

## ASHTON COURT A LESSON IN CO-OPERATION



It looks as though Ashton Court Mansion may at last be on track to full restoration. "The outcome could be the most important architectural history experience for the City" (Edwin Hill). All involved certainly find that an exciting and do-able presumption.

First, I should like to consider how optimism has grown and then why it has come about.

It all started in October 2006 when Peter Weeks and myself went along to see Councillor Simon Cook and found that we all shared the positive and realistic view that restoration was possible and must be done - in other words, we did not waste time considering why it could not be done, but discussed the strategy and tactics needed to overcome challenges.

In November Simon Cook and officers led a tour of the locked-away upper floors. It was instructive and emotional. I asked all members for feed-back, subsequently circulated to them and to Bristol City Council members. Here are some brief extracts:

"The house is wonderful, in better shape than expected but a

terrific challenge",  
"impressed by robust engineering job of roof replacement",  
"refurbishment of Billiard Room, Library etc. must be given priority",  
"last time I saw the upstairs I was shocked and expected to be shocked again but it was both wind and watertight. I came away feeling if we got our teeth in it, we could get somewhere",  
"a very enlightening visit showing that all is not lost".  
"Having Simon Cook on our side is immensely important",  
I recognised the potential, but also pitfalls,

a) short lease unrealistic as several years may be required for restoration.

b) "the end project should be available to the general public",  
"any solution that is to get beyond the drawing board will need early involvement of the whole Heritage paraphernalia. This move is a huge improvement on the inertia of the last two decades".

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