

As the debate about the proposals for Hornsey Town Hall rages on, what is often overlooked is the fundamental reason for the E.U. procurement process: the need to finance the full repair, restoration and refurbishment of the magnificent Grade II\* listed building, with its historic spaces retained for public and arts use.

Haringey Council has been looking for a long-term solution for Hornsey Town Hall for well over two decades. In the meantime, ANA, the team currently running the Arts Centre at HTH, has done an heroic job in covering up the cracks and opening the doors to the public.

Without a developer involved, who is going to come up with the estimated £10million that Hornsey Town Hall needs just to get it off Heritage England's At Risk register, let alone to a fully refurbished standard? Haringey Council certainly doesn't have the resources, particularly with around 40% cuts to its revenue budget.

There is every possibility that the FEC deal could provide that solution for HTH. They plan substantial investment in the restoration of the Town Hall, improvements to the public realm, the creation of and start-up subsidy for an arts centre backed up by a Community Use Agreement that guarantees a *minimum* of 60% of community and arts use throughout the year.

But what FEC still needs to do is earn the trust of the Crouch End community. Our ward councillors are right to express concern that an arts operator still hasn't been announced; we too have repeatedly made it clear to FEC that this appointment is crucial not just to the long-term viability of the project but also to the final design and fit-out of the Town Hall. Similarly, FEC and the council need to address understandable concerns about massing and the absence of affordable housing. The news that the consultation period has been extended to 26 September is welcome; also welcome is the undertaking by FEC that it will publish a detailed cost plan for the restoration and refurbishment of HTH.

The principle of the enabling development paying for the restoration of the Town Hall has long been established and was fundamental to the planning consent granted in 2010. In any complex scheme like this, there is both significant risk and opportunity. Anyone willing to

take on that risk will expect a return commensurate with that risk. Advised by specialist independent Financial Viability Assessors, the council will assess if that return, as it stands at the moment, is appropriate. Part of the financial equation is the significant Public Benefit of restoring the Town Hall against which the provision of affordable housing is measured, all standard practice for local authorities. Recognition of these particular constraints of the HTH project would be a positive step for all those involved in the current debate.

Community bids and other schemes have been tried in the past and haven't been viable. One thing is certain though. We can't afford to let this wonderful building languish for another twenty years.

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