

Designer's commentary on proposed design solutions

The design solutions seek to provide a carefully balanced response to the committee's design brief within the limitations imposed by a grade II* listed building sitting on a constrained site within a controlled urban environment.

The base objective common to all solutions is to provide modern, safe & statutorily compliant support facilities which service the current or new activities within the first floor hall, or additional space created in the under-croft. The main support facilities are suitable access (stairs and lift), emergency egress (escape stairs), kitchen & bar facilities, toilet accommodation & storage.

In all options the 'reversing' of the external escape stairs seeks to improve emergency egress from the first floor.

By only working within the confines of the existing 'envelope' of the building, the required level of support facilities makes a significant impact on the existing hall space without creating opportunities for new uses, as demonstrated by Option A.

The extension of useable space into the under-croft provides additional opportunities for new uses, and relieves pressure on the first floor hall, but still compromises the size and functionality of the performance stage, which is increasingly seen as a key and unique element of the building's future function. This is demonstrated by Option B

Option C also makes use of an extended space into the under-croft, but critically seeks to relieve 'pressure' on the existing envelope by creating a modest two-storey extension to the rear of the building to house toilet and lift facilities. Not only does this maintain the current hall space but it also provides an opportunity to remove the partial infilling of the under-croft (current toilets) so that the under-croft can be viewed almost in its entirety, which the discrete new glazed elements do very little to impede. This exciting development means that the under-croft, once the main focus of local commerce and community gathering but reduced today to a cold, uninviting under-utilised space partly filled with sub-standard toilets, can be returned to a vibrant, inviting and flexible community space to serve a 21st century Minchinhampton community.

The design process has started to explore improvements to the performance stage to meet an emerging plan to revitalise the performing arts which has had such a strong resonance at the market house in the recent past. Although specialist advice is still being sought, it is anticipated that modifications to the stage could increase stage depth, increase auditorium space and improve audience experience.