



MELKSHAM ASSEMBLY HALL STRATEGIC BRIEF

DECEMBER 2017



Architects

CONTENTS

0.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
1.	INTRODUCTION.....	4
	Project Objectives.....	4
2.	SITE SUMMARY	5
3.	BUDGET/FUNDING.....	6
	Budget.....	6
	Funding Opportunities	6
4.	PROGRAMME	6
5.	PLANNING.....	7
6.	CONSULTANT INPUT	7
7.	EVALUATION OF EXISTING BUILDING	8
	Existing Space Utilisation of Town Hall and Assembly Hall	8
	Condition of Assembly Hall.....	9
	Hazards	9
	Summary of Survey, Public Feedback, and Performer Feedback	9
8.	PRIORITIES FOR REDEVELOPMENT/REFURBISHMENT	13
9.	SUMMARY	16
10.	APPENDICES	17

0. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The strategic brief document summarises the project aim, objectives, feedback from the public, input from the Town Hall and Assembly Hall personnel, key project information, and identifies priorities for the redevelopment/refurbishment. The strategic brief will be used to inform the feasibility study, business case, and grant bids if appropriate.

The aim of the Assembly Hall is to be an accessible community facility that accommodates a diverse range of events and is run in a cost-effective manner. The current facility partially meets this aim, but feedback from the Town Hall, Assembly Hall, and the community demonstrate that this aim is impeded.

Key findings of the report include:

- The current condition and facilities are limiting the range of acts that can be accommodated in the Hall, and therefore the revenue potential. Key issues were unloading and access to stage, stage size/construction/surface, lack of fly tower, insufficient backstage area, and poor lighting/sound.
- The enjoyment and use by the community is inhibited due to lack of parking, lack of visibility, unsafe pedestrian access, cramped foyer, poor thermal/acoustic conditions, uncomfortable seating, crowded/cramped bar, poor sightlines to the stage, general unattractive appearance, lack of natural light, and insufficient WC provision.
- The condition of the Hall and its inefficient mechanical and electrical services increases operational costs. The space heating, hot water heating, and cold water supply are inefficient. The construction fabric is poorly performing, which increases use of the air conditioning system and energy consumption.
- **47%** of respondents said they would use the Hall more if it was refurbished.
- Key priorities for the refurbishment of the Assembly Hall include external signage, safe pedestrian route, adjacent parking including disabled, attractive and generous lobby, larger bar, acoustic interventions, tiered ergonomic retractable seating, natural light, larger stage designed to best practice, larger backstage, generous loading area preferably to west with direct access to backstage, efficient space and hot water heating, high performance integrated lighting/sound/projection system, more toilet provision, and access to a commercial kitchen.
- Key priorities for additional facilities include a medium size performance/multi-use space, gallery, community space, café, and fly tower.

The public and performer feedback identified priority areas and a clear need for works to the Assembly Hall, which supports the Town Council's aspirations to improve the Assembly Hall. Works to the Assembly Hall would enhance the facilities offered, comfort, and appearance of the Assembly Hall in order to generate income, encourage more community use and a more diverse audience, and improve the efficiency of its operation.

In order to achieve the target 2020 construction commencement date, the project will need to proceed at pace, and the feasibility will need to be instructed as soon as possible, along with a condition survey, and topographical survey. We would also recommend liaising with Wiltshire Council over the programme for Blue Pool demolition, provision of parking, and potential for loading in location of existing Blue Pool.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Melksham Assembly Hall serves a population of approximately 28 000. Until 2001, it was operated by West Wilts District Council. Threatened with closure, a community referendum supported the Town Council taking over the running of the Assembly Hall. The Assembly Hall provides a 'village hall' facility, but since 2011, the Town Council has increasingly promoted live entertainment. There is some tension between these uses as live touring acts generate income to cover costs, but reduce the availability of the Assembly Hall for the community.

The large flexible Hall space currently accommodates conferences/seminars, talks/lectures, dinners, dances, wedding receptions, fund raising events, bazaars/ fairs, and pantomimes/theatre. It is also where clubs meet including the model car club. Comic-Con is staged every year and attracts a wide audience. 200 people can be accommodated in cabaret style seating, and 450 in theatre style seating. Flexibility is a key characteristic of the Assembly Hall that must be preserved.

The current condition and lack of facilities associated with a big theatre has reduced the number of performers who are interested in performing at the Assembly Hall, and discourages some members of the community from attending events. In order to meet the Town Hall's aim for the Assembly Hall, refurbishment/redevelopment work is necessary. This document summarises project aim, objectives, feedback from the public, and input from the Town Hall and Assembly Hall personnel, and key project information to create a strategic brief that can be used to inform a feasibility study.

Project Objectives

Aim: The aim of the Assembly Hall is to be an accessible community facility that accommodates a diverse range of events and is run in a cost-effective manner. The current facility partially meets this aim, but feedback from the Town Hall, Assembly Hall, and the community demonstrate that this aim is impeded by:

- The current condition and facilities offered by the Assembly Hall limit the number of live acts who will perform at the Assembly Hall (and therefore the potential revenue and diversity)
- The lack of natural light and break-out space in the Hall space limits the desirability of the space for weddings/conferences/events (and therefore the potential revenue and usefulness to the community)
- The lack of desirable features, condition, facilities limit the degree to which the Assembly Hall acts as a destination venue (and therefore its ability to draw people from outside the immediate area who would contribute to Melksham's economy)
- The current condition and facilities offered by the Assembly Hall limits its use by the community

The refurbishment project intends to increase the ability of the Town Council to meet its aim by:

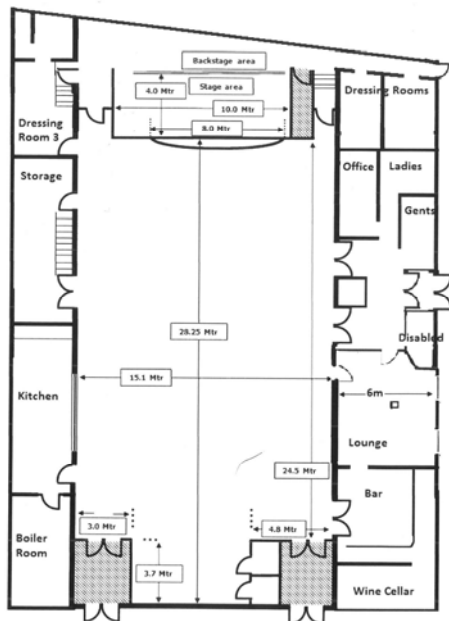
- Enhancing the facilities offered and the appearance of the Assembly Hall to create a destination venue that draws people from outside the area to Melksham to generate income
- Enhancing the facilities offered, comfort, and appearance of the Assembly Hall to attract a more diverse entertainment offer to generate income
- Enhancing the facilities offered, comfort, and appearance to encourage more community use and a more diverse audience including families and youth
- Improve the efficiency of its operation through fabric upgrade (to higher than building regulations) and more efficient and effective mechanical and electrical services to be more cost effective
- Improve the efficiency of its operation through specification of low maintenance materials and solutions

2. SITE SUMMARY

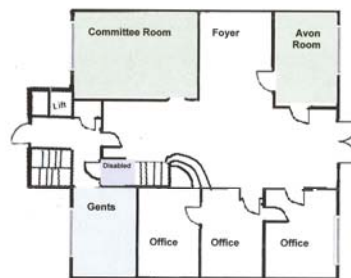
The Assembly Hall is immediately behind the Melksham Town Hall, a two storey, Grade II Listed stone building. Adjacent to the Town Hall is the Arts Café, which is owned by the Town Council and leased to the Rotary Club to run as a cafe. There are 3 parts to the Assembly Hall, the main hall and stage, a single storey brick extension to the east (with bar, lounge, office, two dressing rooms and WC's), and a two storey stone building to the west dating from 1850 which houses the kitchen, storage and the boiler to the Blue Pool. This area is in poor condition and underutilised. It is understood the Assembly Hall was built as a steel frame WWI Drill Hall. It was reroofed in 1976 with an aluminium roof structure and roof cladding. There is no dedicated parking currently, but a large Wiltshire Council carpark to the rear, adjacent to Melksham House. The revised planned Health and Wellbeing Centre will reduce the parking near the site. A full summary and background to Melksham and the Assembly Hall is included in the Appendices as part of the initial brief.



Melksham Assembly Hall



Melksham Town Hall Ground Floor



Melksham Town Hall First Floor

3. BUDGET/FUNDING

Budget

The Town Council has budgeted for a £2m loan from the Public Works Loan Board and its own reserves. Grant funding would potentially be able to increase the budget and /or alongside a Public Works Loan. A feasibility study that includes a number of options that reflect different degrees of intervention is recommended to assist the funding decision-making process. The way the redevelopment cost is presented to the public will be a sensitive topic and some of the feedback has questioned the necessity for the work especially a new build – “Ripping the hall down on some sort of whim is madness and simply only helps to make a few councillors think they have achieved something and lines the pocket of an architect and developer”.

Funding Opportunities

Below is a brief list of some relevant grants:

- Big Lottery Fund – People and places, funding capital and revenue community projects from 10K-500K; Reaching Communities England
- Arts Council
- Heritage lottery fund
- BFI Neighbourhood Cinema – supporting Cinema provision in communities which are underserved
- Power to change – helping new and existing community businesses grow and become more sustainable
- Suez Community Trust

Below is a suggestion of some bid writing consultants that could be asked to quote for preparing bids for grant funding:

- Watchett based, (has been on TV with Piers Taylor) <https://www.onioncollective.co.uk/our-services>
- Leeds based, featured in the Guardian <http://www.ontothepage.co.uk/>
- Wolverhampton based consultancy <http://www.wgconsulting.co.uk/our-services/fundraising-services>

4. PROGRAMME

The key milestone for the programme is that the project must start on site well in advance of the Annual Town Council elections in May 2021. Starting on site by the end of 2020 is the programme objective, and the accuracy and certainty of the completion date is required for the future programming of live acts at the Assembly Hall. In order to achieve this target date, the project will need to proceed at pace, and the feasibility will need to be instructed as soon as possible.

A phased approach from a practical point of view may reduce the amount of time the facility is out of use, but it could mean that political change following the election may realign priorities and reduce the potential of the optimum scheme being delivered. Community perception must also be considered, one of the survey responses said “we don’t need it to be shut down for years being revamped”.

The programme of adjacent Health and Wellbeing Campus also needs to be considered as there are many uncertainties and delays surrounding it. The Blue Pool will only be demolished once the new Health and Wellbeing facilities are available for use, which means the boiler may still have to be housed in the Coach house until then. The Campus' delayed programme will therefore have implications for the programme of this project.

5. PLANNING

The Assembly Hall lies within the Melksham Conservation Area and is adjacent to two Grade II Listed Buildings (The Town Hall 1847 and Melksham House (18th C)). The pillars to the south of the Assembly Hall are also listed as part of Melksham House. St Michael's Church, to the north is Grade II* and dates from the Norman period. Any work to the listed Town Hall including a glazed link between the Assembly Hall and the Town Hall will require Listed Building consent. This has implications on programme and budget as it requires more detailed application drawings. Any highways strategy to improve loading/access to the backstage area will need to account for or negotiate with the Listed Building officer over the location of these pillars.

6. CONSULTANT INPUT

It is advisable that the condition survey and topographical survey are carried out as soon as possible. This should be followed by a feasibility study by an Architect, to identify several options of varying degrees of intervention that can be costed by a Quantity Surveyor. If funding additional to the budget currently allocated is deemed necessary, a Bid Consultant could be appointed to make grant applications on the Town Council's behalf. This may require a consultant to prepare Business Plan. Following the selection of a preferred scheme, consultants in addition to the Architect may include:

- Ecologist (if there is any chance of bats in derelict Coach House)
- Acoustic consultant
- Planning consultant
- Highways consultant
- Structural engineer
- Mechanical and electrical engineer
- Lighting consultant
- External lighting assessment if external lighting provision is increased

7. EVALUATION OF EXISTING BUILDING

Existing Space Utilisation of Town Hall and Assembly Hall

As the Town Hall and Assembly Hall are managed as linked facilities, a summary of key spaces in both buildings has been included.

Town Hall:

- **Main Hall:** There is quite a lot of demand for the Town Hall, main hall space. It accommodates 60 people seated at dinner, and 80-100 in conference seating. The main hall has a lift to enable disabled access. Access is through the ante room, which makes the Anteroom unable to be used independently. The hall is carpeted and does not have a bar, so it is unsuitable for parties, weddings, discos. There are few enquiries for conferences, perhaps due to the lack of transport links and lack of major hotels in Melksham. The main hall is used regularly Monday to Friday during the day and in the evenings. It is rarely used on Saturday evening, but is used regularly on Sunday for church. The main hall is sometimes underutilised because a one hour yoga class may mean a day training session has to be turned away or accommodated elsewhere. If the main hall is unavailable, groups of more than 20, will be accommodated in a partitioned Assembly Hall. Smaller groups are sometimes housed in the Assembly Hall lounge, the cricket pavilion, or sent to the Rachel Fowler centre.
- **Committee room:** The committee room is regularly used Monday to Friday but rarely on weekends.
- **Offices:** The offices are all used.
- **Avon Room:** The Avon room houses the town CCTV which limits its use for other purposes.

Assembly Hall:

- **Main Hall:** The Assembly Hall is used by regular users on Mondays and Wednesdays, and then hired out for events and live entertainment at other times. It has been estimated that live entertainment takes place 36 times a year, cinema 24 times, comedy 12 times, and other private events take place approximately 30 times a year. Often live entertainment shows sell out.
- **Dressing Rooms:** The dressing rooms are only used by live entertainment groups and comedy, otherwise they are not used. Dressing room 3 is currently being used as an office by the Wiltshire Council caterers.
- **Kitchen:** The kitchen is used Monday to Friday for lunch club, but this use will cease shortly. It is used for major catering 6 times per year, and frequently for outside caterers preparation and tea and coffee.
- **Lounge:** Is used daily for lunch club, but this will be discontinued shortly. The lounge is sometimes used as overspill for events that couldn't be accommodated in the Town Hall.

Condition of Assembly Hall

It is recommended that a full condition survey is undertaken as a priority to understand the condition of the existing buildings and the budget implications of remedial work. This will have a major impact on the feasibility study, and the level of redevelopment vs refurbishment required and therefore the budget. This is a general non-technical summary of key issues:

- Ancillary Spaces: The bar, lounge, office, toilets are tired and need modernising. The rooflights in this area have failed and are currently covered by tarpaulins.
- Kitchen: The kitchen was replaced 3 years ago by Wiltshire Council, with reconditioned equipment. It is showing its age, but is still serviceable.
- Mechanical and Electrical: Hot water is instantaneous electric units at point of delivery. Space heating is via air conditioning units that has outlets at the top of the main hall space. This is a very ineffective and inefficient way of heating the space, as described by the maintenance engineer.
- Coach house: derelict and underutilised. It is unusable in areas where header tanks from Blue Pool are housed. Adjacent to the kitchen, the boiler for the Blue Pool is housed.
- The construction fabric is poorly performing, which contributes to heat loss in winter and heat gain in summer, which in turn increases use of the air conditioning system and energy use.

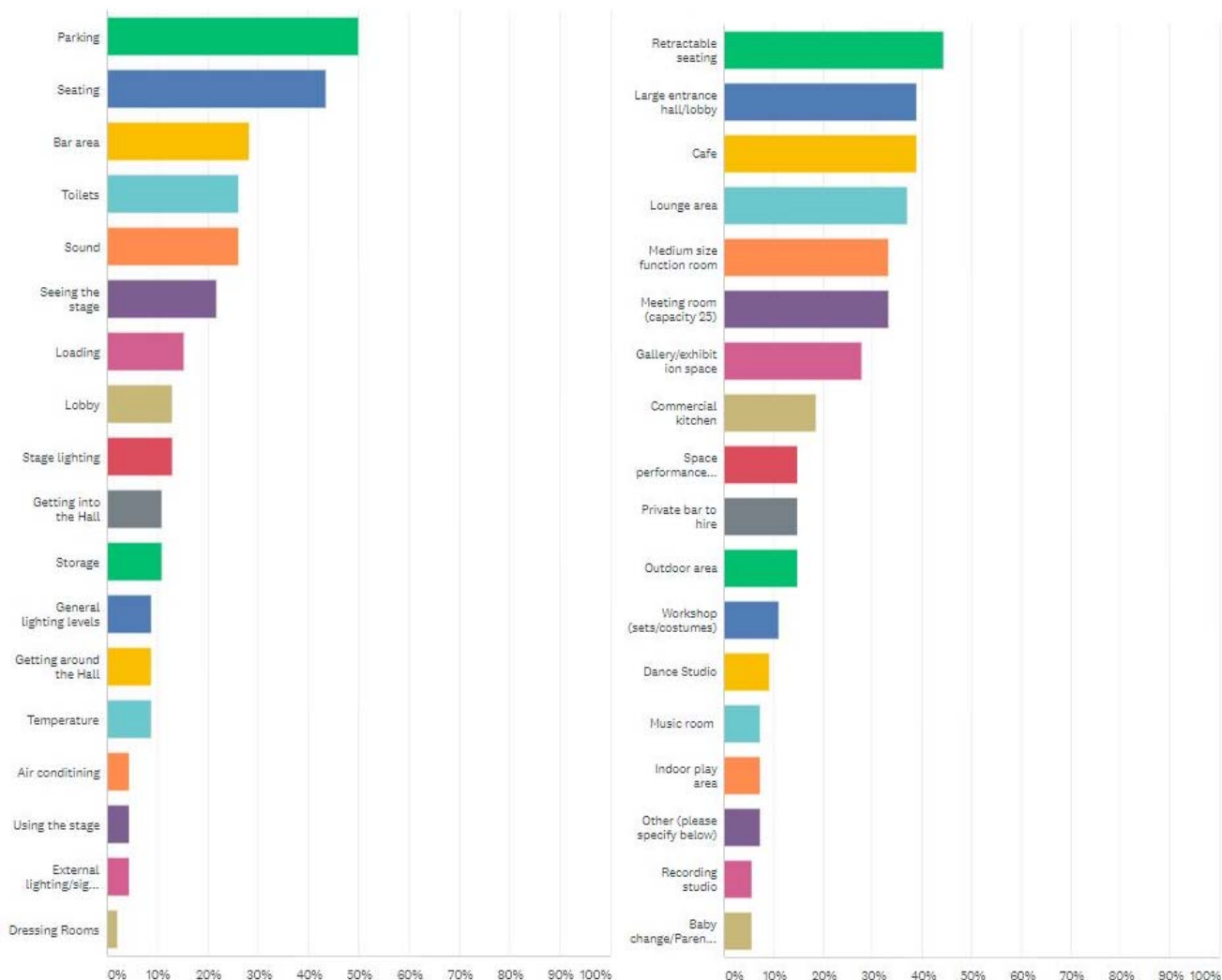
Hazards

An asbestos survey is appended to this report. Asbestos has been found in various locations in the Assembly Hall including floor tiles, toilet cistern, roofing felt, and gaskets. Removal of the asbestos will require special handling and may have cost implications. The Assembly Hall is in Floor Risk Zone 1, which indicates minimal risk of flooding. There may be additional hazards that may be picked up in the Condition Survey.

Summary of Survey, Public Feedback, and Performer Feedback

This is a summary of the feedback from an online survey, two public feedback sessions, and performer feedback given to the Assembly Hall management. The online survey (November 2017) attracted 80 respondents aged between 36-82. The summary includes issues that were raised multiple times, but does not include issues regarding management, other facilities in Melksham, community ownership etc. **40%** believed existing venues in Melksham did not meet the needs of the community. More suitable music venues for larger bands/choirs were desired, comfortable and accessible drop-in venues for older people, additional space for clubs when the main hall is being used, and more appropriate space for theatre and children's events. Other issues included affordability, and several respondents suggested creating a community night (on a quiet night) for a special community rate or free. **47%** of respondents said they would use the Hall more if it was refurbished.

404 Melksham Assembly Hall



The last time you attended the Assembly Hall did you have any problems with

According to the online survey the top five problems areas were parking, seating, bar, toilets and sound.

Which of the facilities below would be of interest to you

The top features online survey respondents would like to see in a redeveloped Assembly Hall were retractable seating, larger lobby, café, lounge area, medium sized multi-use space, exhibition space, and commercial kitchen, which indicates community priorities.

Full details of the public feedback are included in the appendices. Key responses include:

- Parking:
 - Lack of parking generally – was reportedly ok before Campus Build. Parking was no.1 in the survey question regarding problems experienced at the Assembly Hall. “There is no parking at the Hall (and much has been lost in the town now anyway)”
 - Lack of disabled parking. “They are not able to cater for anything in or near the Market Place for those who are elderly, frail or less able but don’t have blue badges”.

- Approach:
 - No sense of arrival
 - Lack of signage, “hidden away”
 - Dangerous pedestrian access
 - Poor disabled access and no adjacent disabled parking
- Foyer:
 - Too small – “the foyer is too cramped and restricts fast movement into the hall”, the lobby is “cramped”.
- Main Hall:
 - Generally happy with size and flexibility to host wide range of community, social and entertainment events
 - Good location
 - Ground floor makes it more accessible than other venues
 - Feels bare, “like a barn” when programmed for smaller events
 - Acoustics of the hall problematic. “There is an acoustic dead spot in the middle of the Hall”, “rain can be heard over entertainment”.
 - Seating uncomfortable – “seating is grim”, “need more leg room”, “seating is unacceptable to provide the right level of comfort for many disabled, those with mobility problems, and issues of age”, and it puts people off attending events “no longer go to shows because seats are uncomfortable and narrow”. Seating was no.2 in the survey question regarding problems experienced at the Assembly Hall.
 - Flat seating - many complained about lack of view of stage and suggested tiered seating
 - Appearance is “run-down”, “outdated”, “looks like a public toilet” or “cow shed”, “we should be looking to the Cheese and Grain or Komedia”
 - Needs more natural light
- Stage and backstage:
 - Dancers don’t like the stage. The concrete construction and slippery lino surface make it difficult to dance on.
 - The small size (height and area) of stage and lack of fly tower has meant some larger companies have not been interested in performing at the Assembly Hall.
 - Small backstage area makes it difficult for performers.
- Mechanical and Electrical:
 - Performers have criticised the lighting, and sound. The lights are not owned by the Assembly Hall. The PA has to be hired, or the acts bring their own.
 - Sound quality in the hall is poor according to survey respondents. This was in the top five in the survey question regarding problems experienced at the Assembly Hall.
 - Thermal comfort was an issue – occupants were either “too hot”, or “too cold”.
- Dressing Rooms:
 - Performers have generally been positive about the dressing rooms.
 - When there is large school dance performances (30 people plus), there is insufficient space for the dancers, and the Town Hall is used as a dressing room, which is not ideal.

404 Melksham Assembly Hall

- Bar:
 - Too small, huge queues. This was a frequently reported problem in the survey and public feedback. Bar was no.4 in the survey question regarding problems experienced at the Assembly Hall.
- Loading:
 - Performing companies have commented on the difficulty of unloading and access, which is sometimes insufficient to allow unloading of all their equipment. Survey respondents commented that “loading can be difficult”
 - Access from the unloading bay to the stage is poor.
- Storage:
 - Need more storage
- Toilets:
 - Not enough ladies toilets, and the lobbies are insufficient to account for door swings. Toilets were no.4 in the survey question regarding problems experienced at the Assembly Hall.
- Kitchen
 - Inconsistent feedback – some respondents thought kitchen facilities were “excellent”, others suggested “servery hatch awkward”, “equipment needs updating”, “need fridge”. 18% of survey respondents would like to see a commercial kitchen in a refurbished Assembly Hall.
- Facilities lacking:
 - Smaller performance/multi-use space – “Hall is too big for smaller functions”, “no suitable venues for card and other games”
 - Gallery - “Town needs an exhibition centre available to all organisations – the lounge was used in the past”, “Exhibition space, we should be looking to the Pound in Corsham”
 - Mezzanine, balcony
 - Museum/visitors centre in Town Hall and offices relocated
 - Drop-in community centre
 - Ability to divide the hall into a smaller space

8. PRIORITIES FOR REDEVELOPMENT/REFURBISHMENT

Below is a summary of the priorities for the redeveloped/refurbished Assembly Hall based on feedback from the online survey, public feedback sessions, interviews with the Assembly Hall management, and Town Council. It is not a detailed accommodation schedule, rather a list of priorities for the refurbishment of existing spaces and desired facilities in any redevelopment. A feasibility study (RIBA Stage 1), and subsequent cost plan will inform a development strategy that will enable the creation of a detailed project brief (RIBA Stage 2).

- Approach
 - Community feedback and observation identified a lack of visibility of the Assembly Hall. More Prominent signage and lighting should be considered. A safer pedestrian route from key access points to the Hall needs consideration. This may require a highways strategy and new pedestrian crossings etc.
- Entrance/Lobby
 - The entrance needs to be larger to enable flow into main hall, more welcoming and attractive
 - It is recommended that this space be large enough to act as exhibition space/drop-in community space/connected to the bar/café or Arts café
- Office and staff room
 - The office could remain in its current location or be on the first floor, but accessibility and passive surveillance suggests ground floor central location is desirable.
 - A larger office with adjacent kitchenette and soft seating could be an alternative to a staff room. Or one of the dressing rooms, when not in use could be used as a staff room
- Cloakroom and box office
 - Although included in the original brief, these spaces are considered by the management to be either surplus to requirements (given mostly online ticketing) or carry a large liability burden. A courtesy rail is operated currently.
- Hall Space
 - The size and flexibility of the hall is one of its greatest assets. The Hall should be able to seat at least 450 in theatre, 250 in cabaret and 600 standing. Flexibility and diversity of offerings were key feedback, therefore these two characteristics must be retained.
 - Many patrons and performers were critical of the appearance of the Hall. Acoustic panels, absorption, and ceiling could be specified in attractive materials to improve the internal appearance of the hall.
 - Seating has been described by patrons as a major issue that is impeding the comfort of users or discouraging them from attending events at the Hall. Seeing the stage has also been identified as an issue. Due to the need for flexibility, tiered retractable seating at ground floor level would be the only advisable option. If the seating is soft it would address comfort issues and help acoustic performance.
 - Natural Light should be introduced into the Hall to make it more suitable for conferences/markets/weddings and other events. However, as theatre and cinema are two of the key uses for the Hall, natural daylight must be introduced in a way that would enable management to easily convert between a naturally lit space and a black-out condition.
 - The Hall was considered unsuitable and undesirable by users for smaller events, and some suggested a partitioned space. The potential and practicality of partitioning the space should be explored, but it may be more desirable to provide an additional medium-size multi-use space, the demand for which was established by the utilisation survey, and online public survey.

- A balcony area could increase the capacity of the Hall. Some shows sell out, and increasing the capacity for large events could be considered. If the balcony was able to be closed off from the main hall, it could also be used as an additional performance/conference space.
- Stage
 - The small size of the stage and its construction limits the ability to host dance or orchestral/large band performances. The dancers don't like dancing on concrete. The stage should be at least 1.5m high and 15m x 8m. The stage should meet best practice standards for performing arts in regard to construction, surface, and size.
 - There should be sufficient back stage area to accommodate large equipment that is accessible from an adjacent loading area. Loading from the blue pool side would be more practical.
 - A fly tower should be considered
- Dressing Rooms
 - Provision of 2 dressing rooms is generally acceptable, but it would be recommended to provide an additional space that could be used as dressing space occasionally for larger casts.
 - Must have ensuite WC and shower
- Acoustics
 - The close proximity of the Assembly Hall to residential properties requires detailed consideration of noise. There has been complaints in the past from Crown House to the north. Acoustic insulation, high specification glazing, and attenuation of duct outlets should be considered, and an acoustic specialist should be appointed at RIBA Stage 2 or Stage 3.
 - Acoustic quality in the Hall is also an issue identified by the audience and the performers. Reverberation time and bass frequencies could be improved through acoustic absorption materials on the back wall of the stage, any proposed balcony, and the ceiling. Further interventions could include splaying the walls, faceting the ceiling, making the seating out of absorptive materials, and sound proofing doors.
- Multi-use medium sized performance/conference space
 - The utilisation survey indicates that there is demand for medium sized multi-use spaces that is not currently being met. When Town Hall rooms are booked the Hall is partitioned and used. The online survey suggests in its temporary partitioned state, the Assembly Hall does not perform well.
 - The initial Town Council brief suggested 1-4 multi-use spaces. But the project must be considered in parallel with the Health and Wellbeing Campus, which plans to have multi-purpose space/community space.
- Larger Bar/Cafe Area
 - Much of the feedback (online and public meeting) indicated that the current bar was insufficient in size and layout to meet the needs of the patrons. Its location is acceptable. A long sectional bar that has a number of parts that could be opened to meet demand may be appropriate. Smaller events could open a small section of the bar. The bar area should include some seating
 - Feedback indicated some desire for a café, but this could be incorporated into the bar or linked to the Arts Café rather than making separate provision for a café
- Linking element
 - The Town Council would like to explore a physical link between the Assembly Hall and Town Hall. The two buildings are managed together, and a physical link could mean they could be effectively operated as a larger hub facility.
- Parking/loading/Accessibility

- Feedback indicated that parking was one of the key problems with the Assembly Hall. Critical to this project is to understand the level of parking provision that will ultimately be provided in the Health and Wellbeing Campus. The Town Council needs to consider increasing parking provision for the Assembly Hall close to the site.
- Sufficient space should be provided for loading/unloading – two large vehicles and three vans/cars. Again, this needs to be negotiated with the Health and Wellbeing Campus, as unloading through a roller door from the side of the Blue Pool would be more practical. The aims of both councils should be aligned to be able to provide the best solution for both facilities. Loading space needs to be provided with direct access to back stage.
- Disabled parking should be provided adjacent to the Assembly Hall. The over 60s are a key user group, and their mobility issues need to be considered.
- Mechanical and electrical
 - The inefficient heating system should be addressed, as it is contributing to operating costs that are much higher than necessary and causing occupant discomfort. Operating costs of the Assembly Hall account for 30% of the Town Council's annual expenditure. (The largest areas of cost are staff, electricity, gas, water). The high water bill is attributed to a water leak.
 - The projector and retractable screens are in good condition and still usable
 - The quality of the lighting and sound has been criticised. It is not currently owned by the Hall. An optimum solution is a new integrated lighting, audio, and projection system owned by the Hall.
 - A 24hr remotely monitored intruder and fire alarm system will be required
- Toilets
 - Toilet provision was a key subject of public feedback especially the ladies. More provision should be made for ladies toilets. (M=4 cubicles, 8 urinals; L – 12 cubicles; D = 2 cubicles - subject to current standards)
 - There is a baby change facility in the disabled WC, but a family room could be considered where small WC, parent WC, and change bench is provided.
- Commercial Kitchen
 - The provision of a commercial kitchen needs to be carefully considered. The survey suggests the community value the provision of the kitchen. However, utilisation information suggests following the departure of lunch club it may be underutilised. The initial brief required a full commercial kitchen including cold prep room, chiller room, and washing up room.
 - The ownership of the immediately adjacent Arts Café kitchen by the Town Hall, suggests they be considered as a connected entity, and kitchen facility provision could be shared.
- Ancillary spaces
 - Additional spaces that need to be included in a detailed project brief include strong room; bar cellar; general storage; production rooms; Amp room; front of house control room; plant room, cleaners storage
- Town Hall Avon Room
 - The town CCTV is not the best use for this room that is in a prime location for a more public purpose.

9. SUMMARY

This document creates a strategic brief for the Assembly Hall based on consultation with the public, the Assembly Hall management and the Town Council. The strategic brief will be used to inform the feasibility study, business case, and grant bids if appropriate.

The public and performer feedback identified priority areas and a clear need for works to the Assembly Hall, which supports the Town Council's aspirations to improve the Assembly Hall. The current condition and facilities are limiting the range of acts that can be accommodated in the Hall, and therefore the revenue potential. The enjoyment and use by the community is also hindered. The condition of the Hall and its inefficient services increases operational costs becoming a financial burden on the Town Council. A large percentage of respondents (47%) said they would use the Hall more if it was refurbished.

A major priority area identified through the consultation was parking and loading. This is directly impacted by the plans for the Health and Wellbeing Campus. It is recommended that conversations with Wiltshire Council should begin in earnest to clarify the level of parking provision, and the potential for loading bays and access to the backstage from the Blue Pool side. It is also necessary to understand their programme for demolition of the Blue Pool.

Although not directly a design issue, perceived affordability and unavailability of the Assembly Hall should be addressed in the redevelopment strategy. Free or low cost community nights, and provision of an additional multi-use space, and a generous lobby that could have a community use (exhibition space) are to be encouraged.

The strategic brief is intended to inform a feasibility study (RIBA Stage 1), which can explore a number of options that reflect varying degrees of intervention (and therefore cost). The options can be costed by a Quantity Surveyor and a redevelopment strategy can be identified including funding route and programme. The selected option can be developed (RIBA Stage 2), to be taken to planning (RIBA Stage 3).

10. APPENDICES

Collated Online Responses

Summary of Public Feedback Sessions

Assembly Hall Asbestos Survey

Assembly Hall Plan and Outline Brief