

Consultation on future of the Armstrong Hall

Redevelopment of the Armstrong Hall - The story so far

Improvement to the facilities currently provided at the Armstrong Hall have been a long term priority for Thornbury and the Town Council who act as sole managing trustee of the Armstrong Hall complex. In the Autumn of 2017 the Town Council and Armstrong Hall Trust undertook consultation jointly with South Gloucestershire Council on the future location of community facilities in the town that looked at how and where the library and the Armstrong Hall facilities could be based in the future.

In December South Gloucestershire Council made the decision to relocate the Library to Turnberries. With regards to how the facilities currently provided at the Armstrong Hall could be delivered, overall 75% of respondents to the consultation favoured improving facilities on the existing Armstrong Hall site.

The main issues raised through the consultation were:

- The location of the Turnberries site, the current Armstrong hall was preferred as it was seen as more accessible and centrally located
- The loss of a locally controlled asset and the lack of information about potential ownership and governance if facilities were moved to Turnberries
- Criticism of the plans for the Armstrong Hall for lacking detail and ambition
- Concerns about the loss of the historic Coshham Hall and what would happen on the Armstrong hall site if it was sold for redevelopment
- Questions about how the museum would be affected and provided for
- Concerns about how the different options would be funded and the viability of the business plans

The Armstrong Hall Trust and Town Council have listened to the views expressed through the Autumn consultation and have spent the past few months undertaking further work to address the main issues raised. This consultation enables us to share with you further information and to gather your views on a new additional option which has been developed.

What options are now being considered?

The current condition of the existing Armstrong Hall means that continuing with re-active repairs and maintenance will no longer be sustainable beyond the next few years. The deteriorating condition of the building and the facilities available mean that the building will become unsafe to operate, financially unviable and will not meet the needs or expectations of the community or our users.

As a result of this, the Trust and Town Council believe that a 'Do Nothing Option' is not viable or sustainable and is therefore committed to working with the community to raise the significant investment necessary to ensure that this valued community facility can operate and serve the needs of our growing town for at least the next 20 years. To achieve this, the Trust and Town Council are considering three options to improve the existing facilities and this consultation seeks the views of the community on which option should be progressed.

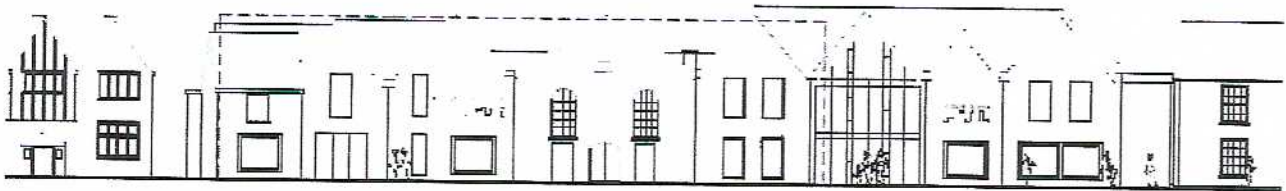
Please note that all costings provided as part of this consultation are estimates only and subject to change as further work will be required as the project evolves and more details and information becomes available.

Option 1: Rebuild of facilities on the existing Armstrong Hall site

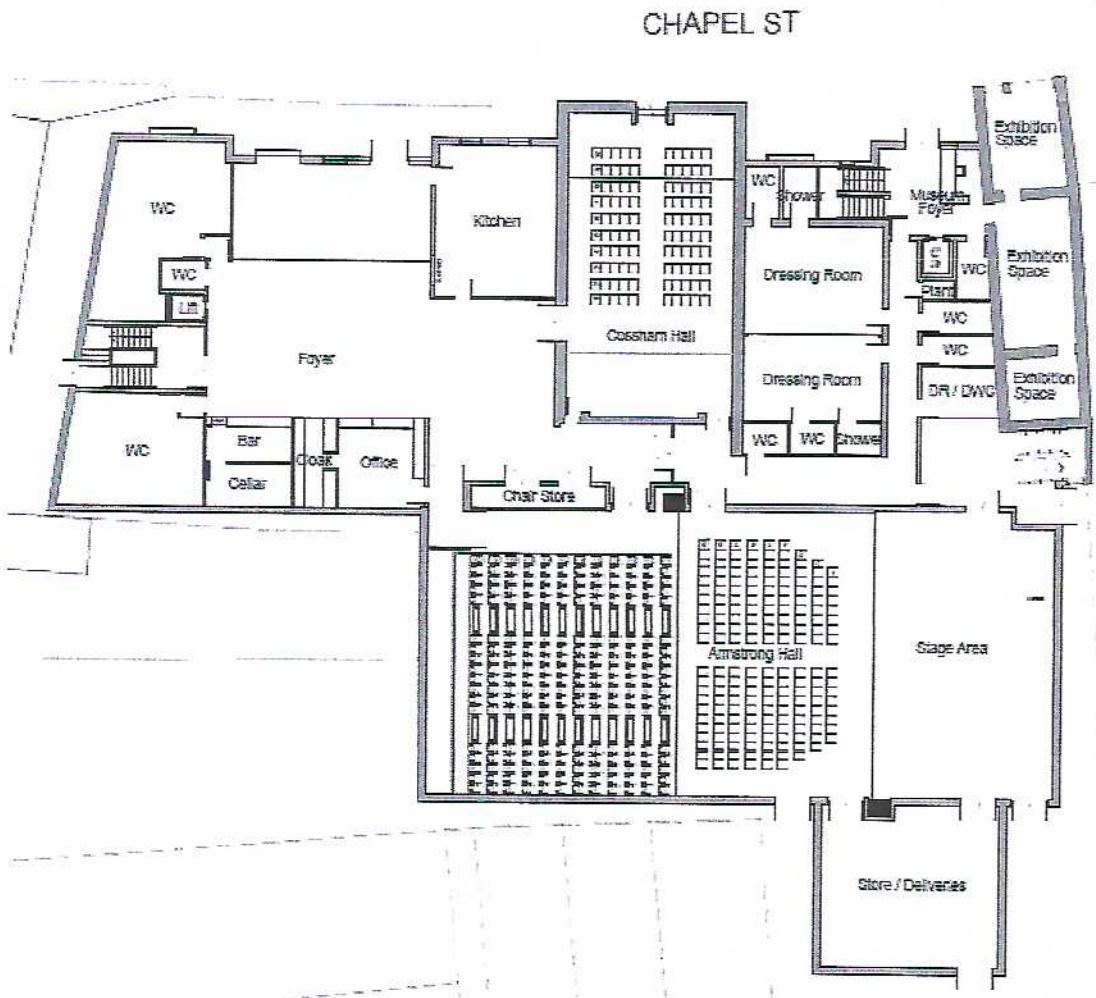
This is a new option that has been developed as a result of feedback from the previous consultation. It is estimated that this would cost approx £4.9 million.

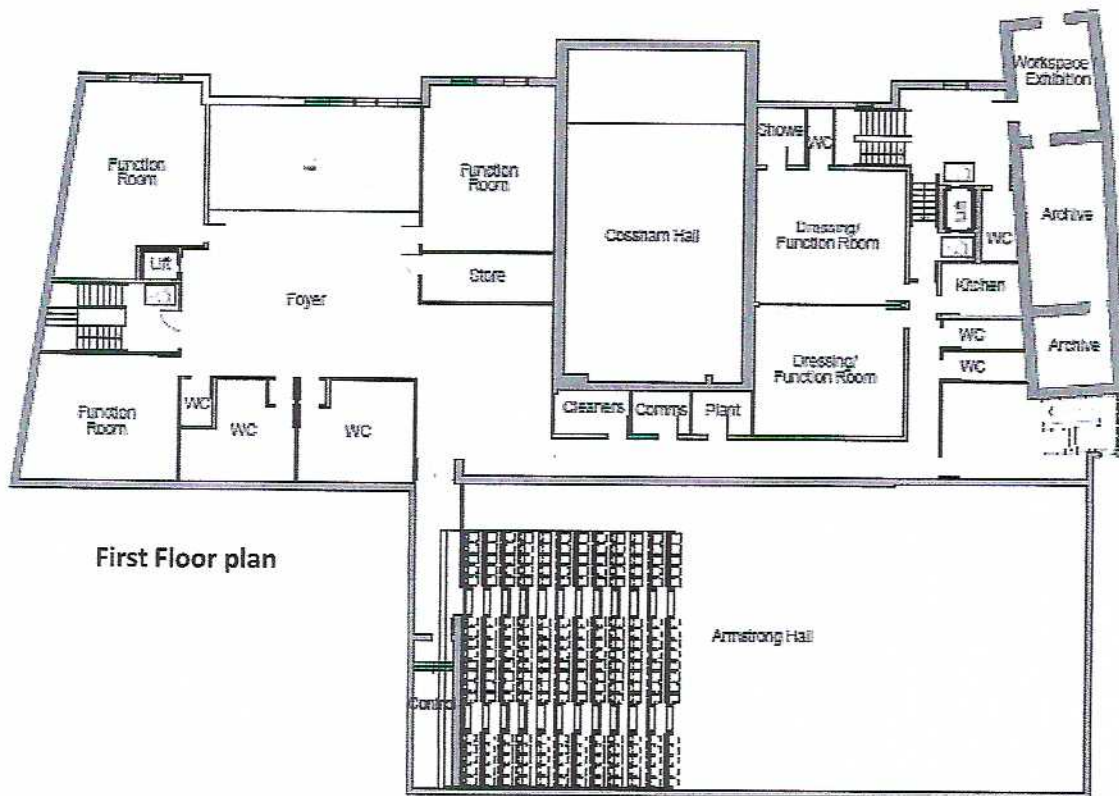
This option would see the existing facilities demolished and replaced with a larger capacity and multi use hall, significantly larger stage and performance space and additional meeting rooms to meet the growing population of Thornbury and the surrounding area. The historic Cossham Hall would be refurbished and incorporated into the new building and access to the museum would be improved. Further work would need to be done to see whether the existing museum building could be adapted and refurbished or demolished and replaced with a similar footprint. If this option was progressed, the site would remain locally controlled although significant changes would need to be made to the governance, management and operation of the new facility.

Front elevation



Ground Floor plan





Option 1: Rebuild of facilities on the existing Armstrong Hall site

Advantages

- Cossham Hall is retained and incorporated
- Significant opportunity to improve income generation to support running costs
- Improved accessibility to the museum
- Increase in seating capacity of replacement Armstrong Hall and improved performance facilities
- Increase in facilities to support growing community
- Fully accessible and efficient to operate building
- Additional car parking can be provided on site
- Configuration of facilities would allow for better occupancy and usage of rooms by multiple users
- Increasing capacity and improving facilities on offer is more likely to be supported by external grant funding

Disadvantages

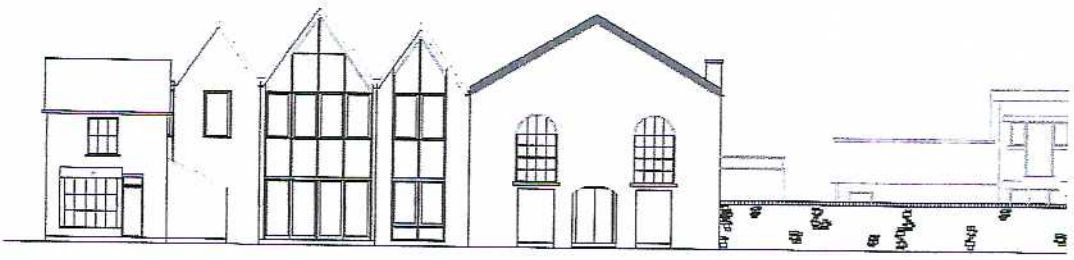
- Most expensive of the three options
- Significant disruption to users who would need to be relocated during any construction works
- Funding needs to be in place for whole works to be undertaken in a single construction phase
- Public access through the site would be restricted

Option 2: Refurbishment of the existing facilities at the Armstrong Hall site

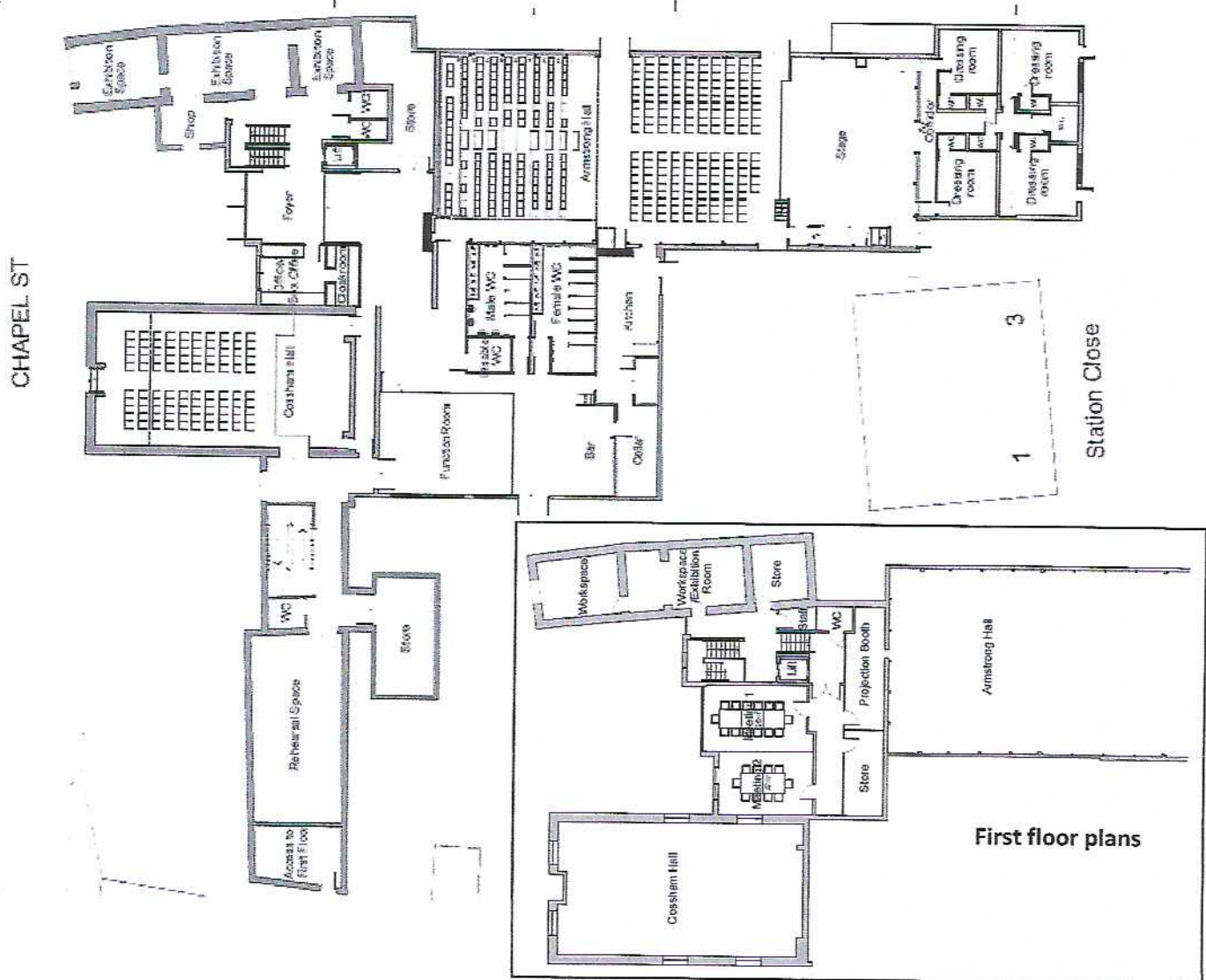
The plans for this option have been revised to provide further detail which was requested during the previous consultation. The costings have also been updated and now stand at approx. £2.85 million.

This option would see the Armstrong and Cossham Halls refurbished and provides new dressing rooms, improved accessibility to the museum and more toilets and foyer space, heating and other systems would be upgraded, the roof repaired and doors and windows replaced. If this option was progressed, the site would remain under local control with some changes possible to governance, management and operations.

Front elevation



Ground floor plans



First floor plans

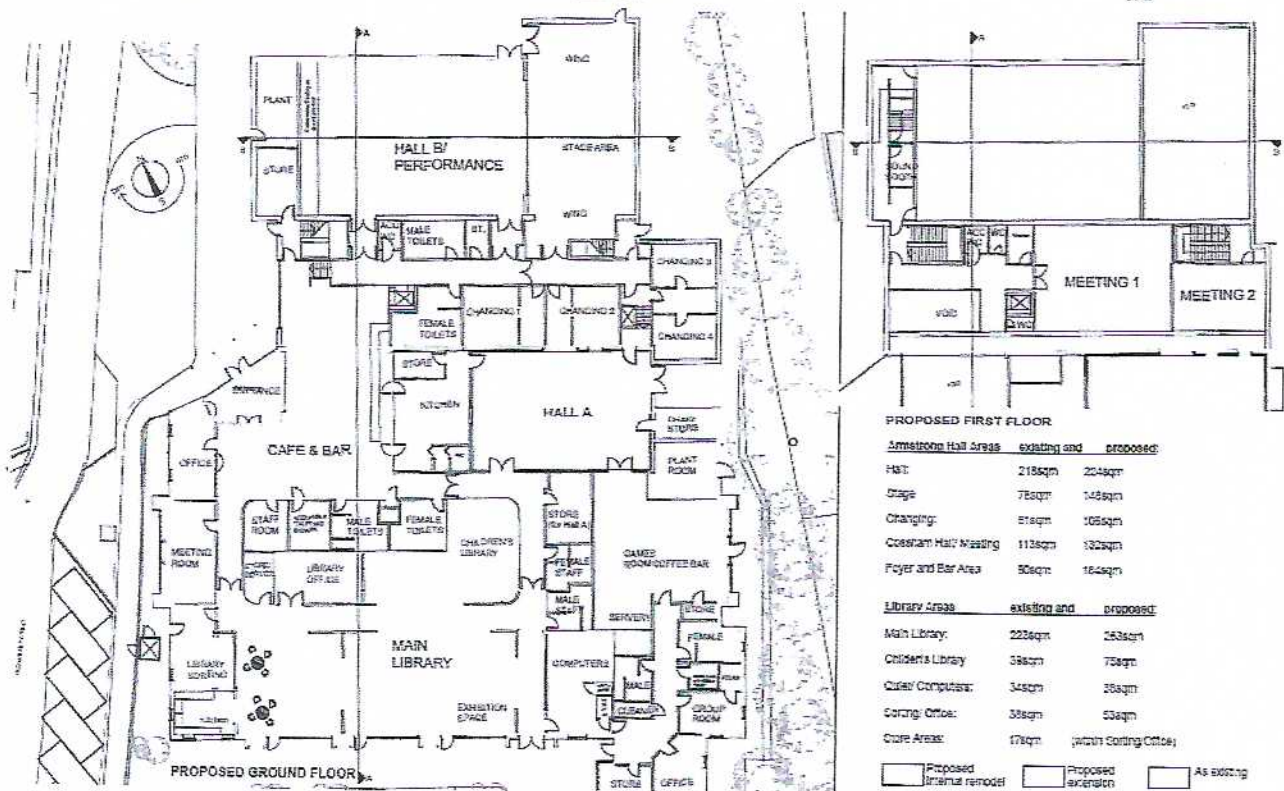
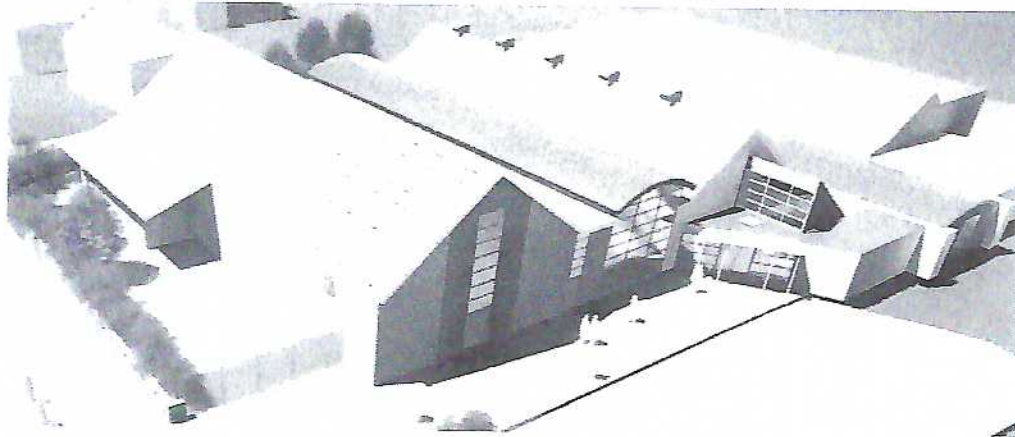
Option 2: Refurbishment of the existing facilities at the Armstrong Hall

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lowest cost option• Would extend the life of the building and address immediate repair and maintenance issues• Would provide additional changing rooms, foyer and toilet space• There is potential for the building to remain part operational whilst elements of the work are ongoing• Works can be phased as funding becomes available• Improves accessibility of the Museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not provide additional capacity or facilities to support growing community• Does not address significant shortcomings in current performance space• Limited potential for additional income generation to support business plan• Long term, this option offers the least value for money• Significant risk that full site survey will uncover additional works and the building will require further investment to maintain in the future• Reduction in on site car parking• Access through the site would be lost

Option 3: Relocate to a new build extension at Turnberries

The plans and approximate costings for this option remain unchanged from the Autumn, with further information now available on ownership and governance issues as well as the potential future use of the current Armstrong Hall site which were significant concerns raised through the last consultation.

This option is estimated to cost approximately £4 million depending on the exact split of costs between the Armstrong Hall extension and planned library works. It would provide a larger performance hall and stage than the current Armstrong hall, associated dressing rooms and a new meeting room. Other facilities such as toilets, foyer space, office, cafe and bar would be shared with the existing Turnberries building.



If this option is progressed, it is proposed that the existing Armstrong Hall site would be sold for redevelopment, and the proceeds used to part fund the new facilities at Turnberries. Since the previous consultation, we have undertaken further work and sought advice on the development potential and associated valuation of the site. This has significantly reduced the capital receipt the site would be likely able to generate and increased the amount of alternative funding that would need to be found to fund these works.

South Gloucestershire Council owns the Turnberries site and it is currently operated under a lease by the Thornbury Community Building Trust. South Gloucestershire Council have confirmed that they will not transfer the freehold of the site to a locally based organisation if the Town Council and Armstrong Hall Charitable Trust were to invest the proceeds from the current Armstrong Hall site and additional investment into a new build extension. Instead they would be prepared to offer the operation of any new building on a 50 year lease to a locally based organisation and further discussions and negotiations with the current site operators would be required to discuss how this would be managed, who would operate it and the appropriate governance model.

Option 3: Relocate to a new build extension at Turnberries

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can provide the majority of facilities required • Ability to join up services with the library, which South Gloucestershire Council have chosen to relocate to the site • Provides a modern and efficient building • Configuration of facilities would allow for better occupancy and usage of Armstrong Hall replacement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site would not be owned locally • Would require significant changes to governance to merge existing facilities and management • Loss of the Cossham Hall • Not able to accommodate Museum in this location • Significant risks associated with the disposal of Armstrong Hall site on timescales and funding • The Turnberries site is not seen as conveniently located or as accessible as the existing site • This option was not supported by the community through the earlier consultation

The preference of the Armstrong Hall trustees

All three options being considered as part of this consultation are viable and have the potential to provide the facilities currently available at the Armstrong Hall to a more modern standard. Albeit with differing advantages and disadvantages, benefits and compromises, level of facilities provided and costs.

Having considered the previous consultation results, the work undertaken to date on the new rebuild option and information now available about the relocation option concerning ownership, governance and site redevelopment potential, the Armstrong Hall Trustees current preference is to remain on the existing Armstrong Hall site and look at how best to provide the greatest overall value for money and improvements to facilities that will serve Thornbury for the future.

It is therefore crucial that local people provide their views and opinions on this once in a generation decision concerning such an important community facility in order that this can be reflected in the final decision as to which option is progressed.

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Decision Announced on the Future of the Armstrong Hall

THE Armstrong Hall Trust, whose sole managing trustee at present is Thornbury Town Council, had made the decision on the option to pursue a new build of the Armstrong Hall on the existing site. The decision followed detailed work on three options that were considered: to relocate to Turnberrie's, to refurbish the existing Hall or to rebuild on the existing site. The three options had been subject to Community Consultation and the community voted strongly in favour of the rebuild option with eighty per cent of the two hundred and eighty five respondents to the survey choosing the option. The remaining vote was eighteen per cent in support of the refurbishment option and only one per cent voting for the relation to Turnberrie's.

Councillor Clive Parkinson, Chair of the Armstrong Hall redevelopment group said, "On balance the Armstrong Hall Trust believes that at this time the new build option is the preferred route to take forward. This is also the clear preferred option of the Thornbury public in their response to the consultations. This does not mean that we know what the final design will look like, only that we have a design that we feel would be preferable to the refurbishment option. The consultations have thrown up many questions and suggestions and the Trust will consider all of these as it takes the project forward. The Armstrong Hall Trust will also want to encourage individuals who have experience or expertise in such a project to join the Working Group and help the town develop an exciting and appropriate successor to the existing Armstrong Hall that has served Thornbury so well for nearly fifty years."

Councillor Helen Harrison, Mayor of Thornbury and Chair of the Hall Trust said, "We wish to thank the public for their great response to the consultation which enables the Council to make a decision knowing it has the support and backing of the public, who we hope will get involved in this exciting project for Thornbury and create a wonderful legacy for the town."

Copies of the consultation report are available from the Town Hall or by visiting the website www.thornburytowncouncil.gov.uk ■

THORNBURY IN BLOOM PLANT SALE If you are starting a new garden or breathing fresh life into an established garden area don't forget the Thornbury in Bloom Plant sale on Saturday 19 May off the High Street by the Town Hall from 10am until 2 pm. We are well known for having lots of good plants at very reasonable prices ... new residents take note!

OLD DOWN ESTATE What's on at Old Down Estate for May & June?

<p>Wedding Fayre at the Manor 13th MAY</p>	<p>Dinosaur Discovery 30th & 31st MAY 2nd JUN</p>	<p>Wedding Fayre at the Barn 7th JUN</p>
<p>Charity Music Festival 9th JUN</p>	<p>Father's Day Carvery 17th JUN Her Part of We for Dad.</p>	<p>Venue Hire Children's Parties, Special Events, Weddings, Wakes and etc.</p>

OLD DOWN ESTATE, FOXHOLES LANE, BRISTOL BS32 4PG | WWW.OLDDOWNESTATE.CO.UK/CALENDAR