

EMBARGO

Restoration works due to start on Hexham's historic Shambles building

Work is due to start this Spring to restore a prominent grade II* listed building, situated in the heart of Hexham.

Plans are on track to start work in late March on The Shambles which occupies a prominent position within the Market Place in the heart of the Hexham Conservation Area.

Built as a covered market by Sir Walter Blackett in 1766, this historically important feature, now owned by Northumberland County Council, is still used by market stall holders throughout the week.

It is however in a poor state of repair with urgent work needed to the timber beams, timber and stone columns, roof and flooring and the electrics within the structure.

The council has agreed to invest £400,000 in a restoration scheme using specialist heritage building contractors to bring the building back to its former glory. The work will be completed in two phases. Phase 1 will entail the restoration and improvements to the building while Phase 2 will involve bringing the adjacent parking area up to modern standards to protect The Shambles in the future.

While the work is taking place, the markets will continue to operate but will be situated on the other side of the road outside the Abbey.

Northumberland County Councillor, Richard Wearmouth, Cabinet Member for Supporting Business and Opportunities said:

"It is fantastic that progress is being made to preserve and restore one of the Conservation Area's most important historic features for generations to come.

"All stakeholders are being updated about the work and all disruption will be kept to an absolute minimum with access to all local businesses maintained throughout the works. The weekly and farmers markets will continue to operate nearby.

"There is no ideal time to undertake this project, but it has been timed to be delivered as quickly and seamlessly as possible avoiding the Autumn and Winter events programme which is important to the town. "

For public safety reasons and to provide access for works, The Shambles building and adjacent car park will be closed for the duration of the work from late-March through to an expected completion date in mid August.

The surrounding area and parking around the rest of Market Place will still be open for business as usual with access maintained for local shops and services.

To protect the building and stonework in the future, a row of bollards will be installed as cars have repeatedly damaged the structure over the years. Without the bollards the restored Shambles and members of the public and traders would continue to be at risk should further accidents occur.

The improved car park will protect the Shambles building and include eight spaces in total. This reduces the number of bays by six bays from the current arrangement which is offset by other recent parking improvements including the new large car park at Alemouth Road which significantly increased parking capacity in the town.

All car parking options to protect the building and improve the car park have been fully investigated but unfortunately other configurations just didn't have the space to be viable.

Northumberland County Councillor Cllr Trevor Cessford, Member for Hexham Central and Acomb Ward said:

"Hexham Shambles is such an old and important building for our town centre so it's great that the county council is funding its refurbishment.

"I'd like to thank all our partners and stakeholders in Hexham for their patience and support while we undertake these critical improvements to safeguard this historic building."

The refurbishment of The Shambles adds to the recently completed Hexham High Streets Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ). This was a £3.4m investment scheme delivered by Northumberland County Council in partnership with Historic England to restore the historic heart of the town and which resulted in the town's Conservation Area being removed from the 'at risk' register.