

## Response to comments raised during Consultation December 2023

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| <p>Improvements to seating</p>                     | <p>Comments received included the need to improve leg room, have larger more comfortable seating and seating arrangements to improve the view.</p> <p>Comments about central aisles were taken into consideration, however in an effort to preserve good sightlines to the stage, centrally located seats are a prime location, to that end side aisles have been used in the design. The new retractable seating unit will not have toe boards which have been noted as a particular issue within the current space.</p> <p>In order to ensure intimacy within the venue no audience member is more than 25 meters from the front of the stage.</p> <p>Consideration has been given to wheelchair positions and companion seats with a number of locations at both stalls level and balcony level offering a wider choice.</p> <p>The stalls level of the auditorium will continue to be used flexibly as with the present venue ensuring Telford Theatre @ Oakengates can continue to offer flat floor music events, seated dining events, in the round events such as wrestling as well as the programme of seated performance events. This philosophy extended into the studio theatre where a retractable seating unit will allow the space to be used for a wide range of activities outside of its use as a performance space.</p>   |
| <p>Access to facilities for disabled community</p> | <p>Comments received included the need to ensure good disabled access and space throughout the theatre, consideration of the position of disabled spaces, improvements to disabled toilet facilities and other facilities e.g. user-friendly systems for deaf/hard of hearing, handrails for blind/visually impaired people.</p> <p>The publicly accessible areas of the existing theatre are split over two levels – the Limes Walk entrance / library area, and a higher-level giving access to the bar and auditorium. The higher level is currently served by a platform lift. The theatre also has a single wheelchair accessible toilet at stalls/bar level, and a Changing Places facility in the library area.</p> <p>The new theatre will have a larger capacity than currently, across multiple levels to accommodate tiered seating and a balcony. Access into the theatre building will be improved by providing a second entrance, serving the carpark and removing the need for patrons to use the long external ramp to Limes Walk when arriving by car.</p> <p>There will be a passenger lift serving all levels of the building and care is being taken that facilities are accessible for wheelchair users and those of reduced mobility, including power assisted entrance doors, adequate turning space, lowered serveries and seating areas to suit a wide range of abilities.</p> <p>There will be multiple wheelchair accessible toilets throughout the building, and at each floor level. In addition, there will be larger cubicles in the ladies' and mens' toilets, gender neutral toilets, and a changing places unit.</p> <p>Finishes throughout the new theatre will aid with wayfinding, with consideration given to multi-sensorial experience, such as how they feel to touch and how they affect the soundscape of a space, as well as their visual appearance.</p> |

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|  | <p>In addition, a quiet room will be available for visitors if the main auditoria becomes too stimulating. A screen showing a live feed from the main auditoria will be available during shows.</p>  |
| <p>Car parking</p>                                       | <p>Comments included concerns over the lack of existing parking spaces, the need for parking to remain free of charge, the need to improve disabled access from the car park and consideration of access into and out of the main car park.</p> <p>We are committed to the ongoing provision of free car parking within council owned car parks in Oakengates. We are aware of the issues of car parking availability due in part to people using the car park to catch the train and are working to develop a long-term parking plan in Oakengates, considering concerns raised.</p>  |
| <p>Café closure and food and drink offer</p>             | <p>Comments included disappointment about the closure of the café and the need to serve hot drinks, the need for the food and drink offer to be open all day and during performances, the need for an extended bar service and concerns that the dining offer will negatively impact on or detract from local businesses.</p> <p>There will be a cafe offer serving hot drinks and food supporting local residents and businesses for customers throughout the day with an additional evening dining offer including pre-show dining. Survey responses 81% supported the creating of a new bay/foyer area with 64% supporting a pre-show dining offer.</p>   |
| <p>Auditorium size, facilities and technical systems</p> | <p>Comments included the need for an orchestra pit, need to improve the sound system (existing system too loud), the need for standing room as well as seats, the need to improve technical facilities to attract shows.</p> <p>The main auditorium spatial volume has increased with the addition of balcony seating level and a technical level. Existing is 2500 meters cubed, with the proposed increasing to 4810 meters cubed.</p> <p>The balcony seating extends down the side walls of the auditorium towards the stage to make best use of space. The overall seated capacity of the auditorium has risen to around 750 people.</p> <p>The elevator which sits in front of the stage will be able to travel up to stage level, extending the playing space into the auditorium as well as a small amount below auditorium level to create a shallow pit accessed from the auditorium.</p> <p>The new auditorium retains the flexibility of the current venue at the heart of its design to enable standing, dining and fully seated events to be hosted.</p> <p>Technical infrastructure will be updated to bring the venue up to date, as well as the rigging bars over stage of a greater capacity and more evenly spaced for better coverage over the stage. As well adding new LED production lighting fixtures to supplement the existing stock, a new loudspeaker system will be installed to ensure the coverage throughout the venue is maximised.</p> <p>The technical level over the auditorium allows for easier access to rig equipment over the auditorium reducing the need for access equipment.</p> |

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|  | <p>The overall venue capacity will be further increased with the addition of a Studio Theatre allowing Telford Theatre to play host to more programmed events as both the Main Auditorium and Studio Theatre can run events simultaneously.</p>  |
| <p>Bar improvements</p>  | <p>Comments included the need for a larger bar, more seating and a quicker bar service.</p> <p>The existing bar area is relatively cramped, especially during the interval period. Space is further restricted by the proximity of the toilets to the bar queueing area. The existing bar area is approximately 200sqm with a bar length of just under 12 metres.</p> <p>The new bar and restaurant area is proposed at 350sqm with a bar length of 28 metres, which represents a much larger seating space for people to sit for dining and pre-show drinks, a larger foyer and standing area and bar servery. The cellar and kitchen is also located close to the servery and seating areas, to aid speed of service. There will be additional toilets throughout the building to avoid congested bar queueing areas. On-line and pre-order bar service will be available for speed of service and a second smaller bar facility will be available on the lower ground floor.</p>  |
| <p>Toilet improvements</p>                                     | <p>Comments included the need for more toilets, more good quality disabled / changing spaces toilets and toilets located in more than one location.</p> <p>The existing theatre has a very limited number of toilets (11), which are located off the bar area, causing congestion at busy times such as the interval. There is one wheelchair accessible toilet, and one Changing Places unit.</p> <p>The proposed theatre includes multiple wheelchair accessible toilets throughout the building, and at each floor level. In addition, there will be some larger cubicles in the ladies' and mens' toilets, gender neutral toilets, a family toilet and a changing places unit. The total number of toilets in the proposed building available for public use is around 68. This represents a vast increase sanitary provision, even when the increased seating numbers (from 550 to 850 seats) are taken into account.</p> <p>The toilets are positioned in multiple locations across the building, with consideration given to densely populated areas and ensuring people do not have to change levels within the building to access a WC.</p> |
| <p>Theatre facilities, look of the building and atmosphere</p> | <p>Comments included the need for the building to be iconic and to have a grander entrance, the need to improve layout and flow of the theatre to avoid bottlenecks, a bigger foyer and bar area, increasing the number of entrances to the auditorium, introduction of a new lift.</p> <p>Some key concepts were identified during the early design stages, in response to the existing site context, the retained building, and the client brief. The first of these is allowing the two auditoria to be visible to the exterior of the theatre, announcing them and celebrating them as beacons on the approach. The second was to find a means of better connecting the existing carpark to the new theatre, which is achieved by the addition of a second entrance facing the carpark.</p> <p>The two entrances are to be connected internally via a stunning double height boulevard, which simplifies wayfinding and accommodates a mass influx of</p>  |

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|  | <p>people at key times, providing clear access to both auditoria and other facilities within the theatre complex.</p> <p>The new front of house space wraps around both auditoria, allowing multiple entry points and ensuring accessibility for all users. Access for all is further provided via a lift which serves all levels.</p>  |
| <p>Improvements to stage and back stage facilities</p>         | <p>Comments included the need for a bigger stage and wing space and a fly tower to accommodate larger productions, the need for improvements to the size, access, ventilation and quality of back stage facilities including dressing rooms, toilet and washing facilities.</p> <p>The current wing space, at its widest, is 2 metres but narrows to as little as 400mm in several locations. The new wings are a consistent 2.3 metres for the full depth of the stage. The stage left wing opens out into a scene dock where scenery and other equipment can arrive off the back of a truck and transit to the stage at one floor level without the need for steps or lifts.</p> <p>Rather than being a 4.8 metre wide platform in front of the stage, the new forestage lift is the full width of the proscenium (12 metres) allowing the playing space to extend up to 2.6 metres into the auditorium.</p> <p>The existing back of house facilities are primarily provided at first floor level, which means performers need to go down stairs to access the stage. The facilities are tired and outdated, and there are very few toilet and shower facilities. The new dressing rooms will accommodate 32 performers in 4 dressing rooms, with an additional generously sized star dressing room. Each will be en-suite and there will be additional shower facilities including accessible shower rooms. There will also be a green room, and a separate stage door access for performers with a platform lift to accommodate the less mobile and also luggage / flight cases. The back of house will be installed at a level to match that of the stage, for ease of access.</p> |
| <p>Theatre programme, ticket pricing and customer service.</p> | <p>Comments included the need to improve the quality and diversity of shows and acts, more live bands, concerts and good plays, the need to maintain a cultural performance offer during theatre closure, the need to keep ticket prices affordable, improvements to ticket purchasing systems and introduction of incentives i.e. a loyalty scheme.</p> <p>The additional facilities including a studio theatre will provide the opportunity for a more diverse programme. We will be holding consultation with customers and promoters to develop this program.</p> <p>During the theatre closure we will be working with other community venues, parks and open spaces to offer a cultural program of entertainment. The popular annual Christmas Pantomime will be relocated to the Telford International Centre for 2024.</p> <p>We will be looking to introduce a Theatre Loyalty Membership Scheme for our patrons.</p> <p>Ticket prices are determined by performers, artists and promoters. We will continue to negotiate the best possible ticket deals in line with other competitor venues and market conditions.</p>   |

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| <p>Location and name of the theatre</p>                         | <p>Comments focussed on the Theatre being better located more centrally in Telford Town Centre i.e. Southwater and that the Theatre should be named Oakengates Theatre.</p> <p>The Levelling Up Funding we have received relates to the remodelling of the theatre in its current location and links with the wider redevelopment of Oakengates. The theatre is now known as Telford Theatre @ Oakengates, celebrating its location in Oakengates, whilst ensuring that theatre patrons from further afield are aware that the theatre is in Telford.</p>   |
| <p>Length of Theatre closure and impact on local businesses</p> | <p>Comments focussed on concerns about the length of the theatre closure, the impact on local business during the construction, views that the project will not increase trade to local businesses.</p> <p>Due to the complex nature of the construction of the new theatre, construction timelines are likely to be between 18-24 months, however we will work with the appointed contract to minimise the length of closure as far as possible.</p> <p>The increased capacity of the new main auditorium and the new studio theatre will bring in more people to Oakengates in the long-term. The studio theatre and the art room will be used by the community, which is expected to increase daytime footfall to the town.</p>  |
| <p>Public transport</p>   | <p>Comments centred on the lack of public transport to/from Oakengates, the need for an evening bus service and better train service.</p> <p>The Council only has limited ways in how we can impact privately operated public transport services by bus and rail in the borough, although do support an increase in quality public transport for our residents.</p> <p>At this point commercial bus operators in Telford are not able to provide additional evening bus services on a commercial basis, which means that any services would need to be subsidised by the Council. Whilst the Council does subsidise services in the borough out funding to do so is severely limited, and regularly engage with national government on the need to provide sufficient long-term funding to support our bus networks. Unfortunately, at this stage until more long- term funding is available, we are not in a position to provide additional evening bus services at this time.</p> <p>In terms of rail, the operation of specific services is overseen by the Department for Transport in conjunction with contract operators. The council does not have direct control over these operations, but again continues to lobby government and regional bodies to improve our rail services.</p> |
| <p>Relocation of the Library</p>                                | <p>Comments focussed on concerns about closing the library and the future of the library.</p> <p>Oakengates library which was located at Telford Theatre closed on Saturday 23 March and has been temporary relocated to The Wakes in Oakengates. The operating hours for the library are:</p> <p>Monday 9am – 5pm<br/> Tuesday 3pm – 5pm<br/> Wednesday 3pm – 5pm<br/> Thursday 9am – 5pm<br/> Friday 3pm – 5pm</p>  |

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|                       | <p>Saturday 9am – 1pm</p> <p>The permanent relocation for Oakengates Library is being considered and will be confirmed in due course.</p>  |
| Relocation of nursery | <p>Comments focussed on the need to provide suitable premises for the relocation of the nursery.</p> <p>A planning application has been submitted for the relocation of Oakengates nursery to Cartilage House, conveniently just a third of a mile from the old nursery.</p> <p>The new nursery on Charlton Street will have a capacity for 90 children, maintaining the same intake as the current facility. This purpose-built nursery will boast dedicated parking, modern amenities, and landscaped outdoor space, providing an optimal learning environment for young children.</p> <p>The decision to relocate Oakengates Nursery School follows a thorough consultation process. Initially, alternative sites were explored. However, after careful consideration of various factors such as access, parking and site layout, the site at Cartilage House emerged as the most suitable location for the nursery.</p>  |
| Funding               | <p>Comments focused on the need to spend funding elsewhere in the town.</p> <p>In July 2022, Local Authorities were invited to bid for a share of the funding in accordance with objectives of the fund. View more information in the Levelling Up Fund Round 2: prospectus.</p> <p>In January 2023, Telford &amp; Wrekin Council received the news that we were successful in securing £20 million to deliver two projects to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remodel Telford Theatre in Oakengates</li> <li>• Create a new further education centre at Station Quarter</li> </ul> <p>These projects deliver solutions to identified issues around enhanced access to Further Education and cultural events, deliver town centre regeneration, through increasing activity levels and footfall, significantly enhance cultural facilities through the expansion and remodelling of the Theatre for the benefit of communities around the wider Borough and support its educational aspirations and needs through new Sixth Form Centre facilities to be located in Telford’s centrally-located Station Quarter.</p> |