

# Smedley's Hydro – transforming Matlock County Hall

## The future of Matlock County Hall

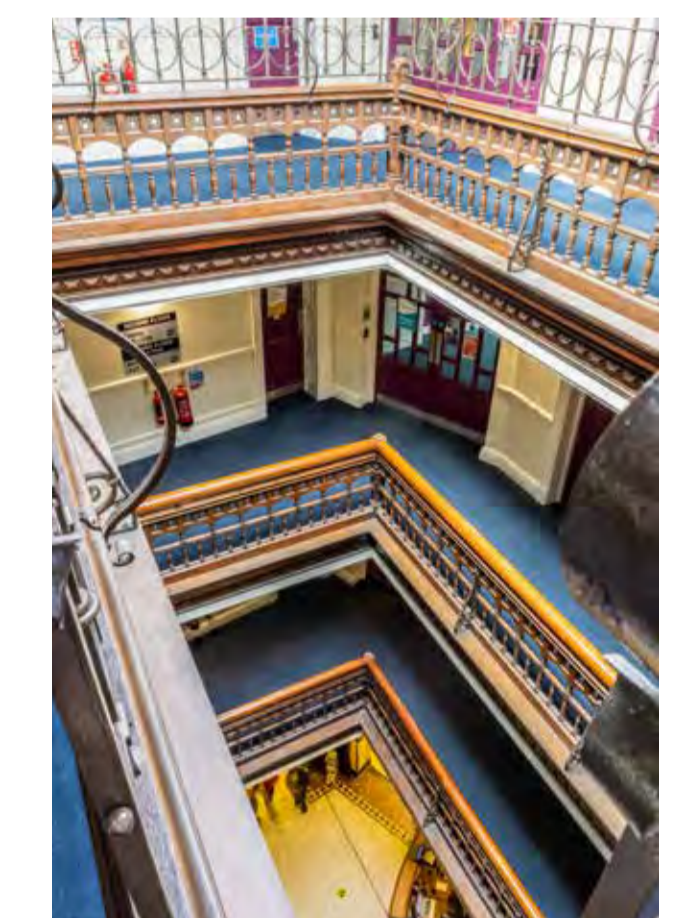
**We would like to share our vision for the Smedley's Hydro development proposals with the local community – an exciting opportunity to redevelop our headquarters at County Hall and restore the beautiful heritage buildings and Winter Gardens.**

John Smedley founded the Smedley's Hydropathic Establishment in Matlock in 1853, offering a variety of different baths and water treatments. Smedley's Hydro, alongside other Hydros, helped Matlock to flourish as a spa town in the 19th Century. John Smedley added to the original building over the years to create the iconic Grade II Listed building located on Smedley Street today.

Now County Hall, the building has served the local community since the 1950s when Derbyshire County Council moved into the complex of buildings and today it provides office space for council employees.

Much of the space is under used and, in 2022, the council started to look at how the buildings could be better used in the future. An early action in the overall programme to deliver our vision has been the relocation of many staff from the North Block to the South Block, and this will be completed by the end of March 2025.

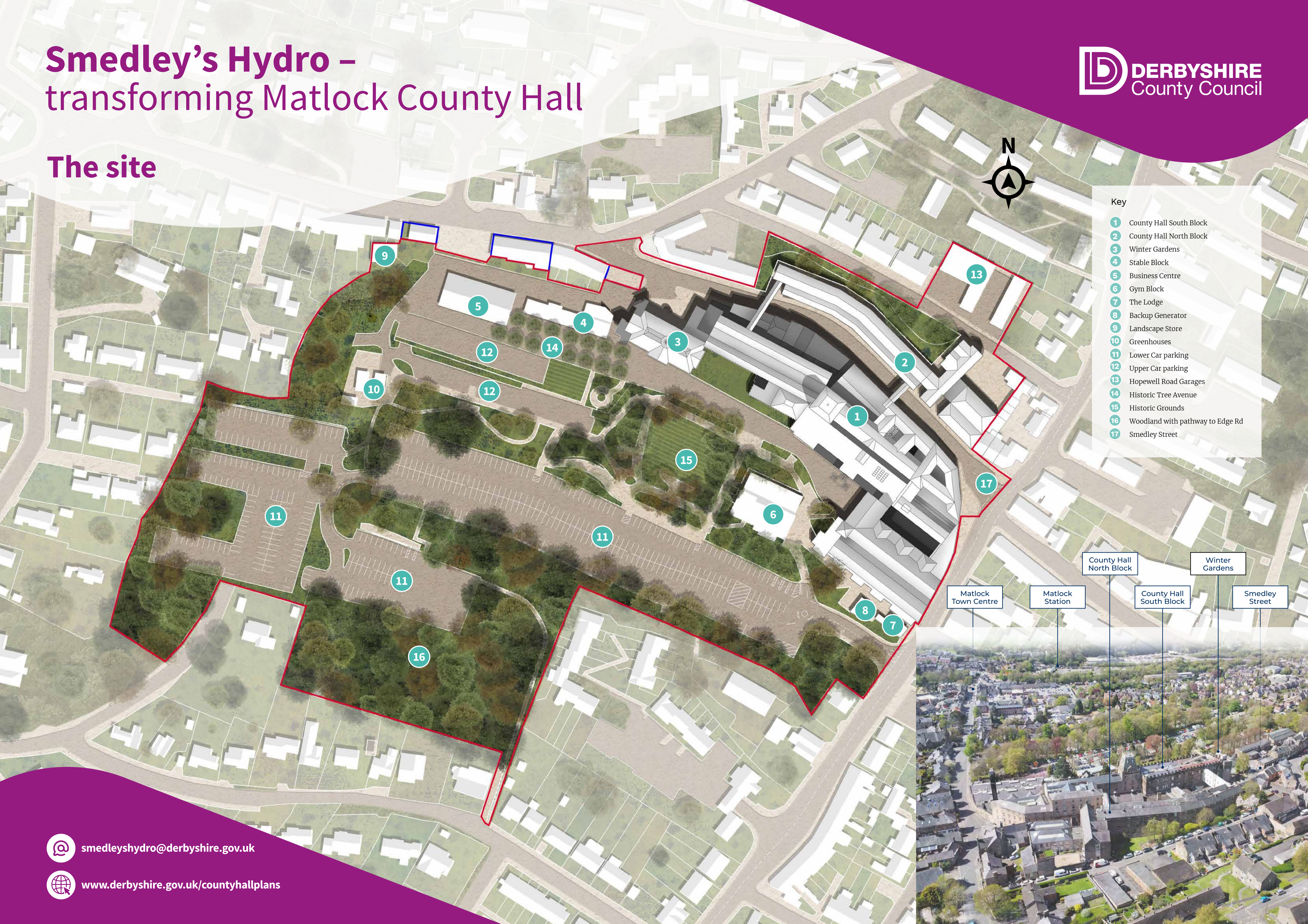
At today's event, you can find out more about the proposals to give the buildings a new lease of life and safeguard the future of the listed buildings with new, suitable permanent uses. This could include a hotel and venue, spaces for local businesses and community uses, new homes and a revitalised Winter Garden, alongside a much smaller, low energy office building for the council to operate from.



**Our team is here today to help with questions. You can complete a feedback form online to provide us with your comments.**

# Smedley's Hydro – transforming Matlock County Hall

## The site



- Key
- 1 County Hall South Block
  - 2 County Hall North Block
  - 3 Winter Gardens
  - 4 Stable Block
  - 5 Business Centre
  - 6 Gym Block
  - 7 The Lodge
  - 8 Backup Generator
  - 9 Landscape Store
  - 10 Greenhouses
  - 11 Lower Car parking
  - 12 Upper Car parking
  - 13 Hopewell Road Garages
  - 14 Historic Tree Avenue
  - 15 Historic Grounds
  - 16 Woodland with pathway to Edge Rd
  - 17 Smedley Street

- County Hall North Block
- County Hall South Block
- Winter Gardens
- Smedley Street
- Matlock Town Centre
- Matlock Station

# Smedley's Hydro – transforming Matlock County Hall

## Opportunities

**County Hall is an important building for Matlock but is no longer fit for purpose in its current function as a civic building.**

It has the potential to deliver so much more for the local economy, by opening up the buildings to benefit the community and attract new businesses to bring greater diversity and economic resilience to the town.

Our team of experts has considered how we can sensitively restore the historic, Grade II Listed buildings and Winter Gardens, taking account of the challenges, to give the buildings a new lease of life that will celebrate its heritage and focus on creating opportunities to support our community.

Input from local stakeholders over last few years has helped to shape this process and we will continue to engage with them as we bring the proposals forward.

**1** **Matlock is currently characterised by a disproportionately heavy weighting of public sector employment.** > Attracting a mix of uses, centred around a quality hotel and spa facility, will broaden and strengthen the economic base of the town, while retaining the council's headquarters on site.

**2** **There is currently a shortage of cultural and arts venues, and premises for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Matlock.** > Restoring the historic buildings and re-purposing the complex is an opportunity to provide a greater variety of spaces suitable for a range of occupiers.

**3** **The original Smedley's Hydropathic Establishment supported small businesses and the presence of the hotel, its guests and workforce sustained a wider network of businesses in the locality.** > Transforming the buildings will reinvigorate the immediate area, while also putting Matlock back on the map as a tourist destination of the highest calibre.

**6** **The scale, age and nature of the building mean it is very costly to maintain and its sustainability credentials are poor.** > Creating sustainable, new office space will reduce the operating costs of the council and help them to function more efficiently.

**5** **The County Hall complex is currently occupied by the council, with limited opportunity for wider community and business use.** > The changes will open up access to the community for events and provide space to support the local business community, which currently faces a shortage of suitable buildings.

**4** **The listed status has made adapting the buildings difficult and the addition of newer buildings over time detracts from the original splendour of County Hall.** > Returning the buildings to its original use as a hotel will support the restoration of the Grade II Listed buildings and Winter Gardens and find a long-term use to secure its future.

**7** **The majority of the landscape has become dominated by car parking, which impacts the natural setting of the buildings.** > Removing buildings with low architectural quality and consolidating car parking will reveal the beauty of the setting.

**8** **Smedley's Hydro will benefit from better connectivity to the town centre.** > Options are being explored to provide a modern equivalent of the tram that used to connect the top of Matlock Bank with Crown Square. The options include an e-shuttle operating throughout the day providing an efficient, frequent and sustainable link that benefits both the town centre and Smedley's Hydro.

**9** **With changes in working practices following the pandemic, County Hall has areas that are not fully occupied by council staff and much of the space is outdated.** > Creating new, fit for purpose and sustainable office space for the council will support collaborative and hybrid working and meet the council's space requirements and operational needs.

# Smedley's Hydro – transforming Matlock County Hall

## Our vision for the future

**Our vision for the Smedley's Hydro aims to transform the buildings and Winter Gardens into a place our community can be proud of, creating a destination that supports our local economy and businesses, opens up the space to the community and safeguards the historic building.**

**Key elements of the proposed masterplan:**

- Restoring the main building to its original hotel use
- Provision of much needed venue space in Matlock for local events, conferences or weddings
- A much smaller, low energy office building for the council to operate from
- Potential opportunities for new workspace suitable for SMEs and local businesses
- New homes
- A revitalised Winter Gardens
- New landscaped areas and better pedestrian connections through the site

**“A restored local landmark enhancing prosperity, vibrancy and pride in Matlock, continuing the legacy created by John Smedley for future generations.”**



# Smedley's Hydro – transforming Matlock County Hall

## A focus on heritage and culture

We have a unique opportunity to create a place we can be proud of. Our vision is to restore the original Victorian and Edwardian landscape to enhance the setting of the heritage buildings. We also want to revive the historical shop frontages on Smedley Street to support local businesses and reinvigorate the area with spaces to attract new cultural and creative businesses.

We are rethinking how we use the buildings to unlock the full potential of the site, which celebrates its rich heritage, by restoring the landmark building and gardens to their former glory.

Our proposals seek to return the original and well-preserved rooms, promenades and gardens of the main building to their intended roles for hospitality and leisure, and ensure much-needed alterations and repairs can be carried out to individual blocks. This will be managed through a Listed Building Consent application.

Similarly, the north block buildings require a formal change of use to enable them to be re-purposed to deliver new homes and business accommodation, ensuring continued beneficial use of the former laundry, boiler house and guest wings that once served Smedley's Hydropathic Establishment.

**1840** From a family of miners, John Smedley's father became a hosier and worsted spinner. John Smedley junior (1803-1874) took up the family business and went on to develop new, finer yarns, making the business successful. After trying hydropathy near Leeds to treat exhaustion and sickness, he turned his back on a life of excessive self-indulgence and started his own journey as a hydropathist and Non-Conformist Christian.

**1853** The Hydro is established and grown in an improvised manner, extended from neighbouring cottages purchased by Smedley in 1853 and 1855. The original house (plot 712 on the title map of 1847-9), described as "a house with outbuildings, yards and garden", is now under the Council Chamber.

**1862** Part of a print by Rock and Co of London 1862 from 'Buckley's Guide to Matlock and Neighbourhood'. The Hydro had grown rapidly. The 1858-59 Old East Wing (to the right) was the first planned wing, reputedly offering 79 rooms for patients, though altered it remains on the corner of Bank Rd and Smedley St.

**1870s** Smedley claimed that the cold-water methods of hydropathy were only safe for people who were generally of robust health. His water was more often warm or hot. Former employees set up their own, smaller Hydros on Matlock Bank, which collectively gave Matlock Bank a distinctive character of alternate medicine.

**1876** Smedley's was at its peak in the period c1895-c1915. During this period there was even a cable tramway to haul visitors up the hill from 1893 until closure in 1927.

**1876** The original bath houses were rebuilt in 1876 with a Turkish interior. The sign says 'Silence is requested.'

**1876** Following Smedley's death in 1874, the relationship between hydropathy and conventional medicine became one of mutual respect, with resident physician Dr. William Bell Hunter taking on the business.

**1876** "LADIES' MANUAL OF PRACTICAL HYDROPATHY, FOR FEMALE DISEASES; WITH DIRECTIONS TO MOTHERS HOW TO CARRY OUT HYDROPATHY FOR THEIR CHILDREN. BY MRS. SMEDLEY, MATLOCK BANK HYDROPATHIC ESTABLISHMENT, DERBYSHIRE. LONDON: W. & A. PARTNERS, 2, PATERNOSTER ROW, JOB CAUDWELL, 35, STRAND, AND ALL BOOKSELLERS, 1861. Price 1s. 6d. 6th Edition. Twentieth Thousand. 'PRACTICAL HYDROPATHY,' 516 pages, 160 cuts of Plates and Anatomical Illustrations, by JOHN SLEDLEY. Price 2s. 6d. Same publisher."

**1870s** This 1878 view shows Smedley's three main architectural contributions to the complex, i.e. his chapel (1867-70) on the left, his West Wing (1867-8) in the centre and the Old East Wing (1858-9) to the right, though some artistic licence has been taken with the buildings by the historic illustrator!

**1890s** The prominent central block was rebuilt (1881-92) by the Hydropathy Company in a grand manner to the designs of architect George E. Statham on site of Smedley's original, ad-hoc buildings.

Land was gradually purchased for the creation of pleasure grounds for promenade including a row of four gazebos, two remain in place, with tennis and bowling greens added later.

**1900s** The new central block was built in four quarters over 11 years. The public spaces and lounges were elaborate and intended to impress visitors.

**1901** The Winter Garden at Smedley's is considered to be among the most important conservatories made by Richardson and Co. of Darlington. The central feature of the building was the coiled steel spring-supported dance floor with marquetry patterning surrounded by a broad border of mosaic marble.

**1939** The Hydro was requisitioned for the Second World War in 1939, operating as a school of military intelligence from 1941 onwards. Hundreds of telephones were installed and new linoleum was put down, whilst the Winter Garden was used for the familiarisation and display of enemy uniforms and equipment in the event of an invasion.

**1900s** The High Peak news reported on 23rd June 1888 that "There is another important innovation to be noticed at Smedley's... laid apparatus for electric lighting (is) throughout the place. The system is the Swan-incandescence. There will be 350 lights, but the directors have wisely not dispensed with gas. In the event of any mishap the gas can be used as previously..."

The Derbyshire Times reported in 1892 that "...the upper portions of the windows (to the billiard room) are fixed with stained glass of novel design, with centre pieces depicting the various national games, such as golf, croquet, tennis, archery, cricket, billiards and skipping..."

Authors: Philip Heath IHBC, HLM Architects.

**1900s** A laundry block was built on the north side of Smedley Street in 1878. Built above shops, the imposing bedroom wings arrived in three phases (1900-1910), with ornate, light-filled lounges situated mid-terrace for use by the guests.

**1900s** The Hydro was de-requisitioned in 1946 and lingered on as a Hydro until its final closure in September 1955. Derbyshire County Council acquired the buildings and grounds in July 1955 as offices, storage and garaging for the many different departments which still use and value the buildings today.

**1955**

**1955**

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## Creating opportunity

**The restoration of the main building will bring a hotel and spa back to the site, and by doing so, will secure a long-term use for this local landmark, attracting visitors to Matlock to support the town and wider region.**

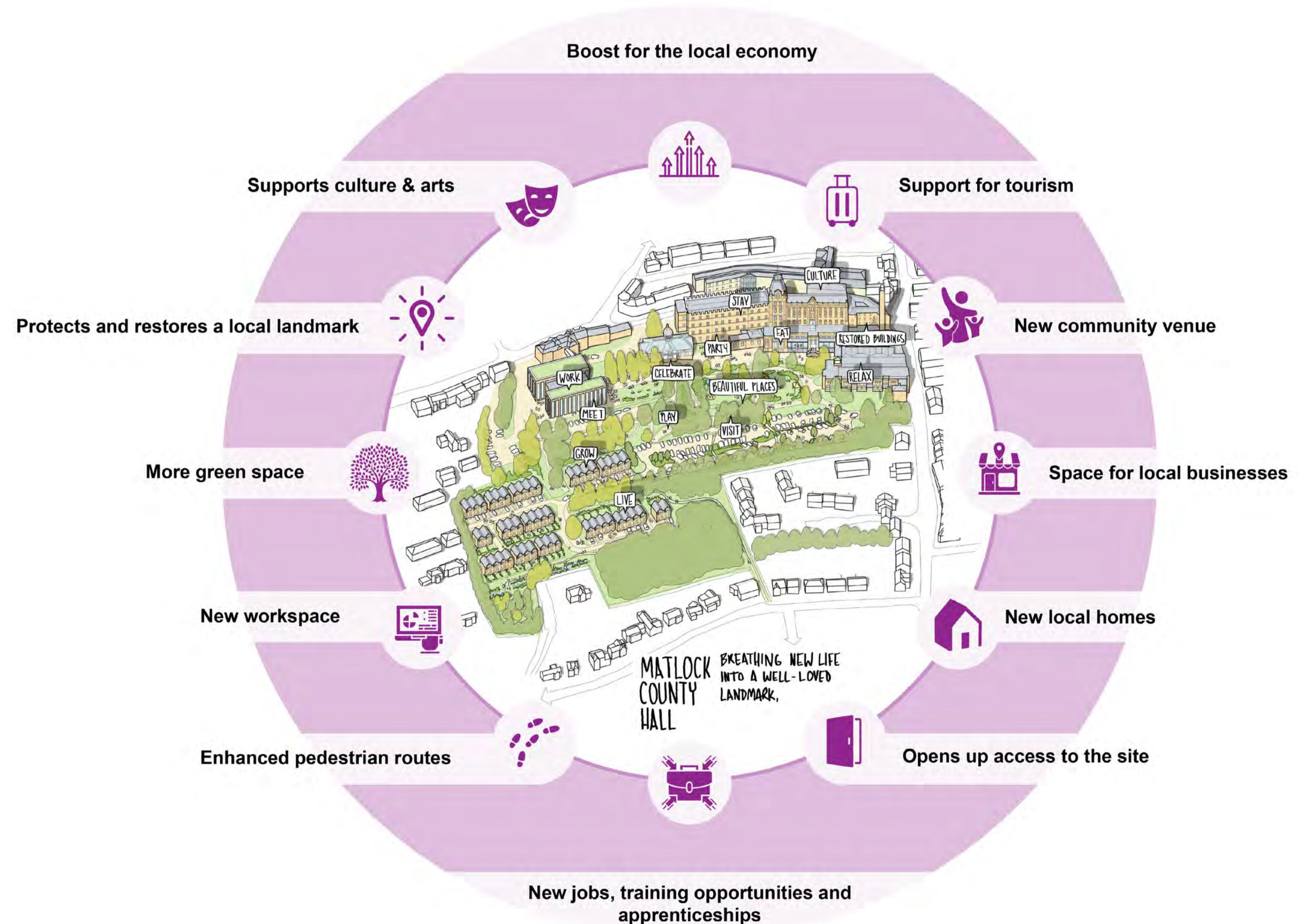
The main buildings and Winter Gardens are important local landmarks, which presents a sustainable future for the site, whether that is through enjoyment of the revitalised Winter Gardens or use of new venue space for events.

Space in the buildings will be repurposed for our local businesses and to create the opportunity to nurture cultural activity in Matlock. This will help to generate growth and resilience in the local economy, by bringing different employment sectors and new job opportunities to the community. Delivering the project will create construction jobs in the short-term and longer-term employment and training opportunities in the hospitality sector and apprenticeships in restoration.

### Sustainability

Smedley's Hydro development is a generational opportunity to deliver truly sustainable solutions for the community and council. Private sector investment will assist in re-purposing existing buildings and contribute to the preservation of important historical buildings. It will also help the council to meet decarbonisation objectives and substantially reduce running costs, by putting in place low energy solutions.

Striving for Net Zero Carbon outcomes, the proposals will deliver more effective, rapid and sustainable connectivity between the site and town centre, and include improved sustainable water cycle and drainage, increased biodiversity and ecology, better air quality and enhanced wellbeing and health for all.



# Smedley's Hydro – transforming Matlock County Hall

## The evolving masterplan



Key

- 1 County Hall South Block - converted to Hotel use
- 2 County Hall North Block - converted to residential use
- 3 Winter Gardens - refurbished as a new events space
- 4 The Lodge - attached to new hotel amenities
- 5 New workspace
- 6 New homes
- 7 Shared Surface access road
- 8 Lower Car parking
- 9 Community orchard
- 10 Upper Car parking
- 11 Pedestrianised Promenade
- 12 New Landscaping
- 13 Historic Tree Avenue
- 14 Historic Grounds
- 15 Woodland with pathway to Edge Rd
- 16 Smedley Street

# Smedley's Hydro – transforming Matlock County Hall

## Transport and access

**A very substantial proportion of the site is presently devoted to car parking, a situation far removed from the original landscaped environment. We plan to wind back the clock.**

The vision for Smedley's Hydro brings back green, open spaces to the site, while promoting the wider use of car parking in the town centre.

A Travel Plan for the council's ongoing needs is being developed and it will favour sustainable travel options. For example, it will encourage active travel, the use of public transport, car sharing and a much wider use of electric pool cars.

With a nod to the past and the cable-operated tram that linked Matlock Bank with Crown Square for more than 30 years up to 1927, our vision includes an e-shuttle connecting the site with the town centre. This innovative proposal will ensure that Smedley's Hydro and the town centre are connected physically, socially and economically.

Our transport assessment in support of the proposed planning applications will set out the practical ways we will transform the way council staff and visitors access the site. It will also ensure the future commercial, residential and community uses are fully supported in ways that respect the environment, promote the overall economic wellbeing of the town, and acknowledge the needs of local businesses and home-owners in the immediate vicinity.

### Improved walkable landscapes



### Enhanced pedestrian priority roads



### Sustainable EV shuttles



### Characterful neighbourhood streets



### Green car parking



### Improved town centre connectivity



### Various mobility hub locations





# Smedley's Hydro – transforming Matlock County Hall

## Tell us what you think – ideas board

# Smedley's Hydro – transforming Matlock County Hall

## Next steps

**Thank you for attending today's community drop-in event to find out more about our ambitious plans to breathe new life into the main building – to be known as Smedley's Hydro.**

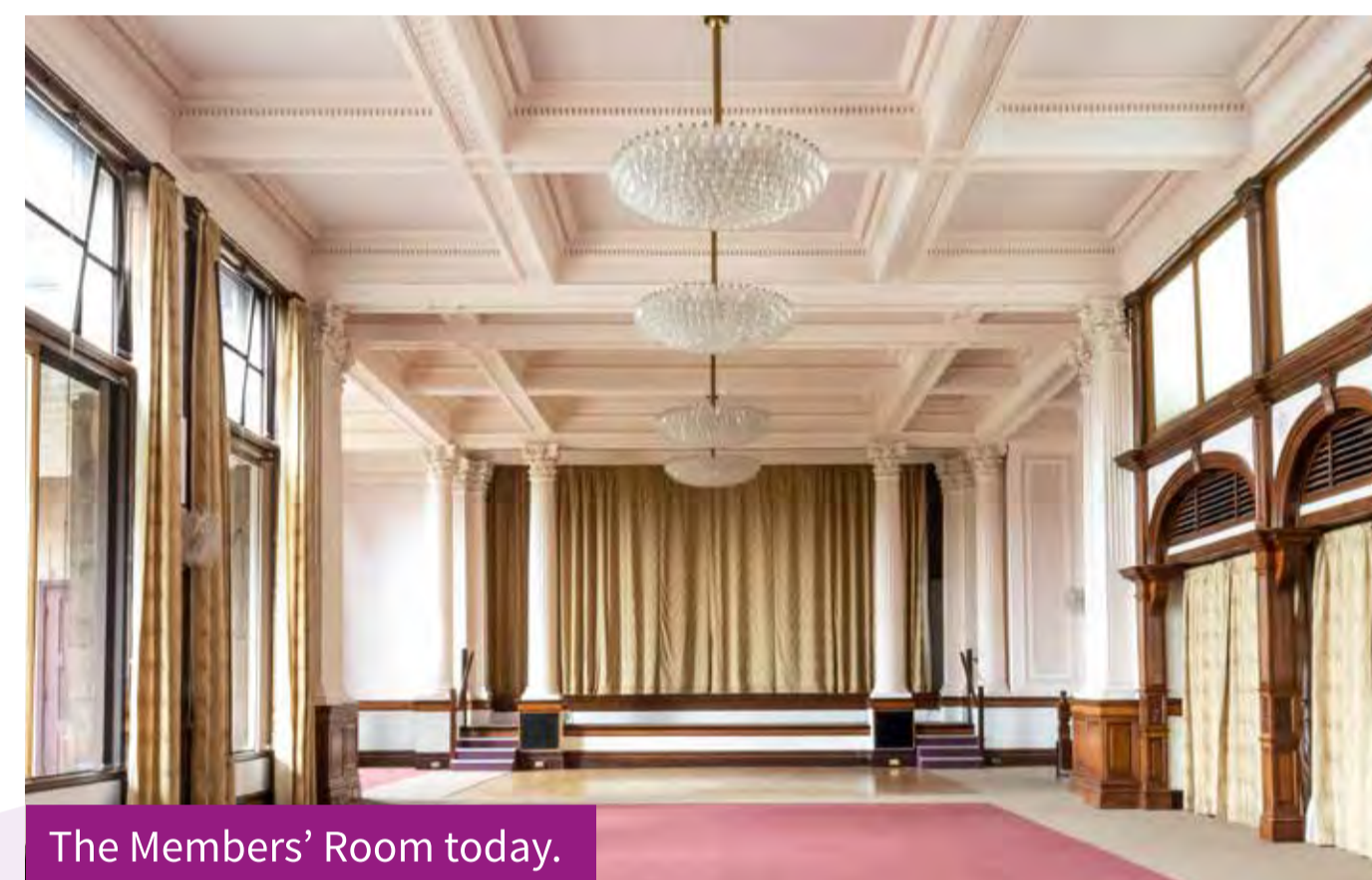
We would like to hear your feedback on the ideas shared today. You can tell us what you think by posting your suggestions on the ideas board or completing a feedback form – you can do this here, take a form home with a freepost envelope or scan the QR code below to complete the form online.

All information displayed today will be added to our website following the consultation events for future reference: [www.derbyshire.gov.uk/countyhallplans](http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/countyhallplans).

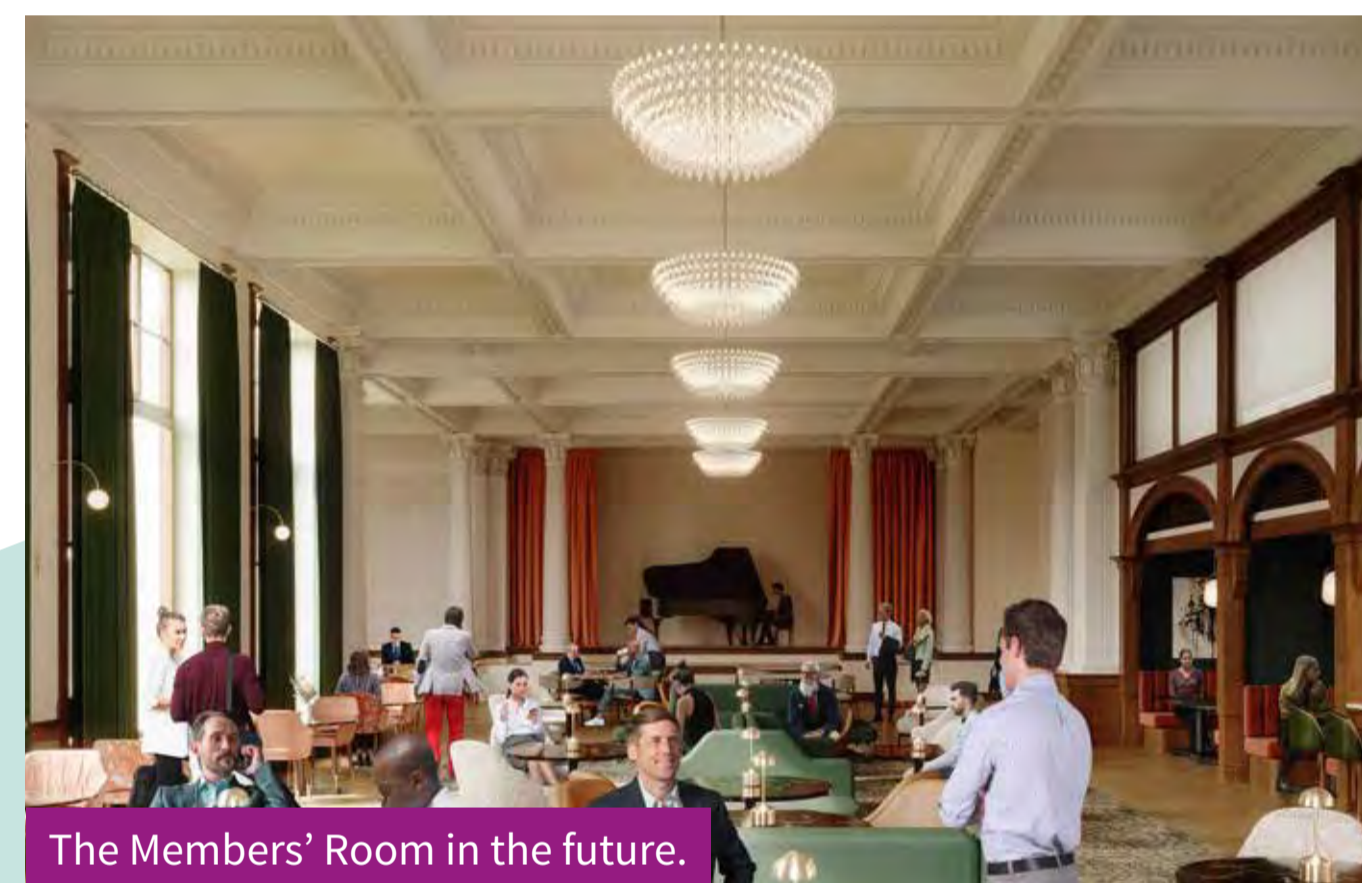
You can contact the project team at any point by emailing [smedleyshydro@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:smedleyshydro@derbyshire.gov.uk).

### Next steps

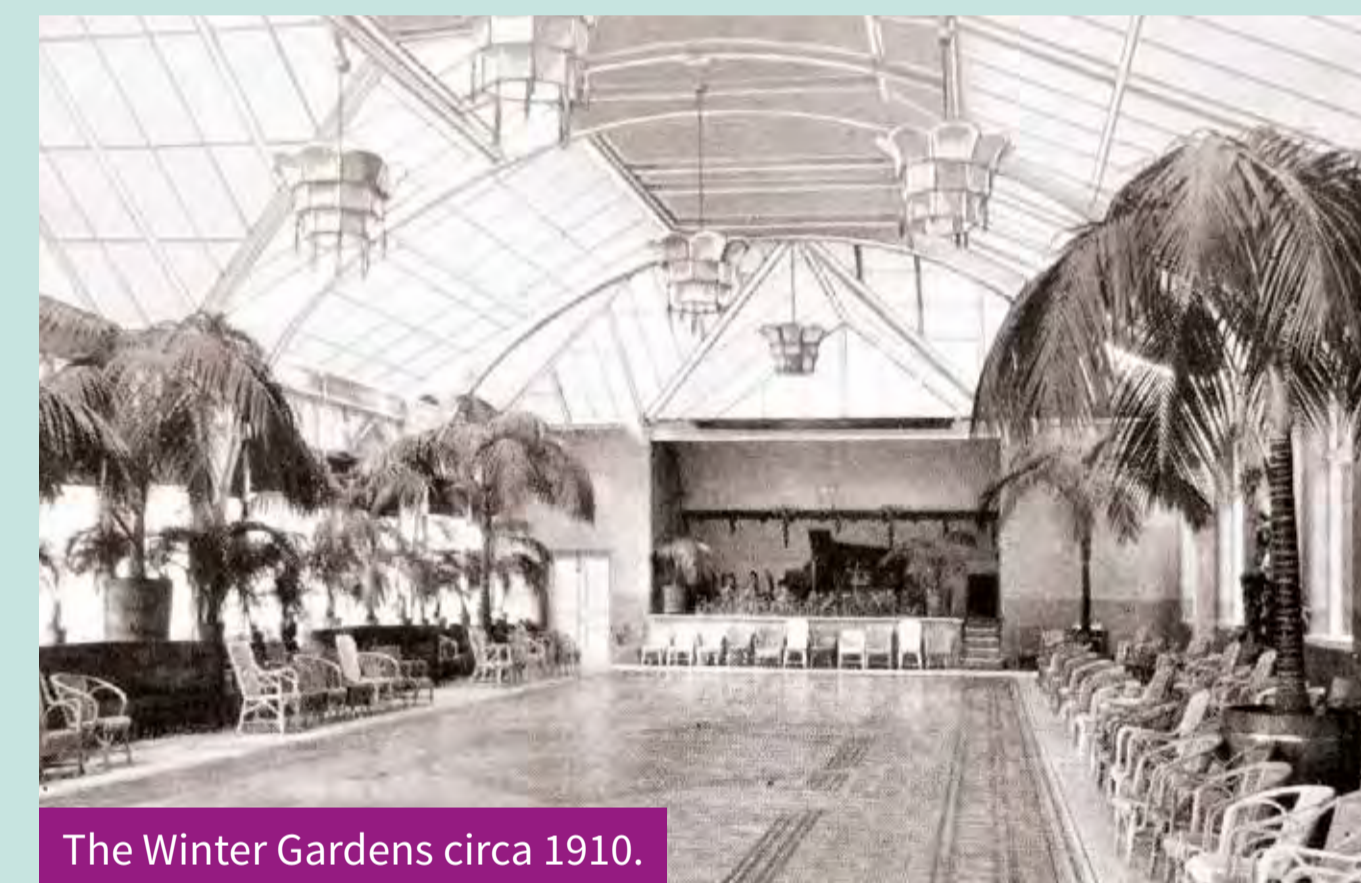
Following this consultation, we will review local feedback and evolve a masterplan for the site. We will submit a series of planning and listed building consent applications to Derbyshire Dales District Council. They will hold their own consultation on the proposals to enable local residents to submit their views on the plans, which will be taken into consideration when deciding the applications.



The Members' Room today.



The Members' Room in the future.



The Winter Gardens circa 1910.



The Winter Gardens of the future.

## Project timeline:

