

Plans for a museum for Amesbury

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By Jill Harding

AMESBURY could have a new museum to help tell the story of its historic past after the town council proposed to buy Melor Hall.

The council has had a conditional offer of £285,000 accepted by the Parochial Church Council and it is now asking local people for their views before the sale proceeds.

Buying the former church hall would add about £7 a year to council tax bills in Amesbury but the town's mayor Andy Rhind-Tutt said it would be money well spent.

"We are working very hard to get Amesbury back on its feet," he said. "Yet apart from a small exhibition in the George Hotel we have nothing to show off to the visiting public and our children to help them understand how special this town really is.

"With the support of the community this site could be redeveloped to house many of our artefacts and become a focal point for tourists to come and visit Amesbury.

"This in turn will see a huge increase in footfall to the town and provide just one of many much needed boosts to the local economy."

If the sale goes ahead, the council hopes to use the building for a small museum and exhibition centre from early next year.

They plan to gather together artefacts relating to the town's Mesolithic past, [Stonehenge](#), Amesbury's royal history and the beginnings of military flight.

Volunteers would be asked to run the museum and visitors would pay a small entry fee to cover running costs.

In the long term, housing developer Bloor Homes has money to spend in Amesbury if it gets the go ahead for its Kings Gate estate.

At a recent public consultation a town museum topped the wish list and it is hoped eventually the existing Melor Hall could be demolished and replaced with purpose built visitor attraction funded by Bloor Homes.

"At our recent heritage day almost everyone we asked agreed that Amesbury needs a museum," said cllr Rhind-Tutt.

"If the public can support this opportunity then this will be a significant step forward for our historic town."

Melor Hall was put up for sale after the church council bought and refurbished Wyndham Hall allowing it to offer a wider range of community activities.

Last year planning permission was sought to build three houses and four flats on the Melor Hall site which was opposed due to overdevelopment.

Although planning consent was eventually granted, the church council has chosen to accept in principal the town council's offer.

A public consultation outlining plans for the museum takes place at the Bowman Centre on Thursday, October 27 from 10am to 8pm.