

# Farnham Museum Gets Arts Council Funding But Guildford Museum's Future Stays Uncertain

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Museum of Farnham Image Google

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While the future of Guildford Museum remains in limbo, one of the “most important buildings” in Farnham is set to receive more than £700,000 from the Arts Council’s Museum Estate and Development Fund for its renovation and repair. The Grade I listed Museum of Farnham’s windfall is part of an overall pot granted by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport central funding of £58.8 million managed by the Arts Council. Surrey Libraries are also set to get £75,000. The museum will get £734,335.

The museum’s grant will help it carry out “essential repairs” to its Wilmer House Georgian home, in West Street, listed for its “exceptional heritage and architectural merit”.

The Waverley Borough Council-owned building is in poor condition and the museum estates and development funding will address the decaying brickwork, collapsing second-floor window arches, and deeply eroded mortar joints.

According to the council, “extensive decay” is also present with vertical and horizontal cracking visible. Much of the original surface detail has also been lost through long-term decay.

## **Guildford Museum**

Although securing £85,000 of Arts Council Funding in August 2016 for a *Your Stories, Your Museum*’ project, Guildford Museum had two major bids for £2 million and £4 million rejected by the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2013 and 2015.



Guildford Museum in Quarry Street

***See: Museum Bid For Heritage Lottery Funding Fails Again***

A further scheme for a major refurbishment, which had ear-marked council funding, was scrapped as unaffordable in the current financial climate. Some GBC councillors are known to prefer moving the museum to a more modern venue with a lower maintenance overhead than the, partly, centuries-old building in Quarry Street adjoining the medieval Castle Arch.



Cllr John Redpath

John Redpath, the lead councillor at GBC responsible for the museum said: “I was pleased to hear that MEND funding will be used for important restoration and repair work to Farnham Museum. Guildford is fortunate in that the council has always looked after the town’s museum incredibly well.

“Applying for funding, involves a lot of officer time and is especially challenging under the current financial constraints. As part of our joint working with Waverley the idea of sharing a ‘funding officer’ could offer benefits for both councils.”

**Locally sourced funding also required for Farnham Museum**

As part of the Arts Council’s grant to the Museum of Farnham, a minimum of 10 per cent funding needs to be locally sourced. Farnham Town Council and Farnham Museum Society will each commit £10,000 with a further £200,000 from Waverley Borough Council.

Waverley Council executive head of Commercial Services, Kelvin Mills, said: “Wilmer House is one of the town’s most important historic buildings. The funding will allow us to address urgent

external building fabric repairs, including rebuilding the parapet wall, repairing the gauged brick cornice and replacing the second-floor gauged brick window heads.

“Not only does this guarantee the Farnham Museum can remain in the building, but it enables Wilmer House itself to become the jewel in the crown of the museum’s collection.

“The restoration will offer an exciting opportunity to share, explore and preserve the history of this fascinating house with a wider and more diverse audience and tell the story of its construction and conservation as part of the collection.”

Nationally £21.4 million has gone to 36 museums through the museum estate and development fund with a further £20.5 million from the libraries improvement fund. The latter is designed to “transform library services in England by helping them upgrade their buildings and improve digital infrastructure”.

Surrey County Council has said its £75,000 share will enable it to deliver its “dynamic spaces” project in eight libraries and will build on work completed in 2022 to deliver “flexible shelving in libraries to ensure a range of events and services can be delivered, and provide future flexibility and additional capacity at events”.

A spokesperson added: “The funding will also be used to provide a further meeting space for community partners, local partners and small businesses with the purchase of a meeting pod at one of our libraries.”

The libraries are: Ashtead, Chertsey, Oxted, Reigate, Haslemere, Farnham, Godalming, Dittons.

Culture Secretary Lucy Frazer said: “Culture helps us create lifelong memories with our families and friends, provides entertainment and joy, and allows us to explore the world around us in new and exciting ways. It can also boost tourism, support local business and drive local economic growth.

“This funding will support brilliant arts organisations to upgrade their venues and create new projects that will be at the heart of their communities.”

Darren Henley, chief executive of Arts Council England said: “Investment in creativity and culture is a catalyst for improving well-being and raising aspirations, reinvigorating pride in communities, regenerating high streets and local economies, and bringing people together.