

## PUBLIC QUESTIONS

<b>Question 1</b>	<b>Simon Baker</b>
<p>If the various companies and individuals that represent the arts in Bishop’s Stortford are saying that the spaces you are creating in the new cinema/arts space are too small for us to use, and therefore as experienced arts professionals we don’t believe it would be viable to use them, how does that change your mind on the design or indeed the concept of your proposal?</p>	
<b>Question 2</b>	<b>Jill Goldsmith</b>
<p>The report to Council on the Business Case for the ORL stipulates the deliverables the Council is committing to in the regeneration project but no detail on the contracts the Council has already entered into (with CityHeart, appointed in 2019, Glenn Howells architect, Theatreplan and Barker Langham) or on future contracting to inform the public on how it will achieve these deliverables.</p> <p>The Council’s Contracts Register discloses none of the existing ORL related contracts, in contravention of the Local Government Transparency Code, which requires local authorities to publish details of any contract, commissioned activity, purchase order, framework agreement and any other legally enforceable agreement with a value that exceeds £5,000. At paragraph 20 of the Code it specifically states that “Local authorities should expect to publish details of contracts newly entered into – commercial confidentiality should not, in itself, be a reason for local authorities to not follow the provisions of this Code.”</p> <p>Paragraph 8 in the report to Council mentions the risk of delay from the SPD process, but the effect of such impact is not spelled out. It says nothing about other contractual or financial risks, such as the risk of developer non-delivery after it has bought the land from the Council from operating the site after its development. It does not set</p>	

out any safeguards the Council may have.

Can you detail the impacts and specific financial risks there would be for the Council if the project gets delayed or set back and what mitigations the Council has put in place?

**Question 3**

**Stuart Purton**

As there has been widely publicised criticism of the rushed rework of the scheme, what efforts have or can be made to include members of the local creative community in the process? The voices of commercial interests will be amplified by their money how will you ensure those without financial clout are given equal credence?

**Question 4**

**Simon Gilliver (Bishop's Stortford Sinfonia)**

Almost uniquely for a town of its size, Bishop's Stortford has no venues of any description large enough to hold large scale concerts or events. The previous plans for ORL addressed this need, whereas the proposal now merely duplicates facilities that already exist in the town. In responding to the reduced available funds, why has the council not sought to find a solution that still delivers on the needs of the town on a reduced budget?

**Question 5**

**Paddy Lennox, on behalf of Laughing Bishops Comedy Club**

In a report on the future of cinema, which we understand underpins the Council's business case for the proposed 5 screen cinema, Tamara Jarvis concluded that the key success of smaller locally run venues lies in a flexible offering to "local interest & population groups", responding to their demands by combining cinema spaces with other spaces to engage "live performance".

That sounds great but, given that none of the local performing arts groups, not the local theatre, not the Symphonia, not the Comedy Club and not the local live music bands, say the proposed new design ORL will be of use to them, who exactly are these "local interest & population groups?"

Please name them.

**Question 6**

**Bethan Jones**

The business plan states that the scheme *'will design out crime and*

*make residents and visitors feel safe'...* (point 9). As a young woman living directly adjacent to the ORL site, the site has already changed the landscape of where I live into one where I already feel less safe. With regard to recent news stories about female safety, what specific measures will be implemented to address these concerns over the **whole** ORL site areas to combat increased risks posed by the entire area - including car parks and side streets?

**Question 7**

**Gailie Pollock, Contexture Theatre**

If the footprint of the ORL arts centre is the same as the original plan, why can't we build the cinema spaces but leave the space for the larger auditorium (which would benefit the town's arts organisations that can't use the proposed small flexible performance spaces), to be built at a later date, at a time when it might be easier to apply for funding?

**Question 8**

**Paul Dean, on behalf of Bishop's Stortford Civic Federation**

Section 8 of the Business Plan Report for the ORL Development says *"the Master-planning and SPD process is a key risk ... [where] it is expected that there will be some turbulence around public opinion"*.

Much of this arises from the Council's perceived failure to separate its role as a landowner/developer from its role as the Local Planning Authority and consult with the public.

The same paragraph of the Report illustrates the problem by suggesting the risk to the SPD process *"will be mitigated through close working and good communication between Cityheart and EHDC's project team and planning officers"*.

District Plan Policy BISH8(I) makes it clear that an SPD will be prepared by EHDC's planning officers and *"used to inform the master-planning of the site"* - **not** that the SPD will be informed by the developer's masterplan and EHDC's project team's Business Case. In view of this will the Council confirm that in mitigating the public opinion risks on the SPD and master-planning processes for ORL it will:

1. Comply with Regulation 12 of the Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012 to carry out public participation on the preparation and recommendations of the SPD before it is

adopted and used to inform master-planning?)

2. Follow the NPPF's SPD requirements for planning officers to provide further guidance for development on specific sites and, in this particular case, (para 23) "*provide a clear strategy ... (and) ... address objectively assessed needs*" for the facilities to be provided in accordance with Policy BISH III (a)?
3. During the Pre-application Engagement process, comply with District Plan Policy DES1(II) that: "*The Masterplan will be collaboratively prepared with all stakeholders, including the public?*"
4. Include transport, environmental conservation area and social impact assessments within the scope of the SPD?

Finally, will the Council's Chief Legal Officer recommend that all DMC members and their substitutes be excluded from today's meeting so they can take an unbiased decision when the resulting planning application comes before them for determination.

**Question 9**

**Ruth Bravo**

I would like to ask if the project could have one side of the building to be a living wall with plants to absorb co2 to improve air quality and have dance studios inside to cater for a wide range of workshops to improve residents' wellbeing?

**Question 10**

**Daniel Badcock**

On the substantially reduced arts centre plan, is there any option delay the start of building of the new arts facility and to "save" the planned subsidy for some time to allow a scheme closer to the original proposal to be built? In my opinion to build a new facility without adding a larger stage to the town facilities is a huge missed opportunity and additional cinema screens are not an exciting alternative proposition.

**Question 11**

**Simon Anderson**

Please tell me the reasons why the decision on the amended ORL development cannot be postponed

**Question 12**

**Jill Jones**

The business plan does not show any financial comparisons between the proposed cinema and any other alternatives. Will EHDC provide any comparisons to show residents of Bishops Stortford how the cinema proposal outweighs other concepts in terms of cost-benefit and social impact? In particular, comparison with an educational establishment such as a Digital skills training centre in terms of potential economic boost and long term sustainable income - as education is counter-cyclic, and BS is ideally placed between Cambridge and London to be such an educational 'hub'.

**Question 13**

**Carl Warnell**

I would like to see more details of the 5 screen cinema as there is a cinema at the other end of the town. I personally think normal cinema is dead with the availability of Netflix (other streaming services are available) at 4K TVs. Plus with social distancing, traditional cinemas will need to run at occupancy levels of 25-50%. I think that Bishop's Stortford should try to use the new Arts Centre/cinema to become a genuine destination for the surrounding towns and villages by offering a different, disruptive and compelling option. Therefore I think an independent cinema offering is the right sort of start, but I would like to see something more. Would the council consider options such as:

- 1) Some sort of luxury arrangement that was previously available at The Lounge at Whiteleys, with limited seating, business airline style seating and table service?
- 2) Something with individual tables where attendees can enjoy a meal whilst watching a film, similar to the Rex in Berkhamsted and the Odyssey in St Albans

**Question 14**

**Annette Burns**

I believe that the residents need a multi-purpose theatre, studio, gallery, music, drama and café space for everyone to use. Why are the council planning another cinema in addition to the six screen Empire cinema and the facility at The Southmill Arts Complex whilst in the midst of a pandemic? I ask the council to reconsider and not rush into something that is not wanted or needed.

**Question 15**

**John Jones**

The business plan states that ..*through the iterative design and cost*

*process we have increased the financial viability of the Arts Centre by:Re - designing the Arts Centre space over a larger footprint which meant a lower, wider, more cost effective design (reducing the height has reduced the cost and complexity of the build)'....* Has EHDC considered applying this approach across the entire site including the carpark at Northgate End by reducing the height to ensure a good fit with new government guidelines on beauty and 'building back better' , and using any funds released by not building six levels of car park to improve the ORL? With anticipated reduced commuting the town will still have 3 MSCPS more than any almost any other town its size in the entire country!

<b>Question 16</b>	<b>Rosalind Rowe, on behalf of Bishop's Stortford Choral Society</b>
--------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------

The Choral Society is so disappointed about the Council's plan for a cinema in place of an arts centre. We seek to work with local orchestras and other choirs to share our enjoyment of live music. We could never use the proposed performance spaces which are too small for any of our concerts. Therefore I respectfully ask my question in three parts in relation to hiring and income of the performance space: a) To what extent does the business case rely on booking of the performance space? b) What assumptions have been made about income delivered by the cinema and the hire by performers? And c) What would be the rate per hour and/or the number of hours booked to achieve net subsidy levels?

<b>Question 17</b>	<b>Michael Boyton</b>
--------------------	-----------------------

With the cut in funding and the council having spent the grant money originally meant for the theatre on the multi-storey car park, has the council costed/considered a refurbishment of URCH into a performing auditorium and leaving enough space for a theatre to be built in the future? If not, why not?