

## Meeting with BCKLWN Regeneration Panel

## Keep Britain's oldest working theatre, working!

## Contents

- 1. About Shakespeare's Guildhall Trust
- 2. Site Development & Restoration
- 3. The main cultural activities
- 4. Commercial Sustainability
- 5. Tenure
- 6. Timing
- 7. Appendices
  - 7.1. Expression of Interest re-drafted by SGT
  - 7.2. Notes from BCKLWN/NT/SGT meeting 19/11
  - 7.3. Financial Commentary
  - 7.4. Architectural outline

# 1 About Shakespeare's Guildhall Trust

## 1.1 Background

- Founded in December 2018, Registered as Charity September 2019
- All trustees and advisors are unpaid volunteers
- Trustees supported by advisory sub-groups Research, Education, Programming, Fundraising, Marketing & Communication
- Trading company established to manage performance and trading activities Shakespeare's Guildhall Productions Ltd.

## 1.2 Aims of Shakespeare's Guildhall Trust

SGT aims to build on the two unique heritage aspects of the site – the oldest working theatre in Britain and that it is the only theatre in the world that can claim Shakespeare performed there – and that has promoted major theatrical figures alongside local talent. We will:

- Provide and manage public activities and events, including performance arts, music, dance, and spoken word at St George's Guildhall in King's Lynn.
- Promote education in the visual and performing arts, including theatre technical skills.
- Interpret the long and theatrical history and traditions associated with the town of Kings Lynn, including expanding knowledge of Robert Armin (1565-1615), Shakespeare's principal comedian who was born in the town.



### 1.3 The Vision for St George's Guildhall Complex

The SGT vision for the site is to unify the management of the entire National Trust freehold and to provide a full range of arts and educational activities in support of our aims. The site will be managed creatively to ensure that all aspects of the property contribute to the sustainability of the enterprise – integrating the food and beverage operations with the arts events and commercial lettings and other income generating uses.

It is envisaged that the site will comprise:

- Performance and rehearsal spaces
- Gallery venues
- Commercial hire spaces
- Workshop and educational spaces
- Retail
- Restaurant, café, bars
- Heritage interpretation
- Commercial office space

The intention is that the complex will eventually be open daytime and evening, 7 days/week.

## 2 Site Development & Restoration

To enable the site to operate to its full potential and become self-sustaining it will be necessary to re-organise, restore and redevelop. Our concept for how the site should be improved is given below. Not all of these changes would necessarily be in the first phase of the project and their sequencing will be dependent on availability of funds and other resources.

It is currently anticipated that the funding for the capital project will come from National Lottery Heritage Fund, Arts Council England, BCKLWN and private funds raised through SGT (only feasible if SGT has a clear legal stake in the enterprise).

#### 2.1 Guildhall

A major update and refurbishment will be required to bring the main performance and event space up to modern standards of access, comfort and facilities. Flexibility of use and respect for the heritage will be the key drivers of the scheme:

- Reinstatement of flat floor to the auditorium to reveal original size and scale of the Guildhall.
- Access improvements to enable wheelchair users to all principal audience, backstage and public areas
- Remodelling of entrance area to create a welcoming, open foyer with service counter for ticket sales and bar.
- Bleacher seating for up to 300 people in proscenium format with flexible options for alternative staging arrangement or flat-floor events.



### 2.2 Undercroft

- Open-plan access from the foyer with access to lower level by lift.
- Direct access to the north courtyard.
- Usable for cabaret/comedy/jazz intimate performance space

#### 2.3 North Courtyard

- Accessible from King Street and brought into use as a seating area for refreshments and outdoor events.
- Direct access to Guildhall and Shakespeare Barn will help integrate site

#### 2.4 South Corridor

- Access to modernised toilets
- Link to the rest of the site.
- Heritage interpretation

#### 2.5 Shakespeare Barn

- Restoration as space for exhibitions, education workshops, meetings and other events
- Additional space for provision of food & beverage.

#### 2.6 Red Barn

• Minor upgrading for use for exhibitions, workshops and rehearsal space.

#### 2.7 Fermoy Gallery

- Upgrading to modern conservation and security standards for use for exhibitions
- Provision for use for meetings, receptions etc.
- Potential extension to the west to provide additional gallery space

#### 2.8 KL Players' Workshop

• Re-development to provide additional gallery and/or other income earning spaces. Suitable theatre workshop space also currently exists in White Barn Annex that could be used for all theatre users.

#### 2.9 Riverside Restaurant, Garden and Terrace

- Modernisation and integration with site-wide food and beverage offers.
- The garden and terrace to be equipped for use for events and outdoor performances, markets, craft and gift fairs etc.
- Accessible ramp to be added

#### 2.10 29 King Street

- Modernised offices for staff and potential commercial letting
- Archway access to north courtyard to be enhanced to provide improved appearance from King Street.

### 2.11 White Barn and Annex (BCKLWN Freehold)

- Re-develop and modernise spaces as workshops to support all activities in the Guildhall and other spaces (i.e. not let to a specific organisation)
- Convert and upgrade to create spaces for exhibitions, workshops, education & training.



• Annex currently houses a secondary theatre workshop that could be used to service all users of the Guildhall site.

### 2.12 Old Warehouse (BCKLWN Freehold)

Possible conversion for office accommodation or other income producing activity

# 3 The main cultural activities

### 3.1 Performing Arts

Programming of activities will make use of spaces throughout the site, including the theatre, undercroft and bar, Shakespeare barn, courtyard, garden and terrace. SGT will particularly promote new and engaging ways to present the works of Shakespeare and Armin to generate a vibrant audience for their work - both within the town and beyond. The types of activity will include:

- Professional, local and youth theatre groups.
- Music including Cabaret, Jazz, Folk etc
- Lectures, public meetings
- Films focussing on art house, classic and specialist interest
- Comedy, Poetry

It is also proposed to develop an in-house company and to become a producing house, both of which would be important to financial success.

### 3.2 Visual Arts

Active programming of a range of visual arts shows to ensure that there is always something to see. In developing the visual arts programme we will work with the Norfolk Museums Service. Activities will include:

- Touring loan exhibitions, Selling exhibitions,
- Workshops and training events
- Local artists/competitions, WNAA, etc
- School & College Exhibitions

### 3.3 Education & Workshops

This is at the heart of SGT's aims. All educational activities would be fully funded by participants or sponsors. Education activities would include:

- Training and learning opportunities in theatre skills
- Internationally marketed summer school based on Shakespeare, Armin and comedy.
- Summer schools / workshops / seminars
- School / College partnerships to provide:
  - Apprenticeships, Work experience
  - School performances / discussion



### 3.4 Heritage Attraction

Heritage Interpretation will be provided throughout the site revealing the surprising history of the Guildhall and its unique place in the history of theatre. This is a significant international opportunity.

- Putting the Guildhall as the oldest working theatre in the UK at the centre of the marketing strategy.
- Exploiting the links between the Guildhall, Shakespeare and Robert Armin who was the first to play the fool in Lear, Feste in Twelfth Night and the Porter in Macbeth among other roles. Armin is the only other member of Shakespeare's company to write plays and is credited with being a major influence on Shakespeare.
- Guided tours will be provided by well-trained volunteers.
- Imaginative, state-of-the-art interpretation specifically designed to illustrate the unique theatrical history of the Guildhall targeted at all ages.

# 4 Commercial Sustainability

To deliver the vision in a sustainable way, every aspect of the site needs to contribute to the benefit of the whole venture.

All activities throughout the site will be under one management. Paid staff and volunteers will work together to minimise overheads and to encourage community involvement.

SGT has undertaken a commercial analysis to demonstrate the potential sustainability of the site. SGT notes the BJA Sustainability Report and offers a brief review of this in Appendix 3. The main sources of income for the whole site will be derived from the following activities:

#### 4.1 Food & Beverage

- Integrated catering, open 7 days/week day and evening
- Flexible to adapt to coordinate with programming . . .
- Commercially operating on its own merit and as a footfall driver to the rest of the site.

### 4.2 Box Office

• Performances will be programmed and managed for the theatre and other facilities including Undercroft, Shakespeare barn, Riverside garden.

#### 4.3 Theatre Hire

- Current Guildhall user groups will continue to play an important role in ensuring that the site is used as much as possible
- Participants and audiences will contribute financially to other aspects of the site such as refreshments and retail sales.

#### 4.4 Retail

- A commercially run retail/gift shop selling souvenirs, literature, books (new or 2<sup>nd</sup> hand), art & craft items etc could generate additional annual income
- The customer base would be made up from heritage visitors, theatre / performance audience, exhibitions attendees, workshop participants



#### 4.5 Galleries

- Commercial or sponsored exhibitions
- Hire of gallery spaces for selling exhibitions or other activities

#### 4.6 Heritage Visitors and Exhibitions

- Guided walks and talks taking place every day run by trained volunteers
- Voluntary donations using contactless technology

#### 4.7 Education Centre

- Workshops and courses operating for all ages and skill levels, with theatreskills training; from 1-day – 30-week
- Summer schools, academic conferences
- Heritage & living theatre animation of the buildings
- Professional development & teacher-training
- Creative writing, composing, lighting, costume, marketing, etc.
- Supported by a variety of models for funding, from commercially driven, subsidised or fully funded.

### 4.8 Corporate Sponsorship & Membership

- Membership schemes e.g. Patrons, Benefactors, Associates and Friends will be offered to provide benefits and discounts to members in return for an annual subscription, donations and bequests.
- Corporate sponsorship will be sought from local, regional and national businesses providing opportunities for advertising and hospitality packages

### 4.9 **Commercial Hirings**

- Opportunities exist for a variety of purposes such as company meetings, conferences, film sets, private functions and other high quality hirings.
- The variety of spaces available, from the large-scale Guildhall to the intimate Riverside room makes the venue attractive for a wide range of uses.

#### 4.10 **Tenancies and Commercial Rentals**

• Unused or surplus space will be let on a commercial basis as offices. Businesses in the creative, media or marketing sector will be targeted to provide a cultural benefit to the overall purpose of the site.

# 5 Tenure

### 5.1 Short-term

The first step in the journey towards a new and sustainable Guildhall Complex is the formal acknowledgement of a relationship between SGT, BCKLWN and the National Trust through a Memorandum of Understanding. From there, all parties can move towards the development of an exciting new asset that will deliver great cultural and commercial benefit to King's Lynn.



#### 5.2 Medium-term

The intention is for SGT to take over the NT lease from the BCKLWN and thus relieve the BC of the financial responsibility for the site. It is acknowledged that this cannot be done immediately but a first step will be the granting of a sub-lease or licence for occupation and operation of the site.

#### 5.3 Transition

The entire site needs to be brought into a single tenure so that all aspects can be jointly managed to support the cultural & heritage offer. This needs to include the Riverside rooms and 29 King Street. Decisions relating to future leases and renewals should reflect this need.

#### Timing 6

•

Key milestones are:

- January 2020 Memorandum of Understanding
- February 2020 Submission of EoI to NLHF
- September 2020 Application to NLHF for development funding for project •
- December 2020 Development approval from NLHF •
- December 2020 Sub-lease/operating licence of Guildhall to SGT •
- November 2021 Catering lease expires, new options to be considered. •
- Submit Delivery Phase application to NLHF August 2022 •
  - December 2022 Approval of Delivery Phase from NLHF .
  - January 2024 Contractor on-site •
  - April 2025 •
    - Reopening of Guildhall complex
      - December 2027 Completion of NLHF-funded project activities
  - TBA •

•

Assignment of NT lease to SGT



# 7 Appendices

## 7.1 Appendix 1. Expression of Interest redrafted by SGT

ST. GEORGE'S GUILDHALL COMPLEX DRAFT Eol – SGT version.

#### **Project vision**

St George's Guildhall has a theatrical history dating back to 1445. It's the only working theatre that can claim to have hosted Shakespeare. We will create a vibrant cultural complex celebrating this unique heritage. The restored buildings will become fully flexible in keeping with their earlier history; enabling a greater range of uses and performances by more sectors of the community. The special history of the Guildhall will draw new audiences locally and regionally and attract visitors, performers and students nationally and internationally. It will be managed holistically to ensure a sustainable future for the site as a community asset.

#### **Heritage Focus**

St George's Guildhall is Grade 1 listed and is the key element of a complex of historic buildings and open spaces dating from the 1400's in the heart of Kings Lynn. It's the largest surviving medieval Guildhall in England and, importantly, the oldest working theatre in the UK (first recorded performance 1445). Also, Shakespeare's key comedian Robert Armin was born in King's Lynn.

It's the only working theatre to have hosted performances in all key dramatic phases: Guild plays, Elizabethan touring, Jacobean, Restoration, Georgian, Regency and post War. No other site in the world has this theatrical pedigree.

This unique heritage provides the theme for the projected interpretation, activities and sustainable uses. Links with education establishments across the region will ensure the site is used to inspire and educate in a region traditionally seen as deprived and underprivileged.

### **Current challenges**

- Inflexible fixed raked seating only allowing limited uses
- Equipment and furnishings very dated, in poor condition, restrict uses doesn't meet the needs of modern users audiences or performers
- No wheelchair access to core historic spaces
- Ancillary spaces (bar, restaurant, backstage etc) outdated and inaccessible
- Fragmented management contributed to failure as attractive, sustainable venue

### What the project will do

- Restore and update the Guildhall as a flexible space for wide-ranging events
- Provide wheelchair access throughout, particularly to public and performers areas



- Provide venues for professional and local theatre/dance groups; varied musical forms, films, talks, comedy, poetry;
- Provide venue for internationally marketed summer school based on Shakespeare and comedy.
- Locate a producing house, training young people (apprenticeship and work experience) in conjunction with local vocational college and schools (curriculum-focused events)
- Establish coordinated management of site with clear vision.
- Modernise other buildings in the complex for effective use for food & beverage; workshops; education/teaching spaces; exhibitions; retail; heritage interpretation that will attract people into the site and generate funds for sustainable success.
- Reveal the Guildhall complex as a social space open to all, improve street presence and provide a clear sense of arrival at site; using courtyards for performances, exhibitions etc; encouraging access, enquiry, playfulness and deeper engagement.
- Work closely with other attractions in King's Lynn, regenerating the town's social capital.
- Dynamic interpretation through guided tours, display and VR displays
- Link with sites in town and region, virtual mapping, collaborative exhibitions, promoting and producing work by exciting practitioners, engage with international community (already shown to want engagement with Guildhall)
- Co-productions with local community drawing in new performers and audiences to reflect and involve the Town's international ethnic and cultural diversity.
- Implement 'green technology' on the site.

## **HF** outcomes

- A wider range of people, including immigrant communities and less advantaged groups, will use the site by providing understanding and encouraging use of affordable flexible facilities appropriate to their interests.
- The physical heritage of the Guildhall complex will be in better condition through repair, restoration and sensitive modernisation
- The physical and intangible heritage revealed through dynamic interpretation of the site, its events and people; tours, performance, participation and AV systems including VR
- The project will deliver a major training and educational role (employ apprentices and interns) cooperating with educational establishments
- Greater knowledge of the forgotten heritage of the Guildhall will encourage enthusiasm for the wider town heritage.
- The increased use of the site by all, and greater accessibility, will grow the town's social capital and contribute to well-being.
- The complex will be more resilient due to managed integration of activities on site.
- Local area will be a better place to live, work and visit.
- Local economy boosted tourism, summer schools, audiences drawn from Cambridge and London

### Work undertaken

Responded to advice given following 2017 HLF application.



Working closely with Shakespeare's Guildhall Trust, a charity established to ensure future success of Guildhall Complex.

Undertaken visioning exercises, extensive consultations and public meeting. These have shown huge local support for the renewal of Guildhall.

New business model developed that integrates the site and builds on the unique Shakespearean and theatrical heritage. This demonstrates the potential for longterm sustainability if the project is delivered. Programming pilot schemes tested.

Feasibility study using specialist theatre architects (FWA) demonstrates how the core buildings can be significantly improved to deliver exciting flexible venue sensitive to the history.

Current words - 800 Total allowed: 800]



## 7.2 Appendix 2. Notes from BCKLWN/NT/SGT meeting 19/11

Dear Ivor,

Having reviewed Russell's meeting notes, I've pulled out what we collectively agreed:

- KLWNBC must lead the process for developing the project as they are the Tenant.
- We are waiting for KLWNBC to confirm which officer will assume responsibility for the project due to changes taking place in the Council, this won't be until early next year.
- We agreed to delay submitting an Expression of Interest to NLHF until we have clear project vision and sustainable operating model which all parties are comfortable with.
- Once the lead contact in KLWNBC is confirmed, NT offered to host a facilitated meeting to define the following:
  - the project vision
  - programme timetable
  - governance principles
  - resources needed to prepare a feasibility plan and Eol

In order to highlight the urgency of appointing a dedicated lead at the Council to drive this forward, it might we worth highlighting these actions in your briefing note.

Kind regards, **Caroline Pons** Assistant Director, Operations



# 7.3 Appendix 3. Financial Commentary Review of BJA Sustainability Report

#### Overall

- Report was briefed and mostly completed before presentation of SGT Vision to Borough Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> July.
- Unsure if any of SGT vision has been incorporated into the report?
- SGT financial projections haven't been used.
- Report confuses SGT with Shakespeare Festival and reduces SGT to an occasional hirer of the venue.

#### Specific

- Unsustainable financial projection
- Doesn't reflect or even mention SGT's model proposals.
- Based on current operating model and current numbers:
  - Very little incremental programming less than one show per week.
  - No benefit from integrated catering.
  - Heritage visitors not adequately accounted for.
  - Modest retail income.
  - No benefit from synergistic benefit of "whole site" management.
  - Little allowance for benefit of a major new tourist attraction.

#### **Conclusion & Recommendation**

- SGT model offers an alternative sustainable option
- Working party to be convened to work through alternative sustainability proposal based on SGT presentation to BC on 22<sup>nd</sup> July.

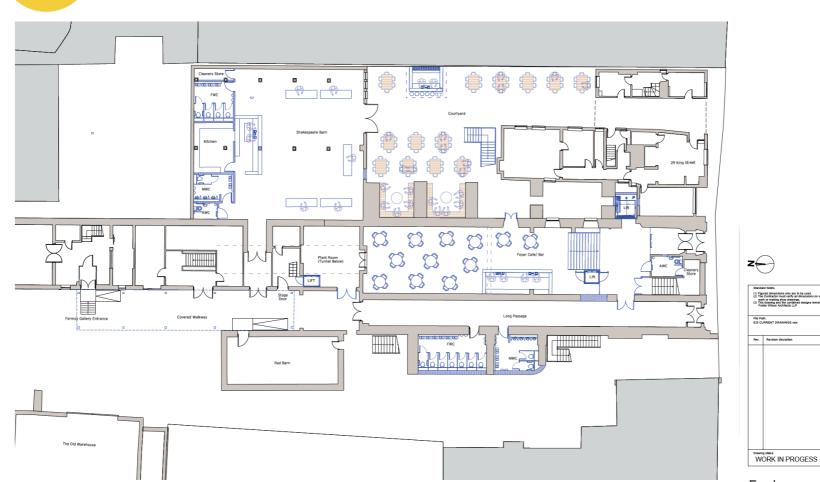
SGT 30/09/2019



## 7.4 Appendix 4. Architectural outline







OPTION B- Ground Floor Plan

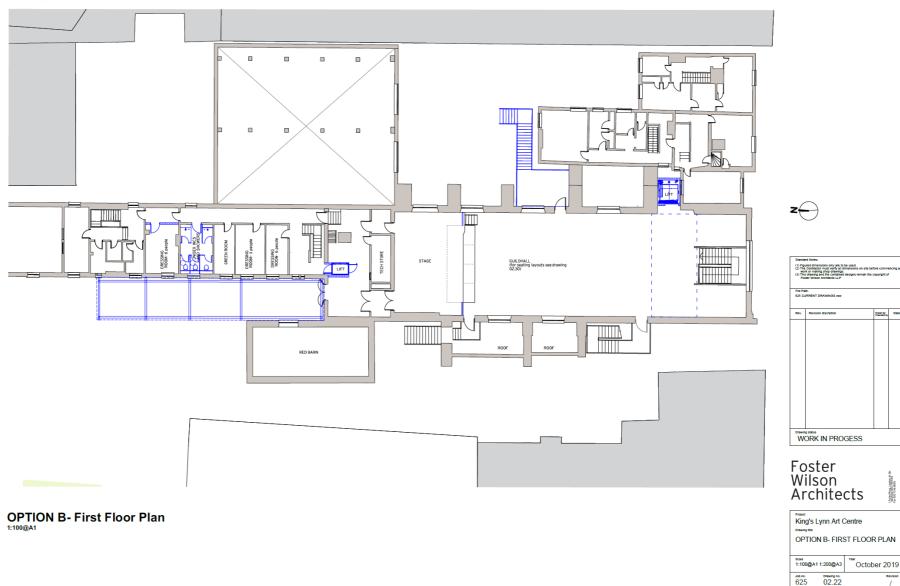


Revision /

Job no. Drawing no. 625 02.21 Drewn te/ Checked by

**14** | P a g e Registered Charity Number. 1185448 www.shakespearesguildhalltrust.com e: shakespearesguildhall@gmail.com





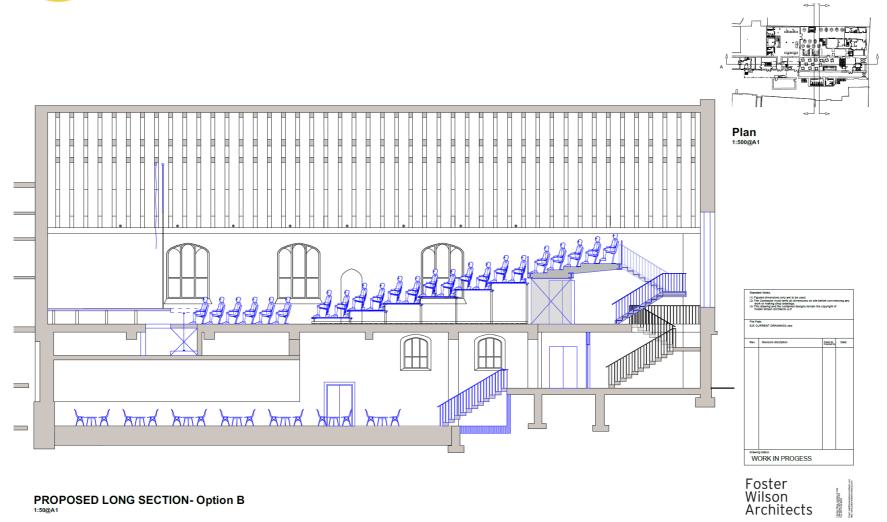
Date Date

Laurantee (20) (20)

Revision /

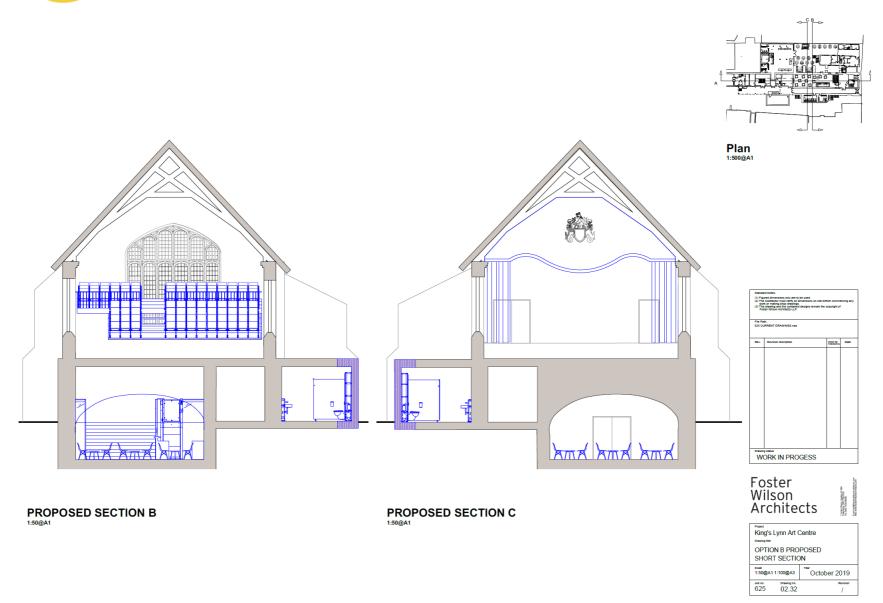
October 2019





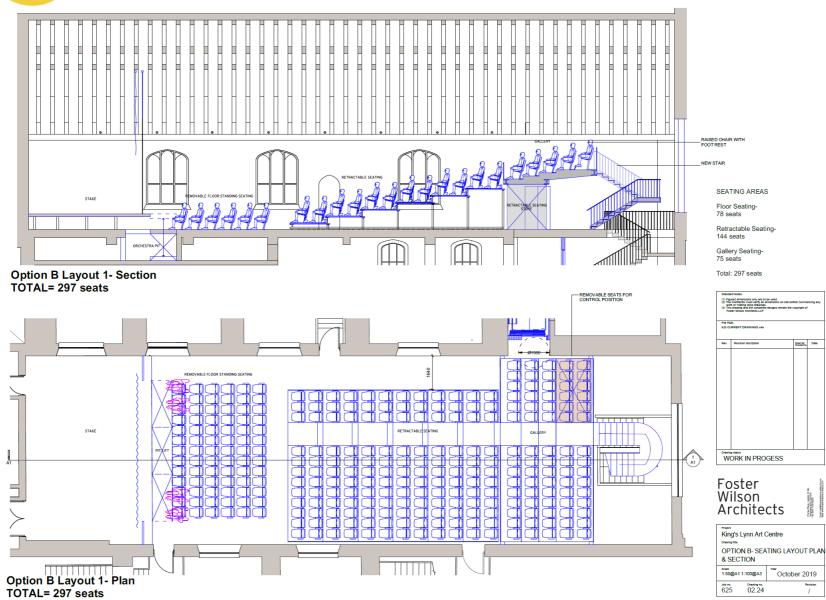




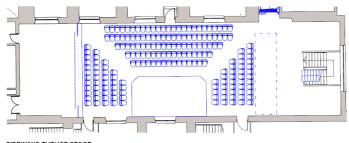




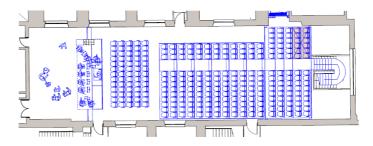
## SHAKESPEARE'S GUILDHALL TRUST



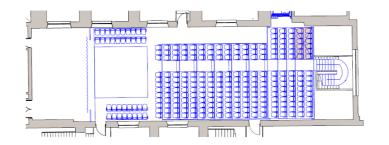




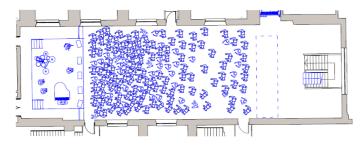
SIDEWAYS THRUST STAGE CAPACITY: 191 Seats



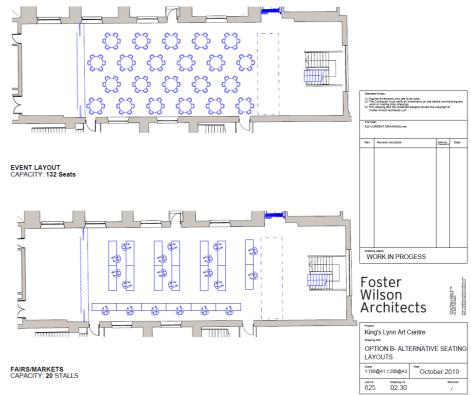
MUSICAL THEATRE/OPERA WITH ORCHESTRA PIT CAPACITY: 284 Seats



















PROPOSED FRONT ELEVATION 1:50@A1