



Bridgwater Town Hall and Theatre

Business Plan

Bridgwater Town Council

July 2024



Bridgwater Town Hall and Theatre

Business Plan

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Figure 1



1. Introduction

Bridgwater Town Hall and Theatre: A Vibrant Hub for Arts and Culture.

This business plan sets out the regeneration plans and business model for Bridgwater Town Hall and Theatre, which is located in the heart of Bridgwater, Somerset, England, an historic Grade II listed building (List Entry Number: 1280140).

The Town Hall (white section of the site) is of late regency style and accommodated the judge's lodgings, witness and jury rooms and was built in 1823 by Richard Carver, with a rear extension (Theatre) added in 1865 by C Knowles, built on the site of a former assize hall. The 1950s extension was added and is not of special interest ([Historic England, 2013](#)). The east end of the building where BoS Café is located on the ground floor, in the eighteenth century, was home to Noah's Ark Inn. The inn closed around 1800 and became first, a grocer's then a saddler, which it remained until just before World War I. After this it became the Gas Board, then a clothes shop, a bookshop, and now a café.

The Town Hall site has recently received full planning permission and listed building consent for the entire regeneration project and a significant boost through the Bridgwater Town Deal funding¹. This investment aims to refresh and transform the facility, creating a vibrant hub for arts and culture.

The wider Town Hall site requires significant investment and modernisation. Large parts of the site have remained empty and unused since Sedgemoor District Council vacated the site around 2002. The Town Council took ownership of the site from Sedgemoor District Council in 2011 and has refurbished two floors within the white part of the Town Hall in 2019/2020. These floors are occupied by Bridgwater Town Council.

This business plan will include financial data and expected outputs achieved with the regeneration of the site and will expand on the following areas:

Key Upgrades and Enhancements Provided by the Town Deal Funding:

Auditorium Enhancements: The theatre's seating, backstage facilities, and rehearsal spaces will undergo significant improvements, ensuring a top-tier experience for both performers and audiences.

Cutting-Edge Technology: State-of-the-art sound systems and projection capabilities elevate performances, making the theatre a versatile venue for various events.

Changing Rooms Enhancements: Significant work is underway within the dressing rooms, with increased size of the dressing rooms and eradicating of damp

¹ [Town Hall Theatre - Bridgwater Town Deal](#)



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within these rooms and installation of new WC and shower facilities to provide a first-class experience to the various acts and cast members.

Accessibility: A new lift installation ensures that everyone can access the enriching experiences within the theatre.

Key Upgrades and Enhancements Provided by Other Funding Streams:

Façade: Deep cleaning of all masonry and required repairs, full repainting of masonry (the white part of the site), repair and repainting of sash windows, replacement of the metal Crittall windows with new timber frames and double glazing in the 1950's part of the site.

Climate Measures: Installation of Solar Photovoltaic Cells on the roof and insulation of roof voids and the removal of gas central heating to the site and replacement of electrical heating and hot water supply.

Empty Rooms: There are approximately 41 empty rooms across the site, and these will be refurbished into modern office suites and conference rooms.

Opportunity to Create Space: Additional space will be created by the remodelling of existing spaces, in addition there will be further remodelling of dormant offices, corridors, and WC's which were previously Sedgemoor District Council Offices that have been vacant since Sedgemoor District Council moved out approx. 25 years ago. The creation of a new Atrium to infill one of the underutilised courtyards and building of an additional conference room near the theatre adds more space and connects all the areas together acting as the central core of the building.

The regeneration of the site will create a community focus and a beacon of creativity:

Community Focus: The Town Hall itself will feature upgraded meeting spaces and flexible offices, fostering collaboration and supporting local social enterprises. An increased footfall as a result of the regeneration will improve the town centre economy.

A Beacon of Creativity: As Bridgwater evolves from the completion of Hinkley Point C and the impending Gravity development, the Town Hall and Theatre will play a pivotal role in shaping the town's cultural landscape. From captivating performances to community gatherings, it promises a bright future for residents and visitors alike.

The completion of this project marks a significant milestone in revitalising Bridgwater's cultural infrastructure.



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2.Executive Summary

Bridgwater Town Hall is a building of significance in both times of past and present. Bridgwater Town Hall requires not only continuous use and devotion but respect and strategy. The building has been well looked after, however, is dated and inaccessible and as a result highly under used with rooms lying empty. This prevents members of the public, both local and visiting, to explore its deep heritage and history.

This plan provides a refreshed Theatre, meeting spaces, office rentals and wedding venue that respects the community's long and vast relationship with its theatre by reserving prices at an affordable rate for those that use it the most. It proposes to bring to life the spaces that have sat dormant across most of the year with local food and drink served by staff to raise the bar for the community's longstanding public shows and cement their place for many years to come.

A fresh and ambitious artistic direction for ticketed events will engage a new generation with culture and allow them to build a relationship with a space they have only been exposed to through community or council events. Bringing popular culture to the stage and gallery spaces will draw an audience to the town centre that has been waiting a good many years for just such a venue. The creation of visitor experiences will provide wraparound new ticketed events, will give local patrons a sense of pride and those who travel motives to advocate and return. It also gives hope to the local economy by bringing in footfall from the surrounding areas who travel to Bath or Bristol for entertainment.

To reimagine and animate these tired spaces for a town that has had little investment will create spaces that the community far and wide will care and respect and will draw talent and passion. This talent will not only revive these spaces but take advantage of its expertise to find innovative ways to bring both income and engagement to the building.

This refurbishment and investment are a once in a lifetime opportunity to give Bridgwater a centre piece, a flagship that addresses the reputation it has been given and turns it on a sixpence to reframe the town. Huge investment began on the periphery of the town in 2015 and more is coming with a vast workforce due to Hinkley Point C and the Gigafactory at Gravity. This provides opportunities, and the Town Council recognises it has a responsibility to take advantage of this investment and use it to unlock economic growth for the High Street, bring the new community to the door of its newly refurbished town, and revolutionise Bridgwater's town centre economy and reputation for a different Bridgwater.

This business plan is fully costed, and income figures are achievable. More information on the financial data can be found in section 6.



3. Bridgwater Town Council Overview

Bridgwater Town Council works with the Community for the Community. Bridgwater Town Council is committed to fostering community engagement and collaboration. Through a variety of channels, the Council actively connects with residents, cultural groups, and partner agencies. The Council utilises the following:

Public Forums: We host open forums where community members can voice their opinions, share ideas, and participate in shaping our town's future.

Community Events: From local festivals to workshops, we organise events that bring people together, celebrate diversity, and promote unity.

Coffee and Biscuit Drop-Ins: Every Tuesday, the Council hosts a community space for casual conversations over coffee and biscuits. It's an opportunity to connect, discuss local matters, and build relationships.

Collaboration: We work closely with partner agencies, including the Police, Fire Brigade, Somerset Council, Youth Groups, YMCA Dulverton Group, local Business Clubs, and intervention charities. Together, we address community needs and enhance well-being.

Bridgwater Town Council was created in 2003 and consists of 16 elected members and 62 employees. The Council has a net expenditure budget of £3,945,512 for the financial year 2024/2025. Bridgwater Town Council raised its share of the precept substantially for the 2024/2025 financial year due to taking over significant services/devolution from Somerset Council.

Bridgwater Town Council is responsible for:

- Bridgwater Town Hall and Theatre Site.
- Bridgwater Arts Centre.
- Admiral Blake Museum.
- ReCreation Community Hub.
- Rollercoaster Community Hub.
- Four business units.
- Six residential dwellings.
- South Bridgwater Pantry.
- Two large cemeteries with over 30,000 burial plots.
- 463 allotments over ten allotment sites.
- Six Principal Parks: Blake Gardens, Cranleigh Gardens/Eastover Park, Victoria Park, King Square, Mansfield Park, and St Matthew's Field.
- 25 play areas.
- Provision and emptying of 233 litter bins.
- Provision and emptying of 80 dog bins.
- Street Cleansing, gully emptying and road sweeping.
- Urban grass cutting and Highway grass cutting.
- Markets.



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- St Matthews Fair.
- Various events.

Bridgewater Town Council's organisational structure is twofold with elected councillors and officers. Councillors are responsible for setting budgets, strategy and policy. Officers are responsible for the operational functions and day-to-day management of the council in line with council policies.

4. Town Hall and Theatre Current Business Model Description

4.1. Spaces

The Town Hall is home to Bridgewater Town Council, Bridgewater Guy Fawkes Carnival, Sedgemoor FM, and approx. 41 empty offices/rooms, a 315-seat Theatre, two large conference meeting rooms and a commercial kitchen. The theatre, conference meeting rooms and commercial kitchen are collectively known as 'hireable space'.

The hireable spaces are available for 5,138 hours per annum, approximately 14 hours per day. Figure 2 demonstrates that in 2023/24 the hireable space as a whole was used less than 7% of the time available. The Theatre only 14% of the hours it was available, the Bridgewater Room 1.28%, Charter Hall 10% and the Kitchen 2%.

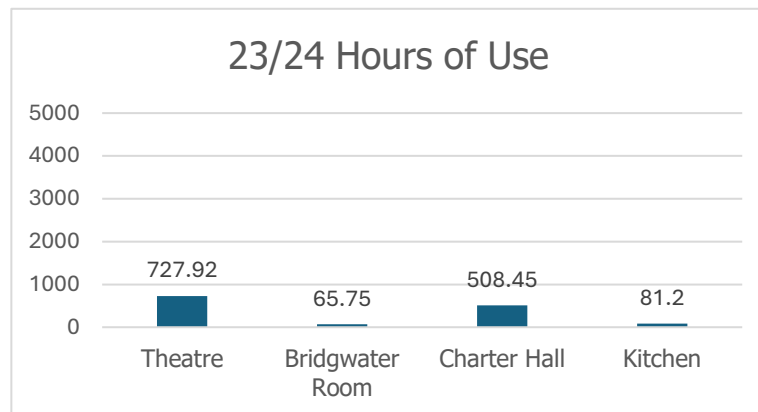


Figure 2

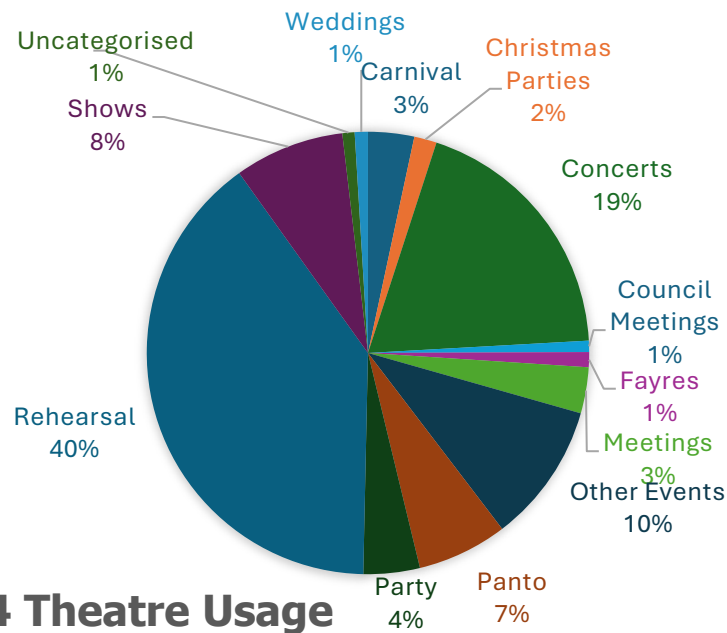
At present, hirers use the Charter Hall as a bar space earning profit on drinks sales with the Town Council taking only room hire income. The Kitchen has the proportions of a commercial kitchen and low-level units of which offer low quality facilities, with 2% of usage, this is a currently dead space with compelling untapped potential. The Bridgewater Room is inaccessible and is closely tied to the offices for which it rarely serves.



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These spaces are highly underused and, with 2023/24 income of approx. £20,000 made up of hires only, hold great opportunity. The spaces are large in dimension and could be working a lot harder to expand earned income streams.

Figure 3 shows the purposes for which the Theatre is used, it is important to note how much of that time is used specifically for rehearsals (saturated across the summer months).



23/24 Theatre Usage

Figure 3

Evidence from other venues demonstrates that not only are the current rates below industry average for the capacity (approx. 315) but that the hours of Theatre use equate to just one ticketed event and one rehearsal per week giving room for more ticketed events and daily activities.

4.2. Audiences & Content

The programme is currently uncoordinated with no clear sense of direction or audience development. This means events are either self-serving for the agents hiring the space or to the other extreme, guided by great amateur productions with extensive history and following.

Plans for a coordinated theatre programme are underway with a mix of box office splits, hires and guarantees to introduce an earned income stream through ticket sales. The installation of a venue managed box office system for all incoming events including community users will assist with this. Data from the box office software will feed into a Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) giving scope to develop audiences - both these systems are important factors in audience development to expand the reach and demographic of patrons across the county.



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Having this type of data for users, both community and commercial, means the Town Hall will be a more promising venue locally as they can support sales and events.

4.3. Staffing and Systems

The Town Hall has both new systems and a new team in place alongside an infrastructure of experienced facility professionals. The new Town Hall Theatre Manager has overseen similar venues, Theatre refurbishment, has extensive programming and marketing experience and has built a new team to manage Bridgwater Arts Centre. The Bookings Officer has a degree in Events Management, a background in conferencing hire across multiple sites and is keen to develop further. The Bar Manager based at the Arts Centre (the Council’s sister venue with 165 seat capacity) has a history of catering operations management in large venues such as the Watershed, Bristol. The Finance and Corporate Services Director at the Town Council has also successfully overseen the financial management of a Theatre and arts centre alongside the current Town Hall Theatre Manager. The Chief Executive Officer and Town Clerk has extensive experience with managing businesses, local authorities and hospitality venues offering food and live music.

4.4. SWOT Analysis

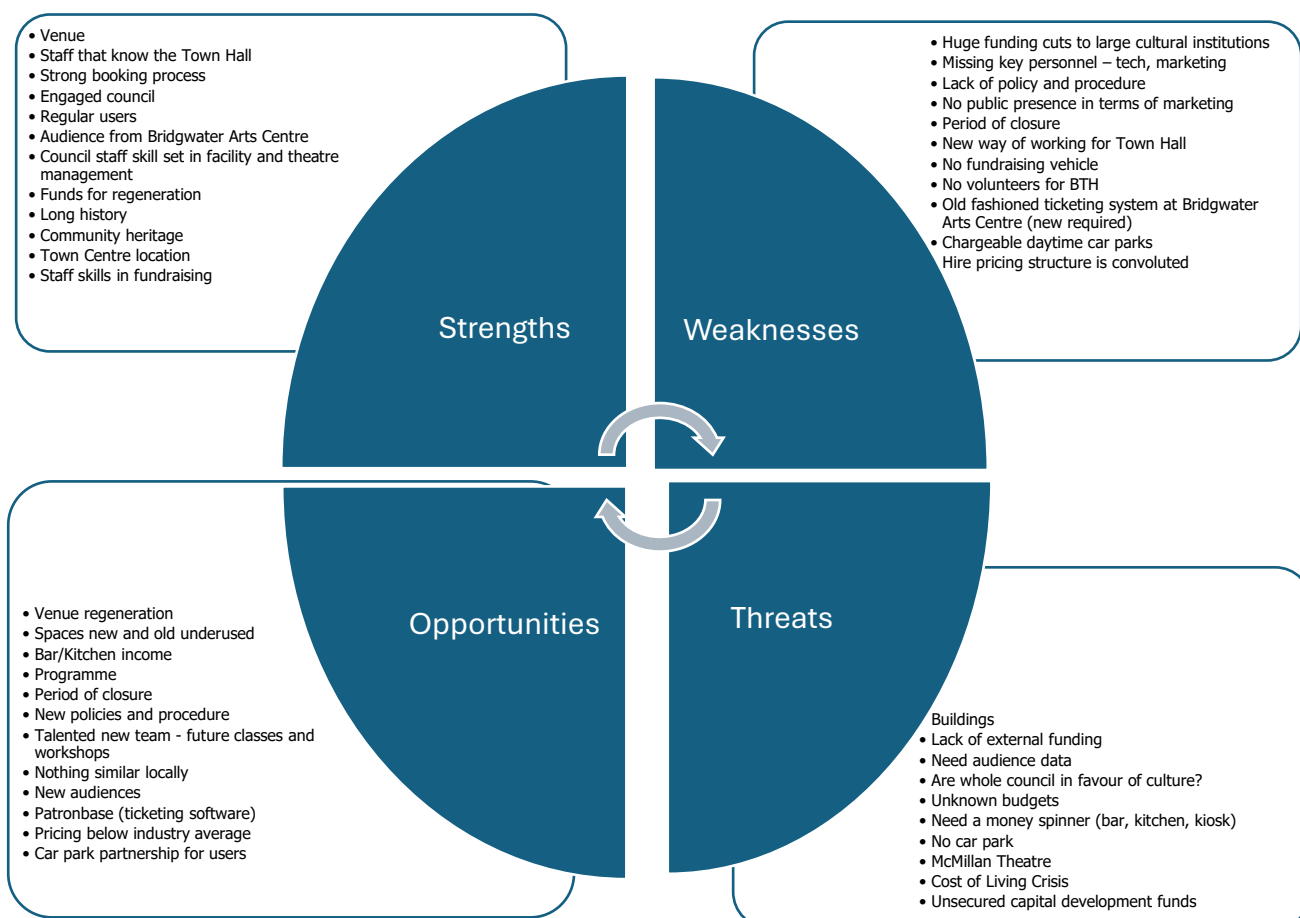


Figure 4



5. Town Hall and Theatre Future Business Model Description

5.1. The Project Overview

Project Phase	Description	Timeline	Funding Source
1 Flat Conversion	2 Bedrooms Open plan living area including kitchen Bathroom Independent entrance Lobby Bin Storage area	Works underway and due to be completed approx. Sept 2024	Capital receipt from sale of land
2A Basement	Caretaker Office Caretaker Storeroom Dressing Rooms x5 Showers Stores x2 WCs for Dressing Rooms x3 WC x1 Corridors	Work underway and due to be completed September 2024	Town Deal
2A Ground Floor	Accessible WC Accessible Dressing Room	Work underway and due to be completed September 2024	Town Deal
2B Ground Floor	Corridor Side Stage x2 Stage Strengthening Removable Fore Stage Green Room Kitchenette & WC Platform Lift Seating Stage Store SLAVS (sound, lighting, audio visual systems)	Works to commence March 2025	Town Deal Public Works Loan Board (PWLB)
2B First Floor	Store Auditorium Balcony Strengthening Seating SLAVS (sound, lighting, audio visual systems)	Works to commence March 2025	Town Deal Public Works Loan Board (PWLB)



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	DDA Access		
2B Top Floor	Attic infrastructure	Works to commence March 2025	Town Deal Public Works Loan Board (PWLB)
2C Roof and Façade	Repair and repaint to façade Refurbishment and redecoration of sash windows Repairs /strengthening of roof LED lighting Installations of solar photovoltaic cells	Works to commence September 2024	Town Council Earmarked Reserves Somerset Council Grant
2C First & Second Floors	Heating	Works to commence September 2024	Town Council Reserves
3 Basement	Stair core Plantroom x 2 Male/Female WCs	Works to commence mid 2025	PWLB
3 Ground Floor	Front of House Lobby Box Office Carnival Centre Charter Hall Store Stairs x3 Stair Core & Lift Reception Lobby Reception Community & Eco Hub Atrium Kitchen x2 Bar Servery x2 Changing Places Corridors WC's x3 Courtyard	Works to commence March 2025	PWLB
3 First Floor	VIP/Conference/Meeting Room Office x3 Corridors Stairs x3 Stair Core & Lift WCs x3 Atrium & Walkways	Works to commence March 2025	PWLB



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	Kitchenette Bridgwater Room		
3 Second Floor	Bridgwater Room Mezzanine Corridors Stair Core & Lift Stairs x3 WCs x2 Conference/Meeting Room Atrium Kitchenette x2 Offices x8	Works to commence March 2025	PWLB
3 Roof	Plant Area	Works to commence March 2025	PWLB
Other	Fire & Intruder Alarms	Works started	Town Council Earmarked Reserves

Figure 5

5.2. Site Plans and Atrium Development Sketches

Proposed Site Plans

Figure 6 – Proposed Ground Floor Plan indicating location of Atrium

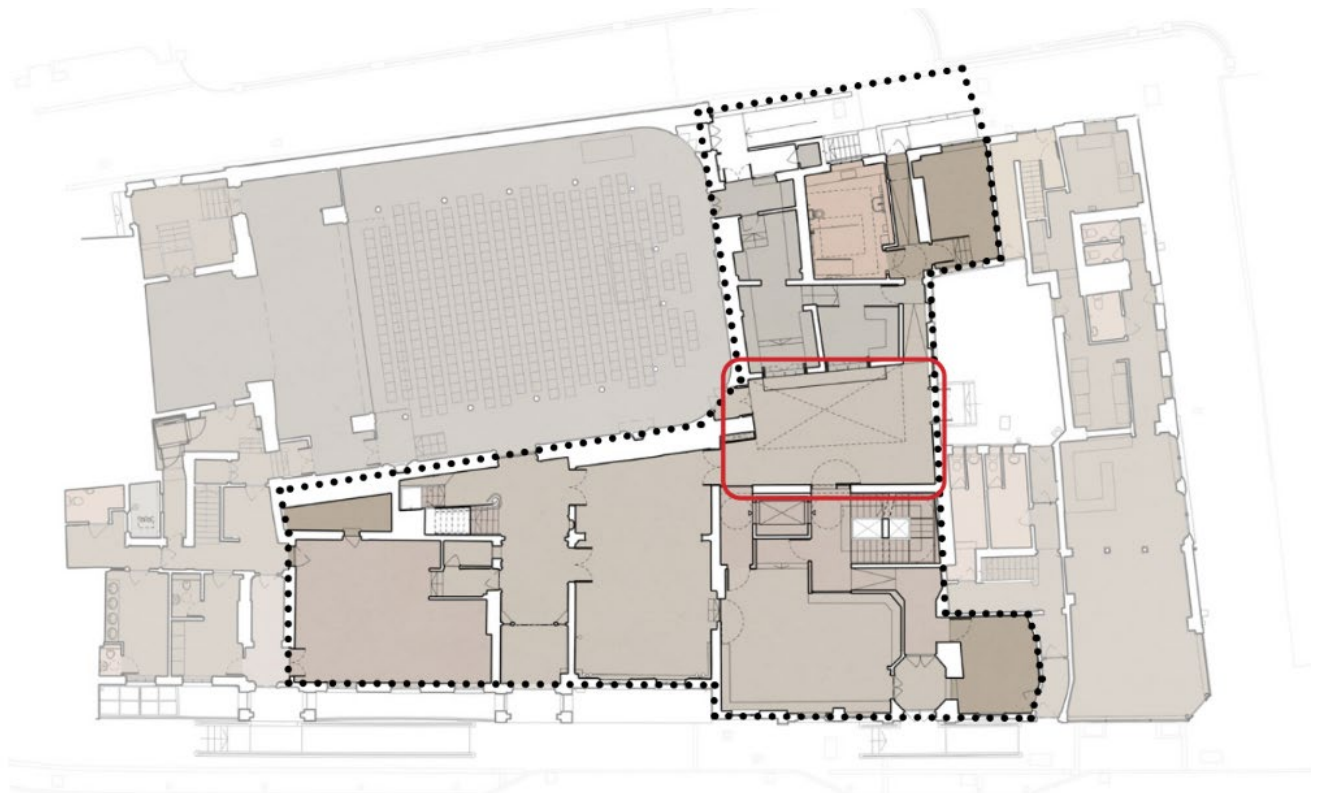


Figure 6



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Figure 7 – Proposed Basement Floor Plan indicating location of Atrium

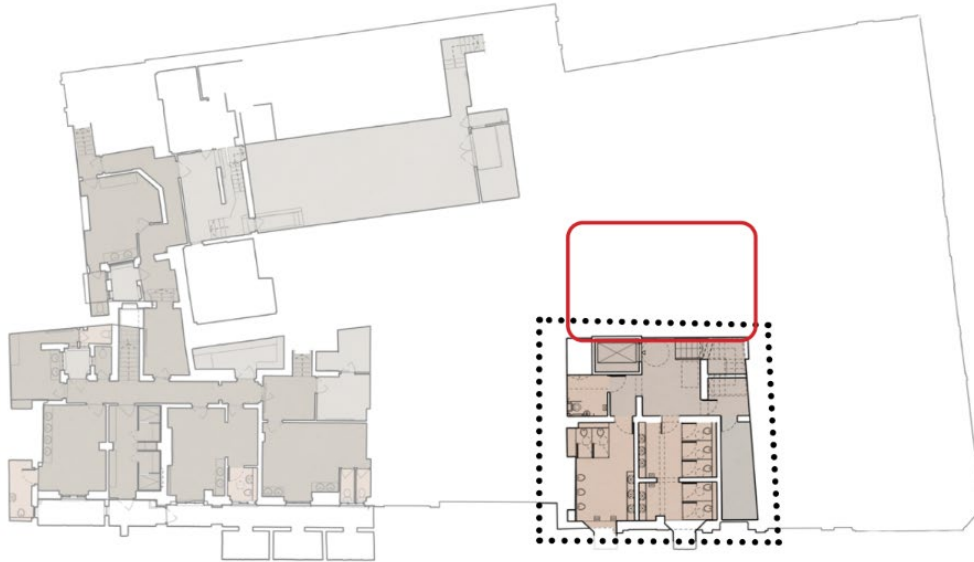


Figure 7

Figure 8 – Proposed First Floor Plan indicating location of Atrium

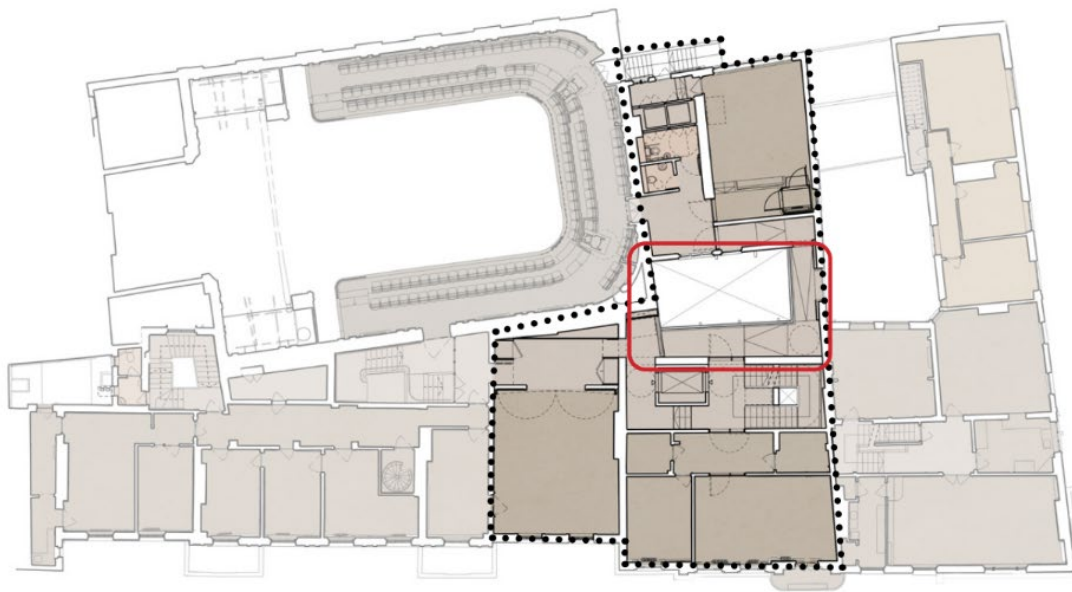


Figure 8



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Figure 9 – Proposed Second Floor Plan indicating location of Atrium

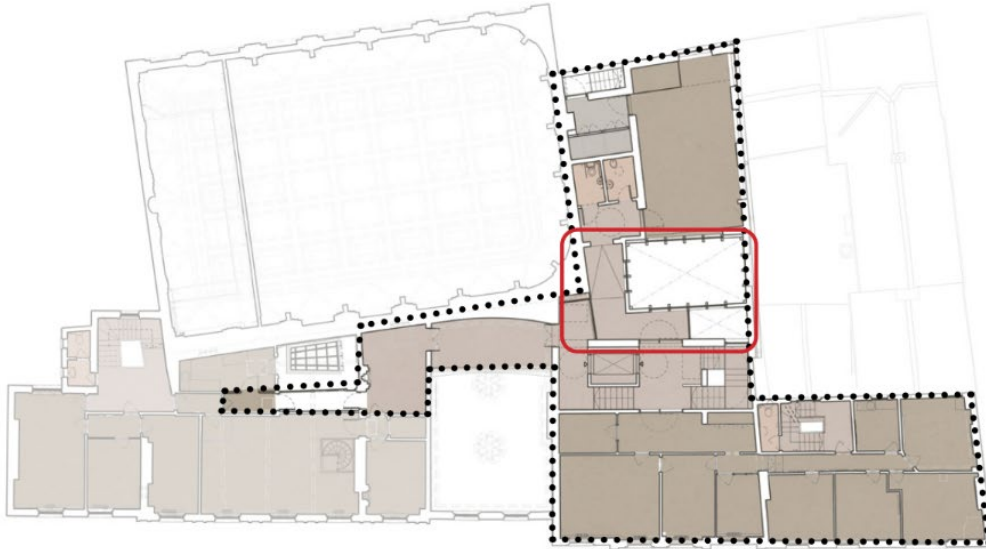


Figure 9

Figure 10 – Proposed Third Floor Plan indicating location of Atrium

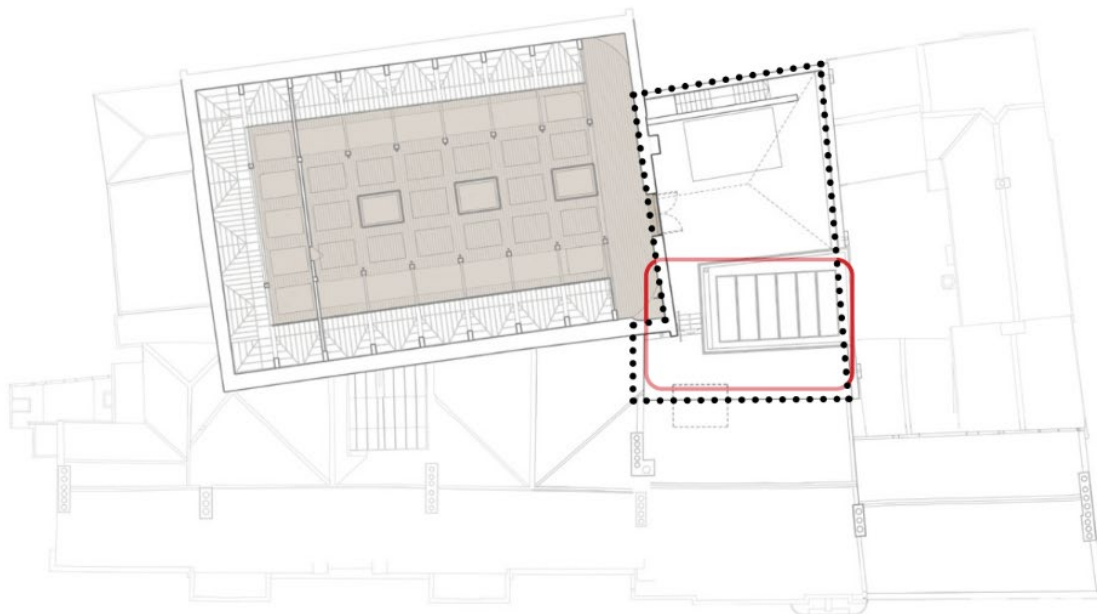


Figure 10



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5.3. Atrium Illustrations

Figure 11 – Internal atrium illustration

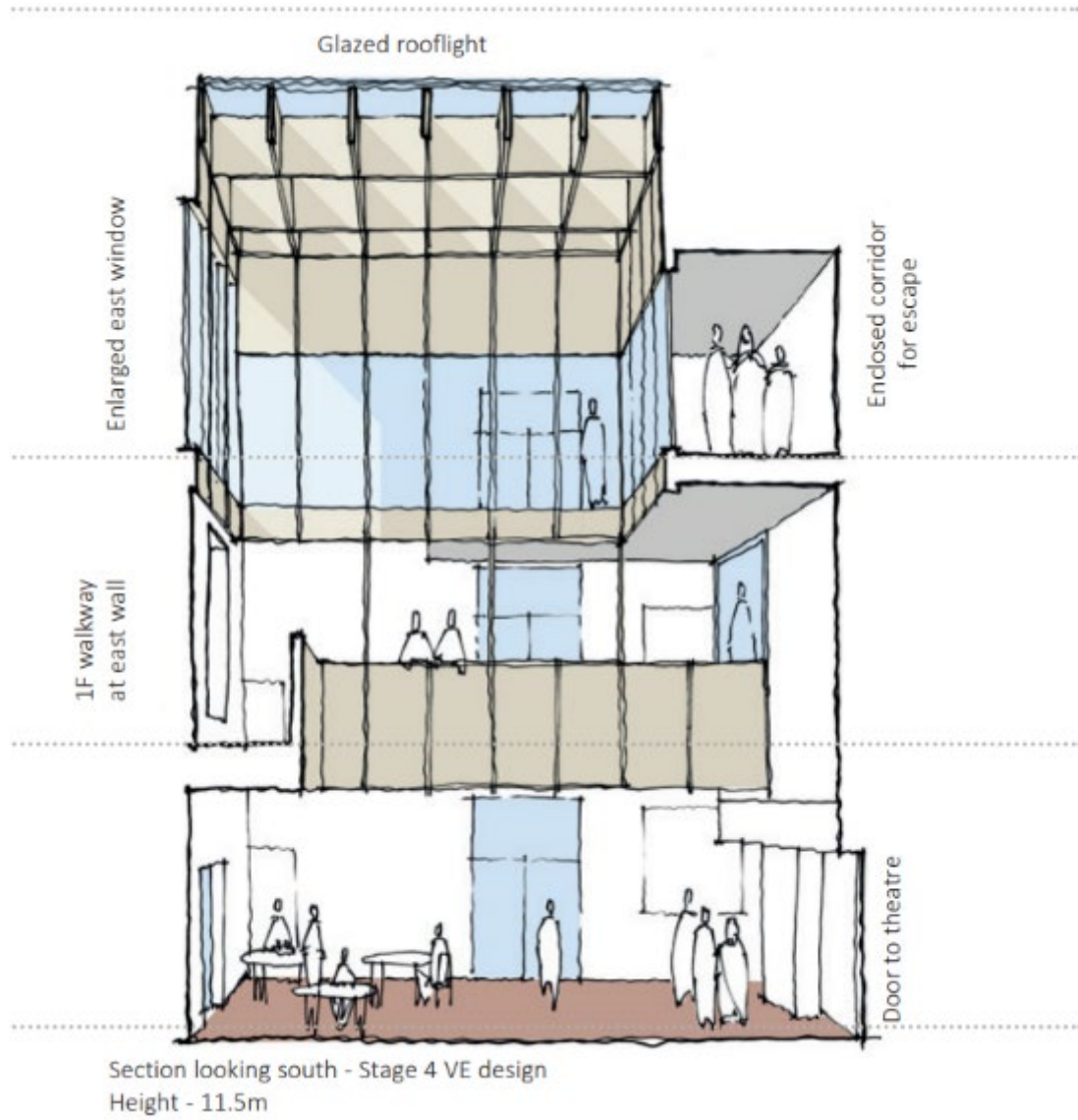


Figure 11



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Figure 12 – External atrium illustration



East Elevation - Stage 4 design



North Elevation - Stage 4 design

Figure 12



5.4. The Project Description

The upgrades will see improvements to various aspects of the facilities, including new auditorium seating, modernised and changed layout to dressing rooms and rehearsal space. The aim is to enhance the visitor experience and provide greater flexibility in the use of the venue, opening doors to a broader range of events. In addition, the introduction of a superior sound system and projection facilities will not only elevate the quality of performances but also enable external streaming and displays.

Accessibility currently is restricted and limited, therefore is a key priority, so a new lift that will access every floor will be installed in the core of the building, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to enjoy the enriching experiences that the Theatre and Town Hall site has to offer. Within the Town Hall itself, meeting spaces and flexible offices will be improved, supporting local social enterprise growth and encouraging collaboration within the community.

This ambitious undertaking is part of a broader aim to create a vibrant and welcoming town centre, improving local cultural venues and 'levelling up' the facilities and opportunities for Bridgwater.

Bridgwater's Town Hall, with investment and the proposed regeneration, will offer a high-quality experience; the very best art and culture in Bridgwater, mixing participation with great entertainment, catering for every stage of the human life cycle and drawing audiences from across the Southwest. A space full of community tradition; from Carnival Concerts to Pantomime, this renewed venue will nurture and support future generations with both community and commercial culture. Weddings and conferences will be a key offer of the new regenerated Bridgwater Town Hall.

The Theatre and associated rooms will benefit from a new café that will present a first-class food and beverage offer and will provide a strong revenue for the council.

Additional and improved conference rooms with a VIP room for Theatre patrons will attract increased revenue and provide a unique offering to the users of the building. Improvement of Theatre lighting, sound systems, and multiple layout options with the seating, will unlock new potential uses for the building without causing detriment to existing hirers of the Theatre.

With removal of gas from the building and installation of solar photovoltaic cells will reduce the current outgoing on utility costs significantly.

Figure 13 and 14: project timelines for 2025/26 and 2026/27:

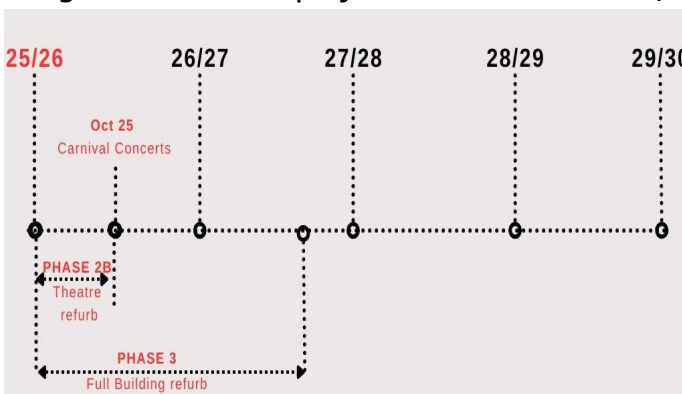


Figure 13

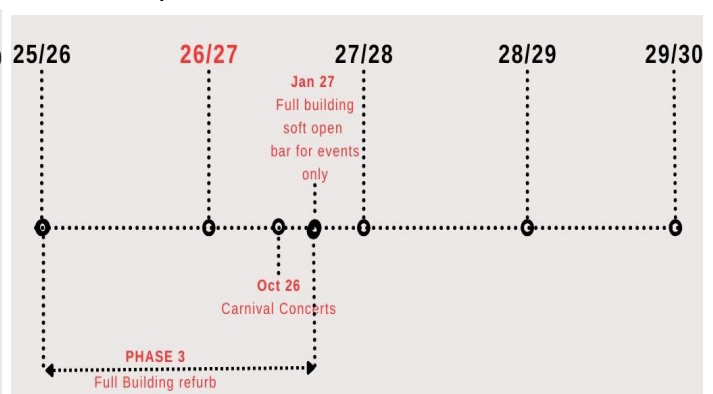


Figure 14



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5.5. New and Improved Hire Spaces from 2025/26

With improved hire space facilities, hire rates (Fig 15.) will rise in line with similar venues across the region taking in to account the extensive upgrades to the Theatre space and the additional 150 seats the Theatre will offer.

Theatre Day Rate 8 hours	24/25	25/26
Commercial	£208.33	£375
Community, Charity or Creative	£166.67	£300
Bridgwater Room	£16.67	Phase 3
VIP Space	Phase 3	Phase 3
Conference Rooms	Phase 3	Phase 3

Figure 15

These new rates are based on venues of similar size and geographical demographic. However, figure 3 shows that 40% of Theatre usage is for rehearsal, which takes place across the fallow months for ticketed events (July-Sept) so a low rate for community groups should be maintained as this is guaranteed income for that period.

Income of £11,000 from room hire is based on 2023/24 hours of usage and reflects the removal of rooms undergoing renovation. The first half of the year sees the Theatre space out of action with Town Deal funded capital works, opening again in late September 2025 for a regular hire of Carnival Concerts and rehearsals.

5.5.1. Audiences

From November 2025, the Theatre will be available to use with a new seating capacity of 460, an increase of 46%. Two live events per month will be scheduled that draw in either hire or ticketing income equal to £9,000 for the 2025/26 financial year. This is a new addition and will see the Town Hall receive ten ticketed events across the five months with an average net box office income of £900 per event – based on a split deal of 70/30, with an audience of 270 (60% of 450 capacity) paying approx. £16 per ticket, less VAT and other costs (usually credit cards, PRS and technicians fees). There is scope for these early performances to achieve a higher income, but it is important to take into account the cost-of-living crisis and not overestimating potential income.

Bridgwater Arts Centre (sister venue) holds a CRM database of approximately 2,500; using this as a marketing tool to an already engaged audience will be a huge advantage. Database members will be asked to opt-in to subscribe to the Town Hall mailing list to comply with Data Protection principles.

5.5.2. Content

The ten events programmed by the team will be commercially high earners, aimed at local and regional audiences to capture engaged ticket buyers, kickstarting the audience development for the Town Hall. To take advantage of a more coordinated programme calendar there is potential for a pop-up bar at these events.



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5.5.3. Staffing and Systems

In addition to the current staff, a Technical Manager and Marketing Officer will join the team offering 75% of their time to the Town Hall Theatre (25% to the Arts Centre). The Technical Manager will oversee the sound and lighting infrastructure brought in with the Town Deal works (Summer 2025), technical process and systems for use within the Theatre, coordination of technical needs for incoming shows and any additional technical requirements across the building. The Marketing Officer will lead on the creation of a new Town Hall Theatre website, ticketing software, CRM, programme content marketing and audience development.

As with the sister venue, Bridgwater Arts Centre, a cohort of volunteers will be recruited and trained to act as both ushers and box office. Volunteers give a huge sense of community to a venue; it offers an opportunity to broker new friendships and improve community cohesion and allows those with a sense of purpose the chance to give something back to the community.

5.6. New and Improved Hire Spaces from 2026/27

The Theatre space now available allows normal hire usage to return with an expected income of £21,000. Capital works will continue to develop; new foyer, atrium, catering and bar spaces, thus creating new opportunities for current audiences and new hirers. Full use of the space will not be possible during this year so no further income for hiring is projected.

5.6.1. Audience

Ticketing income is based on the same income per show for 2025/26 however, the number of shows presented will rise to 25, approximately two per month. Based on figures from [Indigo's 2023 Tomorrow's Audience Report](#), 19.5% of new audiences are returning to venues (biggest growth since 2016) and it is expected that figures will rise in 24/25. This means a reasonable target audience of under 6,300 is required to reach projected income targets of £22,500. This will be possible with the increase to marketing budgets and the introduction of the Marketing Officer from 2025/26.

5.6.2. Content

As with 2025/26 the events programmed will be of a commercial nature to continue to build the loyal following that is needed before major development of an audience can happen. A soft launch of the full building is envisaged in January 2027 with the café bar being open in the evening for drinks only prior to an event. During this time public consultation for participatory classes and workshops will take place for launch in 2028/29. The planning for this future programme will be part of a larger fundraising strategy.

5.6.3. Staffing and Systems

In October 2025 a Catering Operations Manager will join the team to set in place the infrastructure and ordering of catering/bar products as well as working alongside the



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Projects Officer to purchase and plan equipment needed for the catering and bar offer (see 2027/28).

5.7. New and Improved Hire Spaces from 2027/28

Figure 16: project timeline for 2027/28.



Figure 16

5.7.1. Spaces

Hire rates will increase to reflect the high quality of the space; an income of £36,280 is based on 23/24 hours of usage and the introduction of two new rooms with the removal of the Charter Hall becoming part of the café bar space. It is possible that this income will increase with a renewed interest in the building.

Theatre Day Rate 8 hours	26/27	27/28
Commercial	£375	£420
Community, Charity or Creative	£300	£336
Bridgwater Room	£35/30	£40/35
VIP Space	£25/20	£28/23
Conference Rooms	£20/15	£23/18

Figure 17

Exploratory work into franchising a café bar for the space discovered issues such as a lack of control on brand, product and staff as well as the possibility of contract issues and loss of income. Therefore, it is planned for the management of this enterprise to come under the direct management of the Council.

5.7.2. Audience

Ticketing income is based on the same income per show as previous, the number of shows presented however, will go up to 35 – approximately 3 per month. 2026/27 programme will include a Christmas Production to increase customer loyalty with projected ticketing income across the year of £31,500.



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5.7.3. Content

The Town Hall will be open from 10am-3pm Tuesday-Saturday and 5pm-10:30pm on event evenings. The café bar will be open alongside these times. Across 2026/27 it is estimated that a total of two weddings and five in-house events (such as craft fairs and tours) will take place as well as one conference and one party per month. Catering will be offered to all incoming conferences, parties and weddings booked, showing a projected income across the offer of £112,960.

This is based on an average income of £5,000 per wedding, £1,350 events drinks spend (£5 per hour x 270 x 35 events), £420 catering for conferences (£7 per hour x average 60 attendees), day café and pre-Theatre dining £40,950 (spend between £3.50 to £7 per hour x 20-30 covers per session).

Light kiosk sales such as ice creams and sweets are detailed in the income figures along with the introduction of a membership scheme, with offers for members and guests. Sales of merchandise for incoming acts could see a small revenue along with the sales of gallery work. Additions to the space could be made during the refurbishment such as private booths in the café bar charged at a premium rate for an exclusive heightened experience.

December 2027 will see the first Christmas production for the Theatre, the fundraising strategy will aim to achieve Arts Council England (ACE) or alternative arts funding to create this bespoke production for the Town Hall. The old Charter Hall, now part of the café bar, will also become part of a shared gallery space across the foyer for professional work throughout the year.

5.7.4. Staffing and Systems

Joining the team will be two part-time catering staff and four casual bar staff. It is envisaged that across the year a Kitchen Manager will emerge to work with the Catering Operations Manager. A bank of casual duty technicians will also be recruited to pick up the events not covered by the Technical Manager's wage/time.

To complement the staff team a continuous recruitment drive for volunteers will take place and it is at this point we will introduce staff volunteering opportunities at all the venues to create a sense of comradery across the workforce.

5.8. New and Improved Hire Spaces from 2028/29

Figure 18 project timeline for 2028/29:

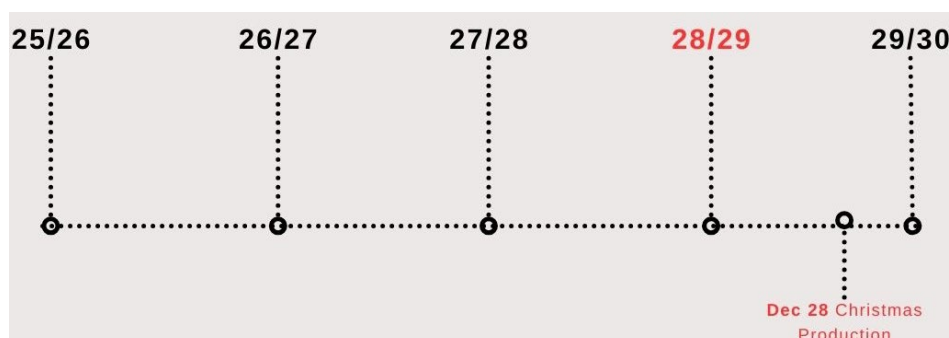


Figure 18



Bridgwater Town Hall and Theatre *Business Plan*

5.8.1. Spaces

A small rise in commercial rates for room hire to consider inflation and rises elsewhere across the economy, however, no further rises to community, charity and creative rates are proposed. Community groups help the council meet their aims and therefore it is felt these groups should be supported. The expected hire income is £40,000 based on a 5-20% increase of usage across the spaces allowing the team to focus on a quality offering of new spaces to new audiences. Diversification from the current (2024/25) market penetration requires careful management but this year those new and old spaces need to work hard.

5.8.2. Audience & Content

The premise is to maintain and create a real quality offer for incoming audiences, so the ticketing income is based on the same volume of audience but with a rise of ticket prices. This year's programme will also include a Christmas Production. The number of shows presented will go up to 48 from 35 – approximately four per month giving a projected ticketing income across the year of £48,600, an increase of 54% from 2027/28.

It is at this point the introduction of new genres will see the audience diversify to bring in audiences from further afield. It is likely that audiences per event will grow, however, it is important to take into account potential instability globally that might impact on the cost-of-living crisis and political factors that may cause this not to happen.

A focus on increased 'other' events will see three weddings and six fairs across the year with an extra six conferences, parties will rise to two per month as will in-house tours. The catering and drinks offer will bring an income of £167,280, an increase of nearly 50% from 2027/28.

The introduction of a daytime programme of two regular classes and ad-hoc workshops will complement both the café bar income and ticketed events, bringing a different audience through the doors. For someone with an interest in filling their days with creative activities, this is a strong opportunity to enhance the volunteer cohort.

5.8.3. Staffing and Systems

With the increase to catering we will need to change the two part-time catering posts to three full-time. Should there be a need, further casuals will be added to the bar staff, although this is not accounted for.

5.9. New and Improved Spaces from 2029/30

5.9.1. Spaces

Another 5% to 20% increase in usage is projected for room hire across the spaces (see Fig 19), based on both an increased volume of marketing and a strong reputation for high quality events over the two years post renovation.



Bridgwater Town Hall and Theatre Business Plan

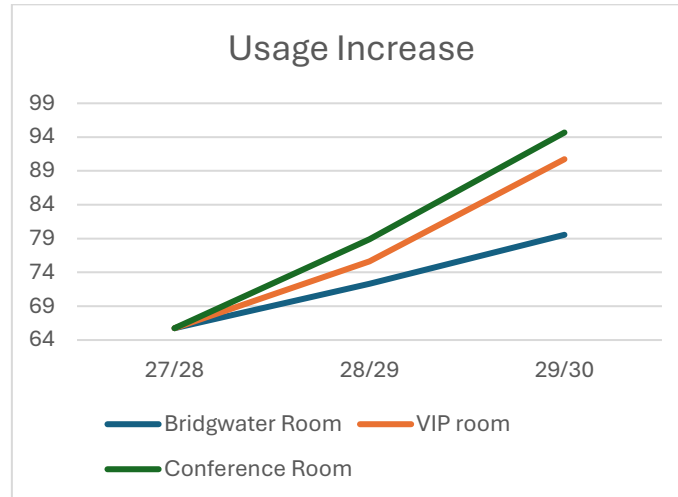


Figure 19

There is a low rise to commercial rates, however no rise to community, charity and creative rates. It is hoped that the Conference Room rates can remain low and build users to allow for the new businesses in residence to take advantage. This, along with Theatre usage, will achieve £42,000 across the year - an increase of 110% from 2023/24.

5.9.2. Audience & Content

Along with increased use of spaces and the volume of marketing, the aim is to achieve a further 5% increase to audiences and a small increase to ticket prices. Taking into account possible increases in costs, it is projected that a ticketing income of £54,000 can be achieved across 48 events, a steady increase of 11% from 2028/29 but a 500% increase from the first year of box office income 2025/26.

This year's plan will also see a total of four regular daytime classes and more ad-hoc workshops added to the programme with an additional £14,400 in income.

5.9.3. Staffing and Systems

There will be no addition to the team in this year, but continuous professional development will be supported as will the recruitment of volunteers.

5.10. Operational Strategies

There has been little drop in the volume of hires over the years, so it is important to develop a strong market penetration strategy for the new products (rooms, food, drinks & events). Using the Ansoff Matrix a route has been established to build the business. With the refurbishment of old spaces, attention has been paid to entice and keep existing customers. Local community groups who bring consistent community income have been brought along for the journey throughout the planning stages. Therefore, those traditional events that have developed over the years are now guaranteed for years to come. The main Theatre is often over subscribed to these groups, so the introduction of the new spaces will be offered as alternatives where possible. Once this is established, the new spaces will be



Bridgwater Town Hall and Theatre Business Plan

introduced to new customers who will bring ad-hoc hires. It is integral that the team focus on quality to build advocacy and new regular hires.

Using this same protocol to build audiences there is a need to start with popular shows offering familiarity to bring in existing and new audiences (those that attend shows at either the Arts Centre or the Town Hall), before programming new shows to new audiences. Maintaining a high-quality programme for audiences will inspire confidence and a confident audience who attend regular shows will be the base for offering innovative work.

Offering a programme that caters for a human life-cycle will create a lifelong relationship with the building and culture, which is essential in keeping this incredible building and its history alive.

A key focus on products and markets is essential to ensuring that the end project is sustainable for the long term. Four strategies will be developed to ensure that a focus on products and markets is not forgotten.

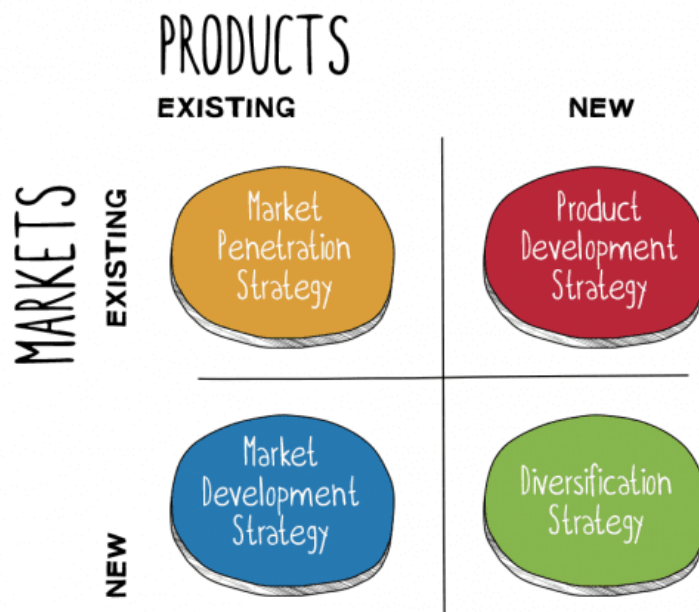


Figure 20

5.11. Town Hall Offices/Empty Rooms

The Council regularly receives enquires for office rental from a range of sources and for a range of terms. Within the Town Hall regeneration project there will be 12 offices available for leasing to generate additional income. These offices will be rented on a mixture of tenures from rent-a-desk for a day or rental packages for weekly, monthly three-yearly leases. Renting out offices on a mixture of short-term and long-term leases offers several advantages:



Bridgwater Town Hall and Theatre *Business Plan*

Diversified Income Streams:

- Short-term leases provide flexibility and attract transient tenants (e.g., freelancers, startups).
- Long-term leases offer stability with established businesses.
- Combining both ensures steady cash flow from different sources.

Adaptability:

- Short-term leases allow quick adjustments to market changes.
- Long-term leases provide stability during economic fluctuations.

Risk Mitigation:

- Short-term leases reduce exposure to vacancies.
- Long-term leases provide consistent income even if some offices remain unoccupied.

Tenant Variety:

- Short-term tenants bring fresh ideas and networking opportunities.
- Long-term tenants contribute to a stable community.

Maximised Space Utilisation:

- Short-term leases prevent underutilisation during gaps between long-term tenants.
- Long-term leases ensure efficient use of space.

Market Testing:

- Short-term leases allow testing demand for specific amenities or services.
- Long-term leases validate sustained interest.

Community Building:

- A mix of tenants fosters collaboration and networking.
- Long-term tenants become part of the Town Hall's identity.

5.11.1. Income Potential

There will be 5,896 square feet of space available for income generation. This space will provide a mixture of uses. New offices to meet demand (the Council regularly receives enquires for short, medium, and long-term office rental), residential accommodation, new café and bar areas and commercial letting space.

The offices will be fully accessible with a staffed reception and serviced communal areas. Discounted parking has been secured nearby that will provide a unique selling point for town centre offices and will provide support to a town centre business.

Increased footfall at the Town Hall and Theatre will provide additional spend in the town centre.



Bridgwater Town Hall and Theatre Business Plan

Additional Town Hall income in figure 21 is based on A mixture of short- term and long-term rental.

Office Rental based on £22 sq. ft	£47,742
Service charge based on £5 sq. ft	£16,013
Office Rental based on £22 sq. ft	£9,660
Service charge based on £6.5 sq. ft	£2,415
Other potential income	£11,765
Income from Bos Café and new Flat	£28,260
Total	£115,856

Figure 21

6. Project Finances and Income Potential

The Town Hall site has been registered as 'opt-to-tax', which means that VAT can be reclaimed on the regeneration, however VAT must be charged on all income received. The regeneration of the Town Hall and Theatre has been independently costed by Ridge who are multidisciplined property and construction consultants. The figures quoted below exclude VAT.

QS Total Project Cost Plan – May 2025 (covers phases 1, 2A, 2B, & 3)

Project Costs	Total
Facilitating and Building Works Cost	£2,668,975
Main Contractor's Preliminaries	£316,048
Main Contractor's Overheads and Profit	£193,843
Works Cost Estimate	£3,178,866
Other Project Costs / Client Direct Items	£631,076
Works Cost Estimate inc. client direct items	£3,809,943
Project / Design Team Fees	£613,199
Risk Allowance Estimate	£573,151
Cost Limit	£4,996,292
Inflation	£135,271
VAT	excluded
Total Project Cost (Excl. VAT)	£5,131,563

Figure 22



Bridgwater Town Hall and Theatre Business Plan

Project Costs Breakdown

Phase	Scope of Works	Cost (ex VAT)	Funding	Deficit
1	Flat Conversion	£ 163,915	BTC	£0
2A	Dressing Room Refurbishment & Upgrades	£ 465,462	Town Deal	£0
		£ 39,000	BTC Matched funding (Budgeted)	£0
2B	Theatre Refurbishment & Upgrades	£ 434,538	Town Deal	£0
		£ 50,000	BTC Matched funding (Budgeted)	£0
		£1,248,916	PWLB	£1,248,916
2C	PV installation, front façade and window refurbishment and redecoration	£ 145,697	BTC Earmarked Reserves and Budgeted	£0
		£ 75,000	Somerset Council	
	Replacement heating to existing offices	£ 44,774	BTC	£0
3	1950's Redevelopment including remodelling and new atrium	£2,729,732	PWLB	£2,729,732
Other	Replacement Fire & Intruder Alarms	£ 49,987	BTC	£0
Total Project Value		£5,447,021	Total Deficit	£3,978,648

Figure 23

Future Town Hall and Theatre Operational Budget

	25/26 Budget	26/27 Budget	27/28 Budget
Income			
Leases	£115,856.00	£121,648.80	£127,731.24
Room Hire	£11,000	£21,000	£36,280
Box Office	£9,000	£22,500	£31,500
Box Office Ancillary	£1,760	£6,385	£20,305
Catering/Bar	£0	£60,000	£112,960
Kiosk sales	£0	£0	£9,450
	£137,616	£231,534	£328,776
Expenditure			
Staffing costs	£174,604	£208,652	£271,122
Rates	£27,000	£29,900	£31,400
Utilities	£42,950	£44,950	£45,964
Building costs	£19,340	£22,460	£27,184
Maintenance	£20,000	£20,400	£20,808
Marketing and Website	£11,234	£4,650	£4,800
Box Office costs	£10,250	£41,400	£46,950
Catering costs	£0	£27,000	£45,184
Kiosk costs	£0	£0	£3,150
Loan Repayment	£240,961	£240,961	£240,961
	£546,339	£640,373	£737,523
Net Budget Position	-£408,723	-£408,839	-£408,747
24-25 Existing net Budget Difference	-£406,850	-£406,850	-£406,850
	-£1,873	-£1,989	-£1,897

Figure 24



Bridgwater Town Hall and Theatre *Business Plan*

7. Public Engagement

Public engagement has taken place on the Town Hall and Theatre Regeneration scheme over several events:

- Bridgwater Carnival Committee, Bridgwater Pantomime Society and Old Folks Shows – several meetings over the last 12 months have been held to help shape the proposals for the Theatre and associated rooms.
- Bridgwater Civic Society – presentations of design plans to a meeting of Bridgwater Civic Society on 11 October 2023.
- Town Deal Open Day Event 19 October 2023.
- Forget Me Knot Club Meeting 14 May 2024.
- Public Engagement Open Days 29 and 30 July 2024.
- BBC Radio Somerset Interview and coverage 07 August 2024.
- Various Council and Committee Meetings.
- Planning and Listed Building Application process.

8. Conclusion

Bridgwater Town Hall site is undergoing an exciting transformation with £900,000 in Town Deal funding and £75,000 in Climate Funding from Somerset Council, the project aims to revitalise this historic building. Full planning permission and listed building consent have been granted, and work is already underway. Key details:

Renovations and Upgrades:

- The project includes creating two-bedroom apartments and refurbishing the dressing rooms (work underway).
- In September 2024, solar photovoltaic cells will be installed, sash windows refurbished, and the exterior masonry repaired and repainted.
- Extensive refurbishment work to the Theatre and empty offices is programmed subject to approval of borrowing.
- New Bar and Café area and Atrium.
- Every floor to be made accessible with the installation of a lift.

Long-Term Impact:

- The regeneration proposals aim to secure the Town Hall for the next 50 years.
 - Increased footfall to the town centre is expected, benefiting both the local community and visitors from within a 30 to 40-mile radius of Bridgwater.
-



9. Appendices

Plans (Work in Progress)

[051-CWa-DR-A-Latest Plans WC Proposals 150724.pdf](#)

Presentations

[240716 CWa-051 Atrium Consultation Slides 02.pdf](#)

[240716 CWa-051 Theatre Consultation Slides 02.pdf](#)

[240613 CWa-051 Consultation boards RevA.pdf](#)

Fire Strategy (Work in Progress)

[Jensen Hughes Bridgwater Town Hall Outline Fire Strategy Report Issue 1.pdf](#)

Cost Plan

[Bridgwater Town Hall Cost Plan V3.1.pdf](#)

Income Spreadsheets

[Town Hall Theatre Budget 23-30.pdf](#)

[Rental Income Analysis.pdf](#)

Current Financial Year Budget

[Annual Budget - By Centre \(Actual YTD Month 4\).pdf](#)

Public Works Loan Board Figures

[PWLB Figures 07.08.2024.pdf](#)

Planning Permissions and Listed Building Consent Applications/Approvals

[Planning Online \(somerset.gov.uk\)](#)

[Planning Online \(somerset.gov.uk\)](#)

[Planning Online \(somerset.gov.uk\)](#)

[Planning Online \(somerset.gov.uk\)](#)

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