

**SOUND**  
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**Arts & Entertainment Building**  
Old River Lane, Bishops Stortford  
East Herts District Council

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Studio 2, Tay House  
23 Enterprise Way  
London SW18 1FZ

+44 (0)208 877 5860/68  
info@soundspacevision.com

[www.soundspacevision.com](http://www.soundspacevision.com)

# ARCHITECTURAL/DESIGN BRIEF FOR A NEW ARTS CENTRE ON OLD RIVER LANE

## 1. Background information

This document has been written for inclusion in the Old River Lane site prospectus which will be launched to the market later in 2018. It is intended to provide a high level indication of the partners' requirements for the arts and entertainment centre. At this stage it is still a working document.

The building must house a new theatre and studio space, 5 screen niche cinema, meeting/rehearsal/class rooms, the town's library, a café/bar, backstage performers' and office spaces.

## 2. Design rationale (objectives)

Old River Lane is a key town centre site, and the partners want to see a mixed use development that creates a lively destination throughout the day and evening. The arts centre complex must be an attractive and well detailed building, which draws and welcomes people in. The inside of the building will be a quality architectural space which considers carefully the function of the space and provides significant 'wow factor' (considering how any wow factor would date) to inspire and create public space (social capital). The scale and massing of the building must be in keeping with guidance set out in the Bishop's Stortford Town Centre Planning Framework (adopted by EH Council in 2017).

It should be clear from the outside what goes on inside.

- Needs to be suitable and fit for purpose, able to adapt to changing public and service needs.

## 3. Acoustics

All parts of the arts and entertainment centre must be well planned and acoustically treated to ensure no sound spill, so that simultaneous events can be held in each space. Using other accommodation as buffers between spaces with loud activities is one technique. Sound and light locks and well specified door seals is another to be used in combination.

## 4. Access

The building will be open 7 days a week, from approximately 9am until 11pm (or later if there is an event). It will attract significant throughput of people and must be designed to withstand this type of usage.

All parts of the building must be fully accessible, DDA compliant, and the needs of disabled users must be thought through carefully to ensure that their visitor experience is positive.

As the design evolves it should be tested for people flow, lift and toilet provision and location against a programme of events. Within the flexibility of use will be the need for storage of tables, chairs and platforms.

## 5. Public Square

The outside of the arts centre should lead onto a public square of at least 20m x 30m which can be used for live outdoor performances/events.

There should be cycle parking close to the entrance and taxi drop off/pick up points for those with limited mobility.

## 6. Entrance, Café/Bar and public spaces

### General

The open space within the complex will interconnect the closed spaces (such as the main theatre, studio theatre, cinemas, rehearsal/meeting rooms, toilets and office/backstage facilities, and act as the central hub for the building.

It will be a vibrant, inviting and practical space in its own right as well as performing this interconnection function. It is envisaged that it is a lively daytime hub to which people gravitate from the outside. The public space may not be solely on the ground floor, but it should feel connected. The entrance should be protected from the elements.

A roof top bar/outdoor space at first floor or above that can be used in a variety of different ways.

### General requirements

The open space should perform the following functions:

- act as an inviting and impressive introduction to visitors which draw visitors into the building from outside
- draw visitors through the building to the various facilities by stimulating their curiosity as to what lies beyond
- create an ambience encouraging dwell and investigation (comfy seats are a must)
- contain a cafe/bar/restaurant (with a fully functioning kitchen) of 100 covers, possibly the main or only café/bar/restaurant, which should be inviting both to those who visit the site for one of its other offerings and casual visitors; there should be space and functionality for a proportionate further number covers to extend outside during good weather. The space should be functional for 'hot deskers' who wish to work from a public café.
- have sufficient space to accommodate the audience during a full show, taking into account suitable space (including other bar area(s) elsewhere in the building and without creating a cavernous environment
- be flexible ie., be usable (and attractive) for the following (and more):
- Informal meetings
- Informal stage/music/comedy performances attracting audiences of up to 100
- More formal consultation/conference events involving presentations/posters, working groups etc
- Events such as beer/food/wine festivals
- Receptions for events in the auditorium
- Enough public toilets (and an appropriate mix) to accommodate 500 people in a 15 minute interval without excessive queueing (taking into account potential demand from users of the other spaces such as the cinema as well).

Consideration should be given to designing out all 'counters' which might otherwise be expected for reception/box office or other functions, and instead having a single multi-function bar/cafe counter from which multi-skilled staff serve customers whatever their needs. Electronic self-service terminals should be considered to supplement counter service, but should not create an 'airport' feel.

The layout should be clearly legible however that does not mean that it must of necessity be immediately obvious, if some degree of investigation is merited. Areas to where public access is restricted should be fully secured from the public space, without feeling as though 'restrictions' are in place.

In addition to the above, the space may be required to accommodate part or all of the Library (TBC) – see below..

Technical and other requirements

PA for announcements and broadcast/relayed speech and music

Small semi-permanent stage area with appropriate lighting and sound system

Baby grand acoustic or electric piano

Acoustics which allows multiple activities to coexist

Lighting appropriately adjustable for the variety of activities set out

Easy to maintain and clean.

Buggy storage

## 7. Exhibition space

It is envisaged there may be both permanent and changing art and that the walls of the arts centre will function as a gallery.

- 15 – 30m of wall space (not necessarily continuous) with 2.5m height
- a secure track and hanging system will be required or the walls will need to be lined with ply so that fittings can easily be repositioned as exhibitions change
- Wall mounted screen for showing video work
- Either natural light from above or movable spot lights on a tracking system to light all walls displaying art
- wall mounted display cabinets for small craft items

## 8. Library

The vision for the library is that it should be fully integrated into the building – not a separate entity within a building. This vision will be reflected in the management structure for the centre; there will not be separate organisations operating in the building as far as the day-to-day management arrangements are concerned.

There should be 800 sq m of space within the building for use by the library, but some of this space will be shared with other uses (eg the café). The space should:

- be welcoming, inspiring, light, vibrant, open, accessible and visible with good sight lines.
- have clear distinct areas that enable different uses and flexibility.
- be customer focused – easy to navigate, considers the customer journey and customer preferences and accommodates the needs of different groups (families, students, teens).
- reduce barriers between staff and customers. Maximise staff visibility.
- create opportunities to show case Library Service's prime objectives; such as literacy, information, digital inclusion and being at the heart of the

community. Could be through design, art and exhibition.

- have some connection with the outside world – for example glazed frontage
- Public space would ideally be situated in totality on the ground floor. Lift access to any provision on other floors.
- be adjacent to the main public entrance.
- provide some access to stock and services through supported self-service, “Library Express” (quick pick and bestsellers) and/or out of hours “Open+”
- Layout of the library to reflect the customer journey. Customers who only have a short period of time (approx. 15 minutes) and wish to quickly access services such as quick pick stock and bestsellers or quick use of PCs - should find these services easy to access at the front of the library. Those customers who are intending to spend more time within the library, browsing, accessing services and activities would be encouraged to move through into the heart of the library.
- Space for CreatorSpace, (an area/room with additional public ICT) within the library and ideally adjacent to the meeting space to maximise flexibility of use.
- Noise level to decrease as you move further into the library.
- Acoustic consideration between areas that are noisier (Children’s & Teen) and quiet (IT or study).
- Children’s area to be away from key public entrances.
- Unobtrusive CCTV needed (may be provided as part of Open+ installation)
- Secure external ‘post box’ to enable the return of items out of hours.
- Approx. 1,140 linear metres of shelving to house approx. 40,000 items. This excludes specialist shelving e.g. kinder boxes for picture books, shelving for local studies material (to accommodate periodicals, maps, etc).
- Need to accommodate up to 25 public PCs split into several groups of PCs for different uses, to allow for booking out PCs for IT learning activities.
- Relevant seating areas to support functionality of library e.g.: individual seats and sofas for newspapers & magazines, scattered seating between shelves in fiction and non-fiction, appropriate furniture for children and parents in children areas and study areas.

## 9. Main Theatre

The main theatre will be used for a wide range of performance and non-performance events, and should be designed for maximum flexibility. As far as possible, it should accommodate all art forms and not favour one over another. The acoustic requirements for this range of art forms should be carefully designed.

### Auditorium

- 500+ seat theatre to accommodate a range of performances including (but not limited to) touring theatre, pantomime, live music including choir orchestra and rock bands, dance with recorded music, chamber opera with small orchestra, spoken word, amateur and professional.
- Flexible seating options to allow for standing (or other uses such as functions) in the ‘stalls’, with greater than 100 seats available in balcony. Consider options for seating wagons stored under the auditorium via a forestage extension lift
- Comfortable, durable seats, which feel permanent, even if they are flexible, with plenty of leg room
- Options for adjustable seating configurations for thrust and in the round
- The ability to light the auditorium to feel comfortable for smaller audiences
- Aim to have no restricted view seats whilst creating an intimate feel to the space with the audience surrounding and as close to the stage as possible by the use of at least one balcony
- Permanent FOH mixing position not behind glass which doesn’t require

removal of seats

- Configurable acoustics to cater for amplified and unamplified performances
- Permanent accessible seating positions at rear of auditorium and on balcony if design allows
- Handrails on stairs leading to seats
- Sensitive positioning of wheelchair spaces
- Overall room height 10m

### Stage

- 12x7m adjustable down to 10x7m proscenium opening
- 12x10m performance area with 1m crossover
- 22x11m total useable stage area, additional allowance made for counterweight frames and other installation fittings
- Total 20m2 multiple storage spaces on stage level unless other space requirements aren’t met
- Modular stage design constructed with 8x4’ removable sections with 2.5m height clearance under stage to allow for various stage configurations. This would allow trapdoors, set lifts and orchestra pit configurations to be achieved. Therefore the stage space has flexibility as opposed to a permanent stage space.
- Step free access
- Single forestage extension lift 10m wide creating a 3m stage apron extension. Also to be used for seating at auditorium level. Further adjustability to auditorium seating using limited travel (<1m) manual or drill driven motorised platforms.

### Auditorium technical

- 7.1 high level, rider-friendly sound system
- Lighting system to be decided based on the outcome of the impending EU energy regulations
- Cinema projection setup for DCPs and live screenings
- Fully equipped Audio Visual setup for multiple cameras, projectors and screens
- Technical gallery at rear of stalls to house sound, lighting, projection, storage and other potential future requirements

### Auditorium rigging

- 40 x 16m ladder bars, full single purchase counterweight or automated motorized flying system unless a convincing case can be made that the functionality can be provided in another way
- 2 x motorised up/down bars per side
- 2 x motorised advanced trusses
- Flying and lighting galleries either side of stage at 7m above stage
- Grid specification to allow motors to be rigged in any location on top of grid.
- A grid of 2 or 3 lighting catwalks with adjustable rigging positions to cater for different performance configurations
- Bars on the front of the circle
- Multiple lighting positions along side walls of theatre
- Adjustable rigging points throughout stage and auditorium to allow full adjustability
- Accessible FOH lighting positions
- Grid at 16.5m, therefore main beams onstage approx. 19-20m from stage level
- Stage infrastructure capable of supporting approx. 50 tonnes

### Backstage

- 12x10m Fully equipped workshop for building sets. Double height.

- 11x6m Scene dock directly behind or at side of stage for set storage, stage crossover and use before and during shows. 3x7m roller shutters at either end to access stage
- 7m height clearance throughout scene dock and access to stage
- Multiple dressing rooms to cater for a minimum 100
- 3 x 4 person en suite dressing rooms on stage level, 20m2 each
- 2 x 12 person dressing rooms on other levels, 40m2 each with shared toilets and showers
- 1 x 100m2 rehearsal/meeting space within easy access of backstage to cater for another 40 performers
- 1 x 80m2 open plan green room with sofas, table and chairs and kitchen area for use by all cast and crew
- 20m2 Laundry room with 2 x washing machine and 1 x tumble dryer and hot box
- 30m2 Costume room
- Shared use accessible toilets on all levels to facilitate any dressing rooms that aren’t en suite, green room, rehearsal space and stage
- Video and audio show relay to all dressing rooms, green room and backstage areas
- Easy access between all backstage spaces with a lift to all levels

Possible second theatre bar / area

- To be available when required, but not open permanently (although ideally the main café/bar would be able to service the needs of the theatre. Studio and cinemas during an interval - without excessive queuing)

## 10. Studio theatre

- 100-150 seat black box studio theatre
- At least 15x12m available when seating is stored to allow rehearsals for the main auditorium to take place
- Assuming retractable seating, overall dimensions approx. 12x18m not including 6x3m technical area behind the top level of seating
- Catwalks or Tension wire grid at 6m with 3m clearance above. Therefore a total height of 9m
- Sprung floor throughout
- Depending on venue configuration dedicated or shared dressing rooms with main auditorium
- Flexible seating configurations including end on and in the round, possible use of retractable seating. Wheelchair positions at back on balcony as well as at front of stalls.
- Depending upon seating decisions a store room of at least 6x3m is required to store additional chairs and equipment when the room needs to be cleared
- If the studio theatre is located on a different floor, a goods lift is required to load equipment/set from the loading dock. Minimum dimensions 4x2.5x2.5m. Intention to keep theatres on same floor
- Tension wire grid to allow easy access to the lighting rig, including for wheelchairs users
- 5.1 high level, rider friendly flexible sound system
- Adjustable lighting bars on rolling beams
- Appropriate dedicated lighting stock without the necessity to share with main auditorium
- AV infrastructure and multi projection options including an ultra-short throw onto a semi-permanent cyclorama
- 2 x motorised bars below tension wire grid at rear of end of performance area

- Curtain track with black wool serge drapes around perimeter of room that can be drawn in front of seating when not in use

## 11. Cinema

- At this stage there are number of issues to be resolved that would affect the design of the cinema:
- The use of open space and cafe bar. It is quite likely these will be central and serving all offers. To that end a brief for the F&B element of the cinema will need to come once the overall scheme is laid out. Ideally the F&B space will be shared, to optimise space utilisation. This will need still need the usual elements of F&B offer for a more niche/premium cinema (than mainstream) such as
  - Bar space – including beers on tap/wine range
  - Coffee
  - Chillers
  - Minimal prep area for food
  - Soft drink pythons
- We would not envisage this would need space for such traditional items as popcorn poppers etc
- Ability to sell tickets - a cinema this size would need 3 sales points, which should be combined with the sales points for the other areas
- Automated ticket collection points should be considered too
- The cinema will need an F&B and ticketing system which may be part of the overall scheme system
- Consideration will be needed for customer flow of cinema goers – up to 4 times a day and theatre goers – twice a day

### The cinema

It is envisaged that the cinema will be 4 screens and auditoria of approximately 120/80/80/50 seats total 330.

The overall scheme will be open 7 days a week, 9am-11pm and the cinema will be similar to this, with typically 4 shows a day. The Arts Centre trust will operate the cinemas within its remit.

As programming will be a mix of key mainstream titles and more niche/ arts/events product, it is anticipated that the cinema will have a more even spread of custom than a more mainstream cinema (typically 70/30 weekend weekday).

Whilst the potential traffic numbers are quite low consideration still needs to be given to customer flow.

Given the opportunity to use the cinema for event cinema (theatre opera etc) and B2B (local businesses/community group) consideration needs to be given to the following:

- Largest auditoria to have a lighting rig, potential stage and audio equipment
- Wi-fi throughout
- Charging points for laptops etc
- Easy connectivity to projection
- Use of under crofts for break out space, multi-function room and/or catering space

### Seating

- a stepping of 1.2m and seat width for “standard seating of at least 60 cm
- the rear two rows to be set aside for settees (standard size)
- all seats should be fixed not tip up
- detail and style to be finalised but consideration need to be given to:
  - durability
- stepping height ensuring all seats have an unrestricted view of the screen (top to bottom)
- there should be no centre access aisles
- Disabled location again dependant on the above but ideally 2-3 rows back, central cross aisle or front row (but not solely) with companion seating adjacent
- The UKCA (UK Cinema Association) guidelines on changing places should be adhered to.

### Auditorium/screen/projection

- all auditoria should strive for “4th wall” screens i.e. the screen fills the wall
- all projectors should be housed within the auditorium – there is no need for a projection room – sound proofed/ventilated and cooled
- for reference we do not envisage using any technical offers ATMOS, IMAX, 4DX etc
- Detail on seat number and lighting to be advised once the overall concept is approved
- Fire escape doors to be at the sides (not behind or aside the screens)
- All auditoria need to be designed acousticallyAutomated screen masking
- Comfortable seating with generous leg room, accessible seating spaces in all screens at front and rear
- Shared projection gallery
- Acoustic treatment to ensure:
  - Right room acoustics for cinema projection
  - No noise in or out
  - No structure transmission
- 2K Projection (unless 4K process reduce the price further)
- 7.1 sound
- Depending on screen location access should be ground floor rear i.e. not byby the screenscreen
- Recommended horizontal and vertical viewing angles should be met
- Ideally all cinema auditoria will have a lighting rig, potential stage and audio equipment to ensure versatility.

### Corridor space

Considering the points already highlighted on undercrofts the common space needs to allow space for:

- film quad and information posters
- directional signage
- escapes etc.

## 12. Load in and service areas

Designed to allow a 16m artic lorry and 7m extra long wheelbase van to load simultaneously and stay in situ for a week if required  
Adjustable height load in dock designed to allow direct access to stage without requirements for steps, lifts or ramps, ideally under cover or internal  
Entrance designed to allow an artic to reverse from the main road if space isn't available to turn in the yard

Separate theatre load in to general building and bar deliveries (including cellar access), with space for daily library van deliveries through the service area  
Parking for 4 cars/small vans in the service area

## 13. Rehearsal spaces/meeting rooms

It is anticipated that a number of [NEED NUMBER] versatile rooms will be provided. These should:

- be as flexible as possible to enable a range of different uses without significant set up/change over requirements
- have natural light in some of them
- suit a range of capacities (ie., not all the same size)
- be able to be easily serviced from the kitchen for provision of catering
- provision for storage

## 14. Office space

Office space 60m2 will be required for approx. 15-20 people, throughout the day. Flexible work space is preferred (ie., hot desking) but there should be 2 small meeting rooms (15m2 each) for private/quiet work/meetings. The office space should have considerable storage space for marketing materials, etc.

Staff kitchen

Staff toilets

## 15. Other technical requirements

- Controllable, flexible lighting throughout
- PA system throughout all public areas
- Digital advertising throughout the building
- Energy efficient heating and cooling which is zoned to allow all areas to be controlled independently of each other. The system should be responsive and easy to operate. There is an aspiration for the building to be energy neutral.
- Power and data throughout public areas, that will accommodate changing use of the building over time e.g.: accommodate the current increasing demand for power for personal mobile devices
- WiFi and high functioning IT throughout
- IT server room located near main office space

## 16. Building Information Management

The design process is required to meet BIM standards.