis (Chair of Policy and Resources Committee) and three ward member supported the nomination. Cllr Harwood specifically comments that he believed the Higham Ferrers Library, in its wider role, provides and improves upon those areas of social wellbeing and interest that are so important to the local community.

Decision

Having considered all the factors above, it is my view that the nominated asset falls within the category of an asset of community value as defined by the Localism Act and associated regulations and that it should be listed as such by this council.



Sharn Matthews
Executive Director
23/8/16