

## **7/12/23 Hastings Town Deal; Castle Project FAQs**

Please note FAQs will be updated as questions are submitted to the Town Deal Inbox, so please ensure you check for any updates.

### **What is the Hastings Town Deal?**

Hastings has been awarded £24.3m from the Government's [Towns Fund](#) to kickstart the regeneration of the town. The programme, which was built around seven project themes, offers Hastings an exciting opportunity to drive forward sustainable growth and prosperity. It will ensure that Hastings will continue to thrive as a healthy, vibrant, and quirky seaside town that people love to visit, live, and work in.

HBC has £3m of 'Town Deal' money to invest in a project to improve the cafe as an interpretation facility (with food and beverage provision) and its access to Hastings' Castle, with modest improvements within the castle itself.

For further information regarding the Hastings Town Deal, please refer to the Town Deal FAQs. [Frequently Asked Questions — Hastings Town Deal](#)

### **What are the key aims for the Castle project?**

The project objectives for these interventions as set out in the Town Investment Plan are as follows:

- Increase in visitors to the West Hill and Hastings Castle
- Increase direct and indirect employment because of higher visitor activity to the castle, café and the town
- Improve visitor experience, perception, and appreciation of a significant heritage asset
- Raise Hastings' profile as a visitor destination more widely
- Improve ground protection of the site by improved access, landscaping and biodiversity.

### **What is the delivery programme?**

We are, at this stage, open to your ideas, plans, indicative costings for delivering this exciting project however the project's current target completion date is October 2026 (the 960<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Hastings).

### **Is the council selling the West Hill Café or the Castle?**

There is no intention for Hastings Borough Council to sell the sites that form the Castle project area (West Hill Café, Ladies Parlour and Hastings Castle)

## **What does an Interpretation Centre mean?**

The Interpretation Centre should help to tell the story of Hastings Castle, we are open to ideas how this can be achieved, whether this using interactive displays or new digital technologies such as virtual and augmented reality. It should also include a flexible educational and learning space for talks, exhibitions or meetings.

The interpretation centre should also have a food or beverage offer (this could be a café or restaurant) as well as retail space for the Castle. The interpretation centre should be broadly located within the boundaries of the current café, the lift and the public toilets.

If proposals include development of the site, it is expected the public toilets will be incorporated as part of the interpretation centre. We envisage the interpretation centre will enhance the West Hill visitor experience for the local community and visiting tourists and make the most spectacular views across the Old Town, the fishing fleet, and the English Channel. The site offers huge potential for an experienced developer and operator of cultural and heritage assets.

Dependent on the nature of proposed development, proposals may be subject to a full planning application, including consultation with Historic England. The café site is in very close proximity the West Hill Lift and the Castle site which is a Scheduled Monument. Any proposals would need to be sensitive to these surroundings.

## **Will the public toilets still be located on the site?**

Yes, the public facilities are expected remain with the café area. If proposals include development of the café area it is expected the facilities will be integrated as part of the interpretation centre.

## **Can we visit the site?**

The café is not currently open to the public, however, access can be arranged by contacting [TownDeal@Hastings.gov.uk](mailto:TownDeal@Hastings.gov.uk) The West Hill Lift and Hastings Castle are both open to the public however please refer to opening times and admission prices. Ladies Parlour is the open, elevated green space between the West Hill Café and the Castle and can be accessed at any time.

## **What is the condition of the West Hill Café?**

The West Hill Café has been closed and vacant for the past 2 years. Detailed building surveys are currently being carried out now the café is back in the possession of Hastings Borough Council.

## **Can we visit the café?**

Café is closed to the public however parties interested in developing the café as part of the Town Deal Castle project can arrange a site visit by contacting [TownDeal@Hastings.gov.uk](mailto:TownDeal@Hastings.gov.uk)

### **Is the café listed?**

The café itself is not listed, however it is in very close proximity the West Hill Lift and the Castle site which is a Scheduled Monument. Any proposals would need to be sensitive to these surroundings and require consultation with Historic England.

Details of the listings can be found below:

[HASTINGS CASTLE, Non-Civil Parish - 1043579 | Historic England](#)

[WEST HILL LIFT, Non-Civil Parish - 1043546 | Historic England](#)

[Hastings Castle, the Collegiate Church of St Mary and the Ladies' Parlour, Non Civil Parish - 1017539 | Historic England](#)

### **Can I apply for a short-term lease of the café?**

The Council is not currently seeking specific enquiries in relation to the short-term leasing of the West Hill Café on the site. This Expression of Interest is regarding the long-term future of the castle and the café site and its development as part of the Town Deal project.

However, HBC do appreciate the café is an asset to the community, as well as tourists who visit the West Hill Lift, Smugglers Adventures and the Castle. The ambition is to bring activity to the café in some capacity whilst the project is being developed. The council is currently undertaking investigations and reports to determine the condition of the building before any short-term options can be explored. More details will be shared when available.

### **Can a group of organisations submit a response to the EOI?**

We welcome proposals from partnered organisations however we ask the details of any partners to be included within your submitted responses.

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