



## Hastings Castle: world heritage destination

### Expressions of Interest Brief – October 2023

This is a call for proposals to develop, build, operate, and maintain the West Hill Cafe as an interpretation centre for the story of Hastings Castle, as well as a restaurant / café and retail space. The proposals should also include access improvements to Ladies Parlour and the Castle itself with improved setting and landscaping of the surrounding grounds.

## Introduction

Hastings Borough Council ('HBC') wishes to appoint an experienced developer and operator of cultural assets in the UK or internationally to significantly improve the visitor offer relating to the castle on the town's West Hill.

Hastings Castle is a scheduled monument and is the only direct link the town has with the battle in 1066 which made it internationally famous. The current offer is poor and attracts only c.30 000 visitors per annum. We think it easily has the potential to attract 100 000 visitors each year, potentially more, and are keen to improve the visitor experience.

The Castle and West Hill café sits atop the West Hill, and a 130-year-old funicular railway, the West Hill Lift, connects Hastings Old Town with the West Hill. The hill includes both Hastings Castle and St Clement's Caves (Smugglers Adventure), as well as 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.

In summary, HBC is looking to work with such a developer/ operator who can design, build, operate, and maintain a new interpretation centre, café, restaurant as well as retail space for the Castle and provide provision of public facilities. These should be broadly within the boundaries of the current café, the lift and the public facilities.

We are, at this stage, open to your ideas, plans, indicative costings for delivering this exciting project.

**Please Note:** The Council is not currently seeking specific enquiries in relation to the 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.

## Background

Hastings has been awarded funding through the Government's Towns Fund to kickstart the regeneration of the town. The programme, which was built around seven project themes, offers Hastings incredible and exciting opportunities 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.

Transforming the café and the castle area into a leading destination is the flagship project of the Hastings Town Investment Plan<sup>1</sup>. It is the project that will capture the imagination and drive a step change in the south coast's visitor economy, with the aim to ensure that Hastings once again becomes a 'must visit' destination.

---

<sup>1</sup> Please note the project development programme, and implementation, as stated in the of the Hastings Town Investment Plan has now changed. Please refer to the supporting document under the "Our work to date" section for up-to-date details.

In early 2023, The Town Deal Board approved the project's business case, and we are now looking for experienced partners to help us deliver the project. 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.

The project objectives for these interventions 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.

The project's target completion date is October 2026 (the 960<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Hastings), with an expectation that the work will be substantially complete by end of 2026.

## **Our work to date**

*For your information the following background documents have been included as part of the expression of interest:*

- [Initial research and feasibility report, Rubicon Regeneration](#)
- [RIBA \(Royal Institute of British Architects\) Stage 1+ Report \(concept designs and initial costings\), Mott MacDonald](#)
- [Statement of Heritage Significance, Mott MacDonald](#)
- [Audience Development plan, interpretation plan, initial business planning, Design Map & Mott MacDonald](#)
- [Community Consultation / stakeholder engagement – As part of RIBA 1 and initial feasibility, Rubicon Regeneration](#)

## **This Expression of Interest Document**

The Council has prepared this Expression of Interest (EOI) to gauge interest from the market on delivering its ambitions for the site and to test the viability of its aspirations as laid out below. Its purpose is to gauge stakeholder and market interest as well as engagement regarding the long-term future of the castle and the café site and its development as part of the Town Deal project.

This is not a call for competition and offers no guarantee of entering into a competition at a future date.

Stakeholders and market providers will not be prejudiced by any response or failure to respond to this exercise. Market providers should also note that a response to this communication does not guarantee an invitation to participate in any future tender opportunity that may be conducted.

Responses should be submitted in accordance with the below.

### **Your Expressions of Interest – Questionnaire**

Market providers should respond to this EOI with a brief statement on their company background and why they are interested in this project with Hastings Borough Council.

Company background should include the following details:

- Details of your organisation size, operation, mission, relevant experience, and assets/ buildings you manage currently
- Your experience of working with heritage and cultural or similar sites
- Full details of any partners you will bring forward to work with you including architects, project management team, operators, individuals and their detailed background and experience
- Any private or other public investments you wish to bring forward to contribute towards the project.

Responses should also include answers to the six questions below.

#### **Questionnaire:**

1. What scope of work could the Council reasonably expect from your proposal given a potential £3,000,000 investment from the Council (subject to cabinet approval)?
2. Would you expect to, or be willing to provide your own investment in the scheme to maximise the potential of the project? If so, what would such an investment look like?
3. The Council has a potential target completion date of the end of 2026. Is this feasible?

4. Should the Council project proceed the appointment of a partner would be subject to a procurement exercise compliant with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Concession Contract Regulations 2016. Would this deter you from participating further?
5. Are there any other comments or concerns you would like to raise as part of this process?
6. Could you please specifically confirm if your responses to the Expression of Interest can be shared publicly or not?

**Full responses to this EOI should be sent to [TownDeal@hastings.gov.uk](mailto:TownDeal@hastings.gov.uk) (with the subject heading: Hastings Castle: Response to EOI) by 8<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

All EOIs will be subject to financial and organisational due diligence and shared with HBC internal and selected external experts for assessments. Additional important clarification points

- Please note this is not a contractual bid and that the Council reserves the right not to continue with any development of the site
- The council is open to suggested and imaginative forms of proposed development and operation of the site with the potential investment available and further investment that may be brought in. We are open to the suggestions that the developer, architect and the operator may be different organisations working together in partnership – but we request detailed information on each organisation
- The operation and management of the West Hill lift will remain with the council although access at the top of the lift may be integrated into the development
- The Hastings Castle site boundary includes the West Hill Cafe, the public facilities, all footpaths leading to Ladies Parlour, the grounds surrounding the castle and Ladies Parlour and the castle itself
- The council may conduct interviews with selected proposers as well as request further additional information on a case-by-case basis
- The council is happy to offer all proposers a tour of the site and surrounding area as requested.
- Responses to the Expression of Interest will be shared with internal HBC officers and selected external experts for assessment.

**Further Information:** Any questions or clarifications to this Expression of Interest should be sent to [TownDeal@hastings.gov.uk](mailto:TownDeal@hastings.gov.uk) by 10<sup>th</sup> November 2023. Frequently asked questions will be collated and added to the [Town Deal blog page](#). If you would like to talk about this expression of interest, please contact Joe Brown at Hastings Borough Council on 07756 772490.



*The West Hill Cafe and West Hill Lift entrance as viewed from Ladies Parlour*

## Site boundary

The following images show the existing site layout, highlighting important features of the site that will all need to be considered as part of the Castle site.

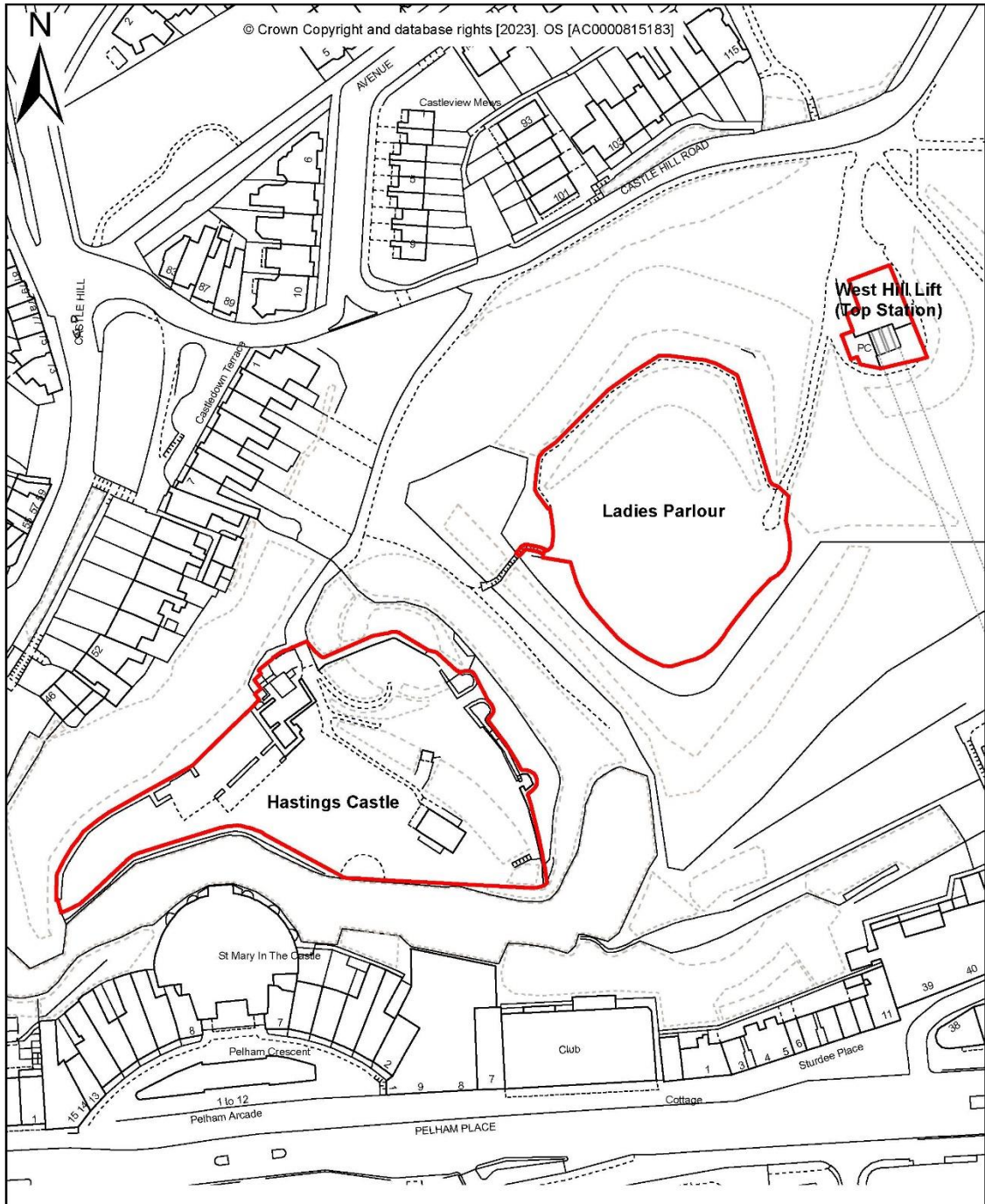
The highlighted areas show main features from the physiographical context, biological context, land use and infrastructural context and cultural and historic context.


**Please note:** the site is a scheduled monument and listed by History England:

[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](#)



<b>Hastings Castle and West Hill Cafe</b>	
Date: Jul 2023	Use of this data is subject to terms and conditions. You are granted a non-exclusive, royalty free, revocable licence solely to view the Licensed Data for non-commercial purposes for the period during which Hastings Borough Council makes it available. You are not permitted to copy, sub-license, distribute, sell or otherwise make available the Licensed Data to third parties in any form. Third party rights to enforce the terms of this licence shall be reserved to OS.
Scale: 1:1,250	
	



**Hastings Castle and West Hill Cafe**

Date: Jul 2023

Scale: 1:1,250

Use of this data is subject to terms and conditions. You are granted a non-exclusive, royalty free, revocable licence solely to view the Licensed Data for non-commercial purposes for the period during which Hastings Borough Council makes it available. You are not permitted to copy, sub-license, distribute, sell or otherwise make available the Licenced Data to third parties in any form. Third party rights to enforce the terms of this licence shall be reserved to OS.

