



Fleet Town Council

HARLINGTON REFURBISHMENT TENDER – ARCHITECT BRIEF

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fleet Town Council wishes to embark on a major refurbishment and re-modelling project to revitalise The Harlington performance and community building located in the centre of Fleet town, and to secure its long-term future as an important cultural, entertainment and leisure facility.

The Town Council is seeking to appoint exceptional architects to work collaboratively with the Town Council, to progress the optimum design solution to reconfigure The Harlington in ways to help the Town Council achieve its vision and ensure the building's long term sustainability.

Fleet Town Council is seeking a strong design partner who can translate the Council's aspirations into a design that offers value for money within the overall project budget and is able to deliver against the requirements outlined below.

The key words for the project are:

COST CONTROL, CAPACITY, COMFORT, CONTINUITY and FLEXIBILITY

This document sets out the brief for the proposed refurbishment works at The Harlington in Fleet. The document explains the background to the venue's requirements, exploring the existing operation of the whole site and the evolving brief for the refurbishment work of the existing structure. It identifies the key aspirations for the building. A schedule of dates for interviews, architect's appointment and design are included, along with copies of background supporting documents.

BACKGROUND

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

A major fire in 1991 partially destroyed the hall which was rebuilt with some improved facilities. The alleyway between The Harlington and the Library was bridged over and the buildings grafted together to form the current foyer. Single storey extensions were added to the rear and the side of the building to accommodate, originally, the WRVS with kitchen facilities to operate a meals on wheels service and a separate facility to accommodate the County Council and District Council Youth Services.

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, originally as a gymnasium and treatment rooms and latterly into Fleet Town Council's offices. The operation and management of the building transferred to Fleet Town Council in 2010, but the freehold remained with Hart District Council. The Town Council gave a commitment to return The Harlington to the social and entertainment focus of the community. The building has 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 and 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 a public consultation on three options for the development of The Harlington. Two options were for refurbishing The Harlington. The "essential refurbishment" would have brought the building into the 21st century, insulated the building, added double glazing, replaced the leaking roof, completely refurbished the heating and electrical systems, replaced the toilet facilities and given the building an internal and external "facelift". It did not, however, improve the theatre.

The second refurbishment option included a complete makeover of the building as Option 1, but added quality tiered seating and a balcony within the auditorium to increase capacity. It also would have improved the 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; 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 taxpayers: the costs, the benefits and the constraints of developing each option and left 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 deliver 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.

The new building design was developed by Burrell Foley and Fischer sufficient to submit an outline planning application, but regrettably the application was refused by Hart District Council's Planning Committee, principally on the grounds of disabled access. Due to subsequent local issues raised over the use of Gurkha Square, the scheme was abandoned.

At the end of 2018 Hart District Council, the freehold owners of The Harlington, indicated their willingness to offer Fleet Town Council a long-term lease on the building, but on the condition that Fleet Town Council took on full responsibility for the building maintenance and repair. The Town Council tendered a contract for a detailed condition survey of the building structure and essential mechanical and electrical services. The contract was awarded to Cooper and Withycombe, consulting engineers and surveyors, together with Pope Consulting Ltd, building services consulting engineers. The final report was submitted to the Town Council in January 2020. An extension was awarded to the contract to undertake a detailed structural inspection of the Auditorium roof and suspended ceiling concluded in July 2020. To ensure consistency within the report a complete digitisation of the building was undertaken. In brief, the investigation found the building to be structurally sound, but the mechanical and electrical services were deemed to be "beyond their sell by date" and required total replacement.

In 2023 Hart District Council made a further offer of a 99-year lease on the building, again with full repairing responsibility passed to Fleet Town Council. The District Council additionally offered a capital contribution towards the replacement of the heating system as long as it represented the most effective and viable climate friendly form of replacement heating. Fleet Town Council contracted Skelly and Couch Consulting Engineers to undertake a review of Initial Heat Provision Options, to assess the potential use of Air Source or Ground source heat pumps. The report was submitted in March 2023.

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEF

The purpose of this brief is to undertake investigations and surveys, prepare outline and ultimately detailed designs, drawings and cost estimates for a complete refurbishment of the existing building, including a complete replacement of the mechanical and electrical installations, a revamped theatre facility with balcony and retractable seating suitable for a multi-functional community facility and if possible, a new studio theatre extension adequate for smaller public events and commercial shows which would, in the short term, allow the continued function of The Harlington while the main building undergoes extensive refurbishment.

SCOPE OF THE WORK

Fundamentally the aim of the development, apart from essential refurbishment to achieve current building standards, is to produce a multi-functional facility that supports both commercial entertainment and community group activities. The primary aims are to:

- Bring the building up to current building standards particularly related to environmental efficiency.
- Replace and improve all mechanical and electrical systems.

- Increase the capacity of the main auditorium to at least 350 seats, split between retractable seats in the stalls and fixed seats in a balcony to be built within the existing building structure.
- Provide a secondary performance space either permanently or as a temporary measure to allow continuous operation of The Harlington in some form.
- Maximise the functionality of all available space.

The Charcoalblue Feasibility Report identified a number of options for re-utilising the available space and adding additional space, particularly a new studio theatre, which in the short term provided a modest community/theatre space while the main building is refurbished and in the longer term creates greater flexibility in the use of the enlarged building. Various other building modifications were identified including adding a first floor to the single storey element on the Northwest corner of the building.

THE CONTRACT

The Council's preferred contract route is the traditional procurement route following the RIBA Plan of Work 2020.

The first phases of the contract (RIBA Stages 0-1) will identify an optimum development of the site within the declared available budget. The consultant should identify options for the potential redevelopment of the building, identifying the benefits and the restraints imposed by the relevant options. The overall aim is to achieve a building that offers the greatest opportunity for a wide variety of community events and supports the Town Council function.

The Town Council has, through its precept, established a maximum borrowing limit which together with the accumulated capital, establishes a ceiling project cost of around £9.5 million based upon current Public Works Loan Board borrowing rates. This figure will be confirmed when a final project programme has been established. Based upon previous estimates and recognising the increased costs of construction it is acknowledged that the Council's original aspirations may not all be achievable. Control of the budget and the outturn cost is a primary driver/restraint on the overall development.

PHASE 1 - Study

The initial work will require a multi-disciplinary review of all available documentation supplemented by additional site surveys to establish the full scope of work , developing costed options for the extent of refurbishment achievable within the overall declared project budget.

It may/will be necessary to hold a public consultation on the final design options and assistance in preparing presentation material will form part of the contract.

Work will only progress to Phase 2 of the project (RIBA Stages 2-6) once the Town Council has signed off the final scope of work.

PHASE 2 - Implementation

Once the detailed scheme has been approved the consultant will develop designs, prepare contract documents and progress the work to tender for construction.

Any work external to the existing building or any external alterations to the existing building will require planning permission and preparation of any documentation required to submit a planning application will form part of RIBA Stage 3 of the Plan of Work.

CURRENT FACILITIES

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.

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.

There is a large roof space above the suspended ceiling which hangs off four number 1 metre deep laminated timber beams spanning the full width of the auditorium. The roof to the auditorium is simple timber decking with a felt protection over. There is no insulation to the roof.

Off the main auditorium is a kitchen facility and access to the main electrical supply room with an array of distribution boards and meters.

Front of House Areas

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 former café/coffee shop area to one side, which serves as the only foyer area. There is additionally a small reception desk to resolve any ticketing issues that may arise, but overall, the space is not conducive towards creating an evening performance atmosphere.

Toilet facilities are located off a corridor off the main public foyer area and are in serious need of attention both in décor and updating of the mechanical services. There is a separate disabled toilet facility within the foyer area.

The Function Room is situated directly through to the back of the building and serves as an overflow to the foyer and bar facility in times of larger audience capacities. The room has a functional bar to serve refreshments 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. Neither the café/coffee shop area 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.

Backstage Facilities

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. Access to the control 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 and are only accessible by short flights of stairs.

The load-in is small and accesses the auditorium floor 1350mm below stage level, meaning difficult and time-consuming get-ins for performances.

Ancillary spaces

At ground level, on the northwest corner of the building, are a collection of rooms known as the RVS area. It is split level, has its own toilet facilities and a semi basement level, previously used for a kitchen and cold storage area for meals on wheels food preparation.

This basement area links to the access under the main stage,

At the northern end of the main building is the facility known as “The Point” originally developed as a youth club with some office space, a main hall, a kitchen area, together with toilets and storage space.

Both these single-story areas, added in the 1990’s, are not connected to the main heating system and have standalone night storage heaters. Both facilities have their own independent access.

On the eastern side of the main building is the Fleet Town Council Office, which was originally the bin storage area to the main building intermediately developed as a gymnasium. Again, single story but split level because it bridges between the inside of the main building and the outside service area. It also accommodates a main fire escape route from the main auditorium. This area is not connected to the main heating system but has its own domestic gas boiler.

In the extreme northeast corner of the main building is the plant room with the boilers and pumps to distribute hot water to the heating system and sinks in the main building and the adjacent library. This is a semi-basement room with access to the rear carparking area.

At the first-floor level there is a dedicated dance studio, a reception lobby, toilets and two offices. This level is accessible by a staircase and a lift.

OUTLINE ASPIRATIONS

At its simplest, the venue is dated and has outgrown its current facilities. New facilities are needed for both the present and for growth. But in all the areas described above, it is not simply a matter of providing better facilities for the same output, but of providing a venue to

increase and improve the social, cultural and entertainment opportunities for the community. The key requirements of the brief are set out below but opportunities to improve and increase the flexibility and functionality of the spaces should be presented.

Main Auditorium

To support a programme of:

Tribute shows, comedians, plays, amateur shows, dance school performances, pantomime, larger children/family shows, named artists and performances where a larger capacity is required, conferences and large meetings, exhibitions, large party nights with live entertainment, cinema (not new releases), streamed broadcasts of live major cultural events (National Theatre and Royal Opera House productions for example) and community organisations such as the Film Club and Jazz Club.

Capacity: Minimum 350 theatre / 320-350 cabaret (chairs & tables at auditorium floor level).

Ability to do flat floor, all-standing events. 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 at ground level accessible from the main auditorium for cabaret style shows and community events (with retractable seating withdrawn). Additionally, a bar on the first floor with higher quality toilets etc.; can be closed off at bottom of stairs at ground level when not sold.

Backstage

Three separate dressing rooms, plus one large space for larger cast events such as pantomime, 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 and dock/storage (which would include level access loading bay and parking for a tour bus and trailer plus additional cars if possible).

Foyer

Possibly all open plan with current café area becoming a café/bar and theatre bar and box office area. Toilets.

Second Performance Space

To support a programme of:

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 (desirably 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 and sound. Ideally self-contained so audience can enter the venue independently of the main building, but with 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.

The space would be developed as a first phase of refurbishment to allow closure of the main building while major works disrupted public access to the principal facilities.

In the event of a permanent second performance space not being affordable, then temporary facilities to allow some public functions to continue while the main refurbishment work goes on should be explored.

Ancillary Spaces

The addition of a balcony to the main auditorium will mean the relocation of the dance studio. Relocation in another part of the existing building or a development of the existing building is a development requirement.

Space for existing sub-tenancies and selected community groups is to be retained and improved.

Multifunctional use of the smaller spaces for meetings or ancillary use should be explored.

Sound separation from the main auditorium within the building is essential and overall sound proofing of the building to reduce any external noise impact should be implemented.

Fleet Town Council Offices need to be accommodated with readily available public access, independent of the main building access.

It is important that a rational balance between the main theatre function and the broader community function of the building is maintained and improved.

OVERALL BUILDING STRUCTURE

The building is predominantly uninsulated, the majority of windows are single glazed and the limited controls on the heating and ventilation systems are on or off. The aspiration is to significantly reduce the carbon footprint of the building including a sustainable heating system and being as self-sufficient as possible through generating power using photovoltaic panels. It is recognised that improving the thermal efficiency of the building is a vital element in decarbonising the facility and allowing the introduction of a low temperature heating system.

The existing plant room is inadequate for a sustainable heating system and so the location of the proposed heating system is a key element of the study.

An earlier structural survey of the auditorium roof indicated that the main laminated timber beams supporting the roof are not capable of supporting a fully insulated roof deck and solar panels. This needs to be resolved, and if necessary, consideration given to a new roof structure capable of supporting external loads and a possible new suspended gantry. This is a significant cost implication that needs to be resolved with the first Phase Study.

THE TENDER PROCESS

Due to financial thresholds and the predicted value of the contract, Fleet Town Council is required to undertake a pre-qualification for selection of potential tenderers. However, as the Tender is an open procedure, the Standard Selection Questionnaire is presented along with the Tender Document.

A Standard Selection Questionnaire is included as one of the supporting documents and must be completed and submitted with your bid. The criteria for marking the Questionnaire will be Pass or Fail. Tenders from contractors that fail the Standard Selection process will not be evaluated.

The top three Tenders, evaluated against the attached Tender Evaluation Sheet, will be called for an interview at a date and time to be agreed.

The Tender Period will close at 5pm on Friday 17th May 2024. Late submissions will not be considered.

Tenders are to remain valid for a period of 3 (three) months.

One signed hard copy of the Tender Submission and Standard Selection Questionnaire will be submitted together with an electronic copy of the documents on a memory stick.

In the event of any discrepancy between the Hard Copy and the electronic version the former will prevail.

Tender Submission Requirements

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

- Three examples of recent relevant experience in refurbishment works for theatres/performing arts buildings and community buildings. (Please complete in Section 6 of the Standard Selection Questionnaire)
- Relevant reference contact details from three previous projects. (Please complete in Section 6 of the Standard Selection Questionnaire)
- Relevant experience in supporting and preparing material for public consultation exercises and exhibitions.
- Details of the proposed team and organisation structure with supporting CVs.
- A list and particulars of proposed sub-consultants.
- Methodology and approach to the brief including a programme of work and a schedule of proposed manpower allocation for Phase 1 of the Project.
- A response to the brief highlighting opportunities and risks
- A lump-sum fee including expenses for Phase 1 of the project.
- The percentage fees (as a proportion of the final tender sum for implementation of the refurbishment works) to be applied to each of the disciplines for the delivery of Stages 2-6 of the RIBA Plan of Work 2020.

Terms and Conditions

It is proposed to carry out the contract under RIBA Standard Professional Services Contract 2020 following the RIBA Plan of Work 2020.

NEXT STEPS

An Open Day will be held, at The Harlington, on Tuesday 30th April 2024, starting at 11am. This will be an opportunity for any prospective Tenderer to find out more about the potential contract.

The order of the day will be:

- A brief introduction by Fleet Town Council.
- A guided tour of The Harlington.
- An open question and answers session.
- Confidential session with individual tenderers if required. Confidentiality will be observed, but any issue of general interest will be notified to all Tenderers in the notes of the meeting circulated to all attendees post meeting.

LIST OF ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS AND DRAWINGS

These documents are available to view on our website https://www.fleet-tc.gov.uk/The_Harlington_Development.aspx but have also been linked below for ease:

1. **Harlington Location Plan**
<https://www.fleet-tc.gov.uk/Document/Default.aspx?DocumentUid=092ED08B-6340-4A3D-8B85-C282B45146E6>
2. **Harlington Floor Plans**
<https://www.fleet-tc.gov.uk/Document/Default.aspx?DocumentUid=927057FF-7D45-44D2-8975-58F569F69A7E>
3. **Feasibility Study, Charcoal Blue, June 2016**
<https://www.fleet-tc.gov.uk/Document/Default.aspx?DocumentUid=A827C1D6-53C1-4A87-9DF1-D2731915278C>
4. **Repair Refurbish Replace Consultation Document, FTC April 2017**
<https://www.fleet-tc.gov.uk/Document/Default.aspx?DocumentUid=8D68D5C4-6F91-47BE-A3DD-F9387704F390>
5. **Condition Survey Report, Cooper & Withycombe, January 2020**
Please note that the document is split into 3 parts due to file size:
Part 1
<https://www.fleet-tc.gov.uk/Document/Default.aspx?DocumentUid=3A8C35B8-3E49-4FFF-98E6-4B9B9474D6F5>
Part 2
<https://www.fleet-tc.gov.uk/Document/Default.aspx?DocumentUid=41EA6926-4705-4ED5-9D41-F66A7FB51AEF>
Part 3
<https://www.fleet-tc.gov.uk/Document/Default.aspx?DocumentUid=E8F90CAE-04A1-4CDE-B588-6486485A714E>
6. **Auditorium Ceiling Inspection Report, Cooper & Withycombe, July 2020**
<https://www.fleet-tc.gov.uk/Document/Default.aspx?DocumentUid=38FDCEF1-7547-405E-83F6-E51BB5290C7D>
7. **Initial Heat Provision Options, Skelly and Couch, March 2023**
<https://www.fleet-tc.gov.uk/Document/Default.aspx?DocumentUid=E1998F04-BDF3-4C13-9356-30AE7E10D70F>
8. **Asbestos Report**
<https://www.fleet-tc.gov.uk/Document/Default.aspx?DocumentUid=CB30E03E-D5EE-474F-A1D5-F7F39C4DEB29>