

TENDER



ARCHITECT'S BRIEF

THE HARLINGTON, FLEET

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines the design brief for the proposed works at The Harlington in Fleet.

The report explains the background to the venue's requirements, exploring the existing operation of the whole site and the evolving brief for the new building. It identifies the key aspirations for the building, as well as outlining acoustic requirements for the auditorium and acoustic separation requirements throughout the site.

A schedule of dates for interviews, architect's appointment and design are included, along with copies of the area schedules.

1 HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

The Harlington Centre, adjacent to, but separate from the library building opened as a civic complex in 1972 comprising a main hall (Chernoke Hall), two function rooms, offices, general public areas and accommodation for council and voluntary functions. The main hall was variously used as a badminton hall, dance hall, a theatre, conference room, an exhibition space, a gym and a general space for public hire.

A major fire in 1991 destroyed the hall which was rebuilt with some improved facilities, the alleyway between the two buildings was bridged over and the buildings grafted together to form the current foyer/coffee shop area.

Various modifications have occurred since with the addition of a DDA compliant lift and toilet facilities in 2005, the incorporation of the old bin storage area into the building developed as a gymnasium and treatment rooms.

The operation and management of the building transferred to Fleet Town Council in 2010. The Council gave a commitment to return The Harlington to the social and entertainment focus of the community. The building had deteriorated through a lack of capital investment and regular maintenance. The Town Council employed a professional theatre manager to bring professional entertainment back to The Harlington and regenerate its social functions.

A survey of users carried out in 2014 generally supported the development of the facility, but highlighted the poor quality of the theatre, the cramped and uncomfortable seating, the very poor quality of the toilet facilities and the general demeanour of the building. Suggested improvements included better quality tiered seating, better lighting and sound systems. The management and technical team made best use of the facilities available but highlighted the constraints that inhibited further development of the entertainment programme.

In 2014 the Town Council presented two options to the public for refurbishing The Harlington. The “essential refurbishment” would bring the building into the 21st century, insulate the building, add double glazing, replace the leaking roof, completely refurbish the heating and electrical systems, replace the toilet facilities and give the building an internal and external “facelift”. It did not, however, improve the theatre.

The second refurbishment option included a complete makeover of the theatre to provide quality tiered seating and improved lighting and sound

systems, but there was a general perception the existing structure could not accommodate a theatre of the quality envisioned for the town.

The third option was a new-build development on Gurkha Square, on land owned by Hart District Council, that would allow the current operation to continue while the new development took place.

At the Annual Residents Meeting in 2015 the Town Council gave an undertaking to develop the three options to present to the local tax payers: the costs, the benefits and the constraints of developing each option and leave the final decision to the effective funders of the project.

It was clarified to the public that any option would require an increase in the precept (the local council tax). The precept to fund this development was raised in April 2016.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Fleet Town Council briefed theatre designers, Charcoalblue, to ensure that the new theatre facility would be designed to the highest standard and delivered a quality experience appropriate to the size and character of Fleet. Charcoalblue undertook a Feasibility Study of the refurbished and/or new build facility and gave the Town Council confidence that the existing building could accommodate a theatre that met the aspirations of the Council, but identified constraints to the overall design that could only be accommodated in a new building.

PURPOSE OF THIS BRIEF

The purpose of this brief is to undertake investigations and surveys, prepare outline designs, drawings and cost estimates for the three options outlined above:

- An essential refurbishment of the existing building
- A complete refurbishment of the existing building including a new theatre facility
- A new build facility

to a standard suitable and adequate for a public exhibition/consultation from which the public can select the favoured option to go forward to full design and implementation. The ability of the public to visualise what each option delivers is a key outcome of the brief.

SCOPE OF THE WORK

Fundamentally the aim of the development (apart from the essential refurbishment) is to maintain the multi-functional use of the facility, but also to increase the capacity of the main auditorium to 350 seats, split between 250 retractable seats in the stalls and 100 fixed seats in a balcony. The balcony to be accessed from the first floor. The schedule of proposed accommodation is presented below.

Charcoalblue will be retained by Fleet Town Council as the principal theatre designers to work alongside the architect responsible for developing the overall building concept.

Outside of the key theatre elements, which are the responsibility of Charcoalblue, the accommodation sizes are flexible and to be determined by the architect.

The key elements outside the main auditorium are:

- A dance studio which, as far as possible, should replicate the size and geometry of the main stage to be used as a rehearsal space.
- A second performance space (Live Room) a black box space with flat floor with a capacity of 200 standing with a cabaret option, and a stage height of 0.9 to 1.2m. Ideally the room will be self-contained such that audiences can access the facility from the street, but with an option for entering from the main building which can be locked off so it can operate whilst the main building is closed.
 - The provision of the second performance space within a refurbished building may prove problematic from both a space point of view and acoustic separation. Negotiations are on-going with HCC Library Services to release a significant part of the upper floor of the library, accessible from the Harlington, to provide the second performance space and due allowance should be made for investigating this as part of the refurbishment option.

It is recognised that it may be difficult to accommodate all the aspirational accommodation within the existing building, but the full available footprint can be made available for development, the existing tenants can be relocated, and the single story elements can be raised to two storeys to provide additional space.

The new build option should be designed to achieve maximum efficiency and functionality within the building accommodated over a maximum of

three stories. The new building will be totally independent of the library building, but should be cognisant of the impact on the library building. The new build design should consider the treatment of the residual area of Gurkha Square and its relationship with the new building and its possible use and function as a public space.



The current Harlington frontage

2 THE BRIEF

Fleet Town Council (FTC) approached Charcoalblue to explore the viability of developing a “modern, functional theatre facility”, either by means of a new building or through the redevelopment of the existing Harlington site.

FTC approached Charcoalblue as Theatre and Acoustics Consultant and will be appointed direct to FTC. Charcoalblue will lead the design of the performance, backstage and technical spaces in collaboration with the appointed architect and sub-consultants.

2.1 CURRENT ARTS ACTIVITIES

The Harlington currently mostly undertakes one-night events, typically:

- Cabaret
- Tribute acts
- Stand-up comedy
- Beer festivals
- Exhibitions
- Magic shows
- Wrestling events
- Male variety shows
- ‘An evening with...’ with Q&A

This programme is supplemented with day and evening hires for:

- Music classes
- Rock Choir
- Youth theatre
- Roller discos
- Weekly fitness classes (aerobics, yoga, Ceroc, dance, etc.)

The aim is to maintain the current programme of events but to expand with larger scale visiting shows and simultaneous activities in supporting spaces.

2.2 OUTLINE ASPIRATIONS

At its simplest, the venue has outgrown its current facilities and needs new facilities for both the present and to grow into. But in all the areas described below, it is not simply a matter of providing better facilities for the same output, but of providing a venue to increase and improve the output.

The key requirements of the brief are as follows:

MAIN HOUSE

- Programme: Tribute shows, comedians, plays, amateur shows, dance school performances, pantomime, larger children/family shows, named artists & performances where a larger capacity is required, conferences & large meetings, exhibitions, large party nights with live entertainment, cinema (not new releases)
- Capacity: 350-400 theatre / 320-350 cabaret (chairs & tables)
- Ability to do flat floor, all-standing gigs
- Ability to do front half standing, rear half cabaret seating
- Integral bar (which can cater for up to 500 standing)
- Capacity to include balcony with minimum 100 fixed seats (can be removed for sound / follow spot positions); to include side balcony on both sides
- Balcony to be accessed from first floor to avoid losing space downstairs when in cabaret format
- Theatre bar on first floor with higher quality toilets etc.; can be closed off at bottom of stairs at ground level when not sold.

BACKSTAGE

- Dance Studio
- Dressing rooms: 3 separate, plus one large space for larger panto, dance school, amateur casts; should be able to use as one open room or cut in half to split boys/girls where necessary
- Green room
- Crew room
- Laundry room
- Workshop
- Kitchen
- Dock / storage (which would include level access loading bay and parking for up to 2 Luton vans, plus additional cars if possible).

FOYER

- Possibly all open plan with current café (which could become café/bar and theatre bar) and box office area.
- Toilets.

LIVE ROOM (OR SECOND PERFORMANCE SPACE)

- Programme: Live music (jazz, blues & folk clubs, original breaking artists, up and coming artists, comedy club, experimental theatre, rehearsals, private party hires etc. where capacity requirements are lower)
- Black box space with flat floor (must replicate main house stage size so rehearsals could take place in here)
- Capacity: 200 standing with cabaret option.
- Stage height: 0.9m-1.2m
- Facilities: Own bar, toilets, LX & sound
- Ideally self-contained so audience can enter the venue from the street and don't mix with the theatre audience in the main house. There should be an option of entering from the main building, but able to be locked off from it so it can operate independently whilst the rest of the building is closed.

OUTDOOR EATING / DRINKING AREA

- Accessed through café/bar

2.3 THE PLAN IN SUMMARY

The intention of this brief is therefore to clarify how the above list could be accommodated within the existing building as part of a refurbishment project, and to identify what only could be possible as part of a new build construction.

3 THE CURRENT FACILITIES

3.1 THE AUDITORIUM

The Chernocke Hall is a flat-floored room, with an end-on stage 18m x 6.5m, with treads up either side as the only access from auditorium to stage. Wing space is limited by an existing stair to the basement on stage right and the current technical provisions housed on stage left. The space no longer meets the visiting company requirements or the desired programming for the future business model.



Existing Chernocke Hall

The overall look and feel of the auditorium is dated and tired, and the wide, spread-out nature of the space makes it more difficult for the performers to create an atmosphere of excitement and intimacy for focused performance. At present the auditorium does not meet modern expectations for both access and facilities.

3.2 FRONT OF HOUSE SPACES

The Harlington’s public-facing amenities are severely limited: upon entering the building one is immediately faced with a partition wall which naturally creates a division in the ‘meet and greet’ space. There is a café/coffee shop area to one side, which serves as the only foyer area with no real space to resolve any ticketing issues that may arise (apart from a small reception desk) and is not geared towards creating an evening

performance atmosphere. Sanitary facilities are located off a corridor off the main hall, and are in serious need of attention both in décor and updating of the mechanical services.

The Function Room is situated directly through to the back of the building and serves as an overflow to the foyer facility in times of larger audience capacities. The room has a functional bar to serve refreshments from prior to and during the show – this often magnifies the current noise separation issues during the performance when staff need to restock the bar ready for the interval as it is currently linked directly through to the main auditorium volume.

Neither the café/coffee shop nor The Function Room are spaces that are suitable to create anticipation for an evening’s entertainment. Indeed, from the main approach on Fleet Road and through Gurkha Square, one could be forgiven for thinking that The Harlington is solely a library facility, as is its neighbouring building.

The brief will interrogate this front of house area, along with the façade to create a more engaging and exciting entrance facility for the venue.

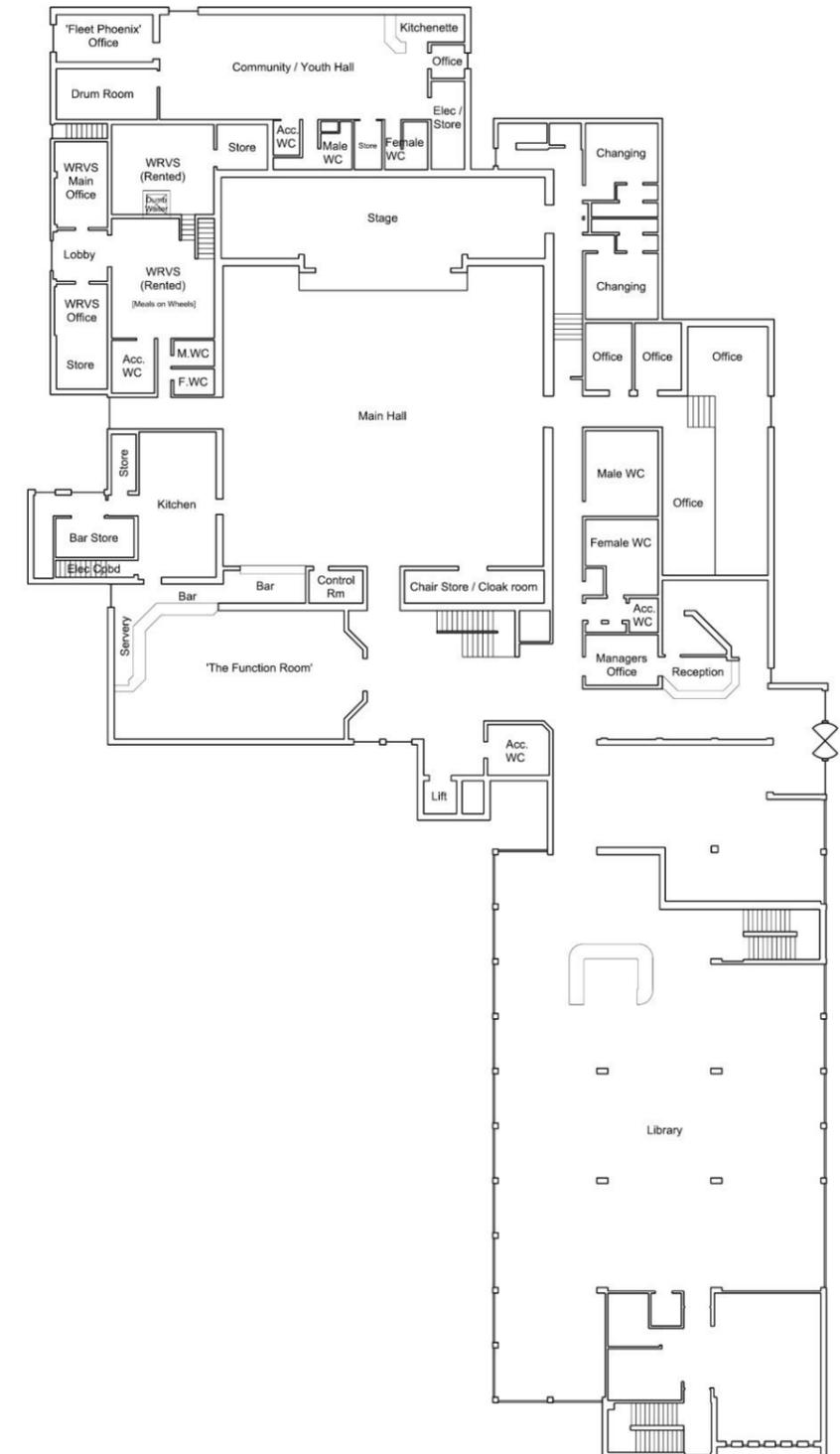
3.3 BACKSTAGE SPACES

There are no counterweight or electrically flown bars over the stage, and any cloths, set, sound, AV or lighting required in this area is rigged by ladder, or pulled up manually by the technicians using direct-haul hemp lines to the overhead bars. The bars are in fixed positions and the lighting rig is also fixed to reduce turnaround times and staff costs, which does not allow the flexibility required for visiting companies – any departure from the fixed rig is at a cost to the incoming production.

Power to the stage area is insufficient for the desired productions. The control room is too small as well as having poor sightlines to the stage for sound and projection and access to the room is via a set of wooden steps within a small enclosure at the rear of the auditorium, i.e. this room is not accessible to wheelchair users.

The auditorium is equipped with one fixed advance bar, with the only access to this position through the use of a ladder, which means the seats have to be moved to allow a clear route along the full length of the bar, which again adds time and cost if alterations to the rig need to be accommodated.

There are significant sound separation issues throughout the building, which cause problems during classes and productions alike. The supporting spaces and dressing rooms are too few and too small. The load-in is small and sits on the floor c.1350mm below stage level, meaning difficult and time-consuming get-ins for performances.



Existing ground floor plan

4 AUDITORIUM PLANNING

The proposal for The Harlington has been broken down into two sections, the first being to address a refurbishment of the existing room by inserting a new venue within the structural envelope of The Chernocke Hall. This proposal is intended to be the most economic development of the site, to ensure the existing venue is enhanced to meet both the current program and that the space will meet the future requirements and aspirations.

The second option outlines the requirements to develop a new, purpose-built venue; identifying the key areas that will not only allow for the future programming of The Harlington, but create a performance venue that will build upon and enhance the design proposal of the refurbishment, refining the main space to perform as required and allow further development in line with the wider business model of a new building.

4.1 REFURBISHMENT

The key principles in the proposals for the Harlington Theatre are the rationalisation of the rooms' proportions, transforming the space from a performance hall to a courtyard theatre, reflecting the development of the venue and the aspirations for future use; being used for music, theatre, dance, comedy and standing gigs, as well as being the main space for community use.

The main drive behind changing the theatre from its current arrangement is to allow for a larger stage required by many of the visiting acts and to create an auditorium that enhances the actor-audience relationship, creating a more intimate experience by enclosing the body of patrons. It is proposed to achieve this by the full removal of the existing core of the space, together with lifting the current ceiling level to maximise the usable volume of the room. The large flat floor area currently used for audience will be replaced with a bank of raked seating that extends up to meet a courtyard balcony. As well as pulling the audience into the extended volume of the space this also helps to create a wall of faces to each side of the room, which connects both the audience to the performance and audience to audience, thus enhancing the experience for both actor and patron whilst maximising the seating capacity, all the while sustaining an intimate playing space.

At this stage, it is proposed to add a slightly reduced seating unit with a small seating pit to sit directly in front of the stage.

This pit is used to allow stage height flexibility whilst the rest of the stalls area can still be configured using the retractable unit for tables and chairs for alternative functions.

The seating pit will consist of removable seats and a mechanically-assisted rostra system.

4.1.1 SUPPORTING SPACES

FRONT OF HOUSE

The entrance, foyers, concessions, and public toilets are the 'welcome' to all patrons arriving at any theatre. In addition to the necessary functionality, the elements provide an opportunity to express the fundamentals that make up The Harlington and share them with the outside world.

A delicate balance must be found between artistic expression and staid usability. A café can help keep the public spaces alive throughout the day and provide opportunity to break down the barrier between staff and their patrons. The service and environment of the café should be an attraction in itself, whilst sharing an identity and feeling of hospitality akin with the theatre. It should be a place patrons and neighbours frequent at any time of day, not just before or after a performance.

It is intended to keep the current location for the front-of-house spaces, updating the tired decor of the building and creating a space which reflects the improvements made inside the auditorium.

The development of these spaces will form a major part of the brief, to ensure that both the aspirations and functionality are united alongside the project goals, both in budgetary and aesthetic considerations.

ADDITIONAL PERFORMANCE SPACES

The client team's aspirations for a second performance space and a large dance studio are the elements that have the greatest limitations within the refurbishment plan.

OFFICES

This area requires further development to ensure that all administration requirements are captured.

POSSIBLE BUILDING EXPANSION OPTIONS

The provision of the second performance space within a refurbished building may prove problematic from both a space point of view and acoustic separation. Negotiations are on-going with HCC library Services to release a significant part of the upper floor of the library, accessible from The Harlington, to provide the second performance space and due allowance should be made for investigating this as part of the refurbishment option.

4.2 NEW BUILD

The following outlines the key elements that are required (in addition to associated support spaces):

- A 350 seat theatre required to support the commercial aspirations for productions
- A 10m x 8m playing space with associated wing space
- A flexible 200max. capacity studio allowing for live music events
- Dance studio with a clear floor area of 140m² for rehearsals and classes
- A foyer that functions as a social gathering space serving both food and drinks to audience and the general public - not just a foyer but crucial to the success of a sustainable venue
- Accommodation for the intended staff members on site
- Workshop for productions
- Dressing rooms
- Box office facilities within, but not dominating, the foyer
- Technical facilities that provide safe and accessible equipment for all performance spaces.

4.2.1 AREA SCHEDULE

Based on experience of similar projects, the following pages represent the areas required for the construction of a new build development for the proposed theatre, together with all the necessary support spaces, to align with the original client briefing document. This will need to be interrogated for this stage of works.

	Sqm	Occupancy	Notes
PUBLIC AREAS			
Foyer	210	350	Based on .75m2 per person
Cloakroom	0		
FOH store	10		
Cleaner stores	0		In gross
Pushchair/mobility scooter parking	0		In gross
<i>Toilets</i>			
Toilets (public male)	19	6	Based on a 60:40 percentage audience split
			Male audience 140 WCs 2
			Urinals 4
Toilets (public female)	54	12	Based on a 60:40 percentage audience split
			Female audience 210 Stalls 12
Toilets (accessible)	7	2	Approximate - 1 per audience level
<i>Box office and reception</i>			
Box office/reception desk	10	2	5 sqm per person
Box office manager/cash office	8	1	Adjacent to box office
<i>Catering</i>			
Bar/Cafe seating area	0		In foyer
Bar and servery	20		
Bar stores	10		
Kitchen	25		
Kitchen store	10		
Staff changing	18		
Staff toilets - male	3	1	
Staff toilets - female	5	1	

PUBLIC AREAS **408**

	Sqm	Occupancy	Notes
THEATRE			
<i>Auditorium and stage</i>			
Seating area	350	350	Based on 1sqm per person
Main stage	100		Mainstage 10mX10m
Wings	40		2m left and right
Substage/trap	20		
Seating store	20		
Lighting bridges	0		In gross
Overstage bridges	0		In gross
<i>Stage support</i>			
Stage door	0		Box Office
Truck bay - external area	0		Outside site
Scene dock / Back stage	20		
Refuse	8		
Stage kitchen	5		
Assembly area / Quick change	8		
Toilets - male	3	1	
Toilets - female	5	1	
Toilets - accessible	4	1	
<i>FOH technical areas</i>			
Control room	12		

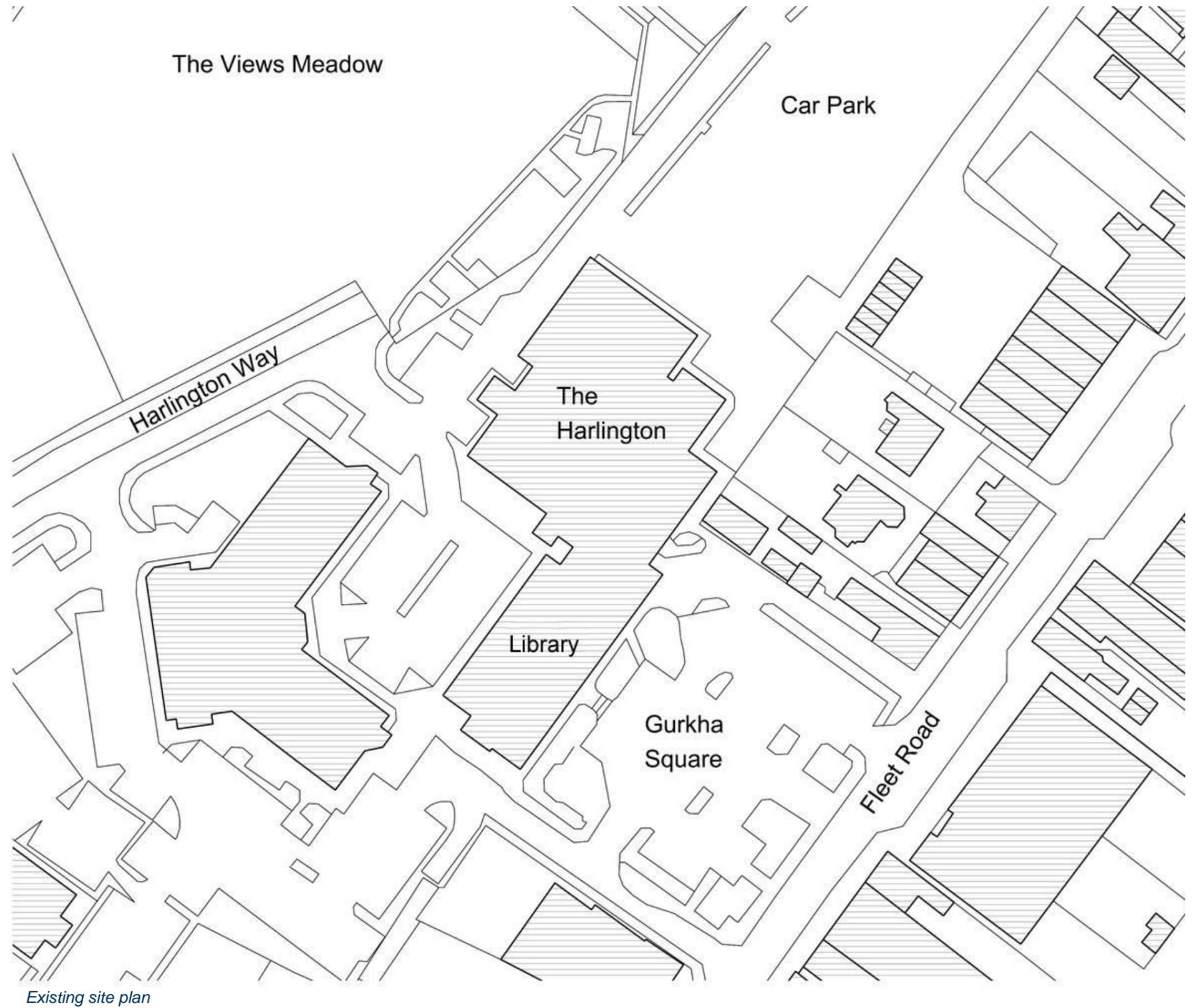
THEATRE **594**

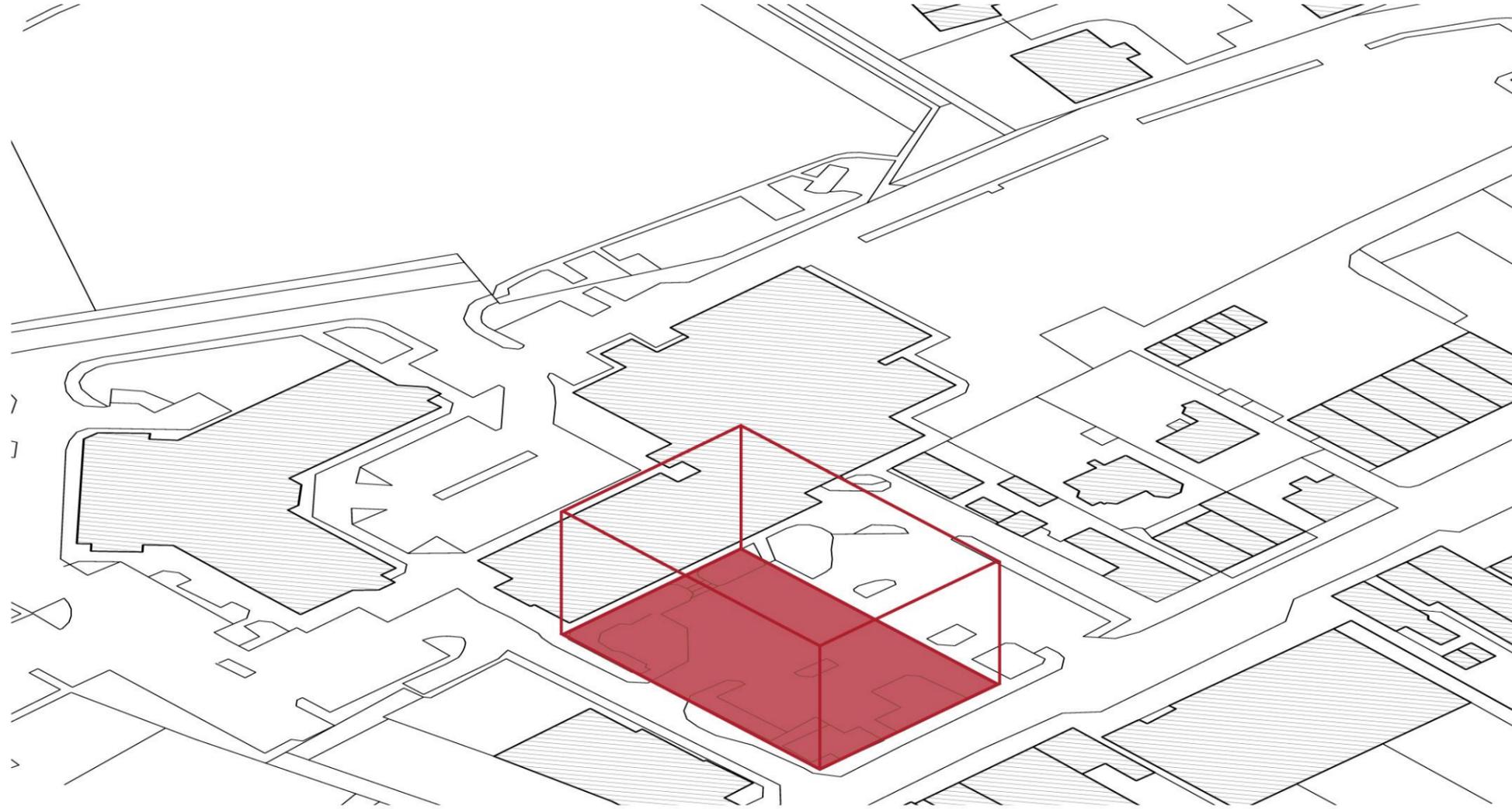
	Sqm	Occupancy	Notes
SECOND SPACE			
Second space	100	200	Based on .5sqm per person
Playing space	48		Mainstage 8mX6m
General store	20		
SECOND SPACE		168	
DANCE STUDIO			
Studio	140		
Store	10		
DANCE STUDIO		150	
TECHNICAL AREAS			
Dimmer room	10		
Audio rack room	12		
Workshop /maintenance	80		
Technical office	8		
Cleaners store	0		In gross
Intake room	0		In gross
General store	20		
TECHNICAL AREAS		130	
PERFORMER SUPPORT SPACES			
One/two person dressing room - 1	20	2	With acc. shower, toilet and wash basin in room
One/two person dressing room - 2	15	2	With shower, toilet and wash basin in room
Eight person dressing room - 1	40	8	With shower and wash basin in room
Eight person dressing room - 2	40	8	With shower and wash basin in room
Green room / Crew room	25		
Wardrobe and Laundry	12		
Toilets - male	6	2	
Toilets - female	9	2	
Disabled toilet and shower	7	1	
PERFORMER SUPPORT SPACES		174	
ADMINISTRATION AREAS			
Offices	54	6	
Resources room	12		
Confidential office	0		Within office area
Group meeting store	10		
Kitchenette	0		In gross
Staff toilets	8		
Staff showers	8		
Disabled toilet	4	1	
ADMINISTRATION AREAS		96	

	Sqm	Occupancy	Notes
Total NET usable area	1,719		
Plant			
Grossing rate (20%)			
Grossing rate (50%) including plant	50.0		
Gross area	860		Includes circulation, plant and technical areas
Total GROSS area	2,579		

4.2.2 SITE PLANNING

The diagrams that follow represent the possible locations for the required footprint of a new build proposal, based on a maximum three storey building to accommodate the required areas. This will require closer examination throughout Stage 1.





Indicative position of new building on Gurkha Square with Fleet Road frontage

5 NOTES ON ACOUSTIC REQUIREMENTS

ROOM ACOUSTICS

The acoustic environment of the Harlington theatre will be tailored to provide the local community with a performance space suitable for hosting a variety of events, including touring theatre productions. The room will also host unamplified and amplified speech (drama, comedy, book signings, etc.), amplified music concerts including Pop/Rock, Jazz/Blues and Folk, conferences, lectures and film presentations. The room volume, form, and finishes should respond to these priorities: in a room of the proposed capacity, both the room volume and overall dimensions will be key parameters in achieving an intimate acoustic environment. As The Harlington Theatre is envisioned to host a wide range of event types with different requirements with regards to acoustic environment, variable acoustic finishes may also be appropriate.

BACKGROUND NOISE

The counterpart to an excellent room acoustic environment is keeping background noise to a minimum. Any continuous background noises (for example from air conditioning systems) will influence perceived loudness and intelligibility, while intrusive noise events from the outside and adjacent spaces can be distracting enough to disturb our sense of suspended disbelief – taking us out of the world the performers are creating for us. The building services will be designed to provide a maximum background noise level of PNC-20 in the performance spaces.

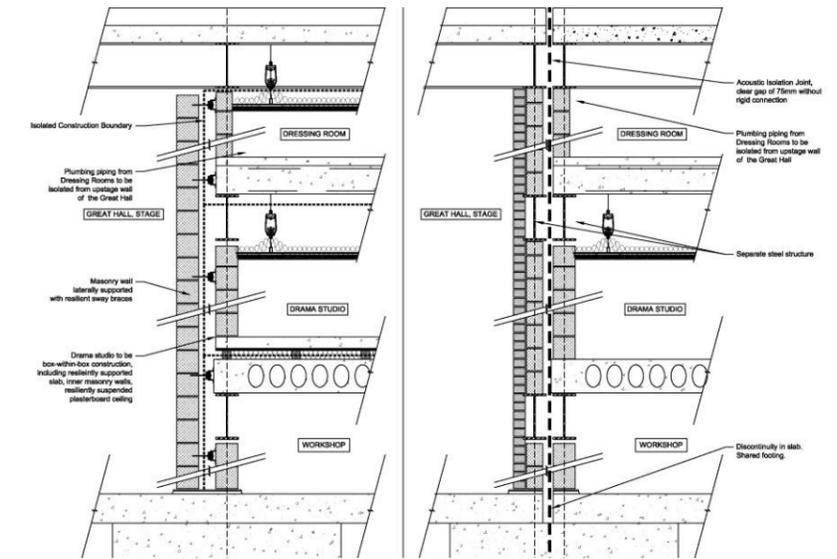
SOUND SEPARATION

The theatre and studio will be provided with sufficient sound separation from exterior noise sources and internal adjacent spaces. Space planning should provide for buffer spaces between the theatre and the studio and any other noise producing rooms, such as plant rooms. The building massing may provide for logical structural separations to achieve attenuation of structure-borne noise.

Successful noise attenuation from the exterior and building services will play a large role in achieving the recommended background noise criteria. Noise from nearby rooms and equipment should not intrude and impact the background sound levels of the performance space. The design goal for intrusive noise is informed by the criteria for continuous background noise. To achieve sufficient sound separation from adjacent areas, some special construction and detailing is expected to be required. This includes noise from mechanical and technical equipment.

The structural scheme will need to assume that the auditorium design will include an approach that allows a vibration break between auditorium and surrounding structure, depending on adjacencies – a cavity wall construction is expected for direct adjacency of the auditorium to the exterior, while a double-layer roof/ceiling construction is expected in order to provide a high level of airborne and rain-impact noise separation.

Critical adjacencies between noise sensitive spaces, especially equipment rooms that may generate airborne noise and vibration, will need to be avoided and may result in some compromises to the most efficient space planning for plant areas. Where dance studios are proposed above performance spaces, a vibration isolation strategy will have to be developed to address noise transfer to the new studio space, and a floating floor system will likely be necessary between the two stacked spaces.



Acoustic construction details developed for the theatre at The Leys School, Cambridge

6 REQUIREMENTS FOR SUBMISSION

Tenderers are asked to provide a fee proposal with the following information:

- Relevant experience in refurbishment works for theatres/performing arts buildings and community buildings
- Relevant experience of new build theatres/performing arts buildings and community buildings
- Relevant experience in supporting and preparing material for public consultation exercises and exhibitions
- Details of your proposed team structure (including a list and particulars of proposed sub-consultants) with supporting CVs and hourly rates.
- Methodology and approach to the brief
- A response to the brief highlighting opportunities and risks
- Relevant reference details from previous projects
- Your lump-sum fee including expenses
- A supporting resource schedule

7 NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE FOR DESIGN

It is anticipated that four shortlisted architect practices will be interviewed.

Following this initial architectural competition, our intention is that the selected architects and their design team will be appointed by the end of September 2016.

It is anticipated that Stage 1 will be of 4 months' duration from October 2016, with a draft issue of information by the end of December and final sign off by the end of January 2017.

Public Consultation - early February to mid-March 2017.
Appointment of design team for remainder of project – end of July 2017.
Final design and construction programme tbc.

**END OF ARCHITECT'S BRIEF
THE HARLINGTON, FLEET**