

Briefing Paper

Guildhall Development Plan 2019-2022

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This paper is not intended to present a complete and comprehensive plan for the development of Gloucester Guildhall. This is because the challenges faced by the Guildhall are real and development opportunities to meet those challenges, the scope of ambition and the resources to achieve those ambitions are broad, and in many cases outside of the direct control of the City Council.
- 1.2. This paper seeks to lay out a direction of travel and a vision for the Guildhall which will allow the Council and its partners to collaborate on programmes and projects to meet the development needs of the Guildhall over the plan period.
- 1.3. This paper also seeks to position the Guildhall so that it can react effectively to external funding opportunities in order to secure the investment necessary to optimise the development potential of the Guildhall. As a consequence, the action plans that will be necessary to deliver the development outlined in this report will follow to reflect the opportunities that arise.

2. A Vision for Gloucester Guildhall

- 2.1. In trying to draft a vision statement for Gloucester Guildhall we have tried to identify what the Guildhall does or can offer to Gloucester that is unique or special to the Guildhall.
- 2.2. It seeks to build on the idea that the Guildhall is important to the City and that it has played a role which, in its day, made it special to many people in the City. It sets out an ambition that the Guildhall should still be somewhere that creates new and important memories for future generations of Gloucester residents and visitors, especially young people.
- 2.3. And those experiences should not just be as passive consumers put also as creatives, producers and performers – taking an active part in what's on offer.
- 2.4. The vision seeks to say that:

We want the Guildhall to be at the heart of Gloucester; a magical, inspirational, creative and exciting place to hear great music, watch great performances, learn great skills, make great friends, grow great talent, stage great work, see great films (and eat great food).

2.5. The Vision is couched in terms of the City's ambition to put culture at its heart for the good of all and its confidence to strive to be the UK City of Culture on 2025. It recognises that to do this the Guildhall has to become:

- A commercially successful cinema and arts centre;
- A place offering a brilliant artistic programme;
- Somewhere that provides spaces to create, rehearse and perform;
- A base offering services that help local people develop their creative skills and supports their ability to stage events and performances;
- A focus to support talent in the city, and especially young people, who want to make Gloucester a City with an ever improving and evolving calendar of festivals and events – helping bring Gloucester to life all day every day.

2.6. This will contribute to the vibrancy of the City: playing a role in reshaping the City's day and night time economies, helping repurpose the "High Street" and give people another reason to love their City Centre.

2.7. The ambitions outlined in this paper will mean that the Guildhall will:

- Be Gloucester's most visited performance venue and improve the skills we need to achieve this (front of house, programming, technical, commercial, marketing and promotion and events management)
- Increase artistic engagement in Gloucester, especially targeting people aged under 30
- Build a new programme that attracts and serves the City's diverse population
- Renovate the Guildhall and make it a more attractive destination
- Establish the Guildhall as the City's Events Academy, supporting people and organisations that want to see, organise, create, stage and promote great events
- Increase our revenues and work towards strong financial viability
- Lay the foundations that could enable the Guildhall to operate as a financially sustainable and artistically successful independent organisation.

3. The Three principal elements of Our Big Plan

3.1. Making all this happen won't be easy and there are some challenges and risks along the way. But there are also some real and exciting opportunities. This plan is intended to make the most of those opportunities.

Building Skills

3.2. As part of the 2017/2020 Great Place Programme Gloucester has forged a strong and developing partnership with the Roundhouse, Camden. The Gloucester Roundhouse Exchange is supported by Great Place funding and a substantial grant from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

3.3. Phase two of the Gloucester Roundhouse Exchange should focus on developing the skills and capacity of the Guildhall and its staff to deliver the vision set out in this plan.

3.4. The purpose of this phase two activity will be to match staff at the Guildhall with counterparts at the Roundhouse and develop capacity, skills and knowledge through mentoring, coaching, learning and secondment in the following areas:-

- Programming and Audience Development
- Front of House and Visitor Experience
- Marketing and Promotion
- Commercial activity (hires, food, drink etc.)
- Events Management
- Technical production and support
- Business Planning

3.5. A strong case can be built to demonstrate that development in these areas will strengthen the sustainability of the Guildhall, the cultural offer in Gloucester and the cultural vitality of the City. But the reality of stretched public finances means that prioritising this investment through Council budgets is hard.

3.6. Our plan is to work with established funders to secure grant funding to help create the capacity at both the Guildhall and the Roundhouse to deliver our skills development programme over the next two years. The intention will be to build a case and establish “proof of concept” that meaningful investment in capacity and skill development is culturally and financially sustainable.

3.7. Whilst the City’s bid for £5.3m from the Cultural Development Fund was not successful the concept of establishing the Guildhall as an Events Academy for Gloucester is worth pursuing. The ambition would be for the Guildhall to serve as the city’s One Stop Shop for events organisers, promoters and enthusiasts to get advice and guidance, support with licencing and permissions, technical equipment hire and support, rehearsal and performance space, both in the Guildhall and elsewhere in the City. The aim would be to build sustainable community capacity and grow events delivery skills coupled with the potential for the Guildhall to offer Apprenticeships and Internships to people

seeking to make their livelihood in the cultural and creative industries – including in partnership with the University of Gloucestershire. Strong links would be built with the Cultural Entrepreneurs Hub in Kings House.

3.8. Gloucester's Great Place Programme is also supporting the Engage in Gloucester project which promotes active volunteering in support of the City's Heritage and Cultural venues. The Guildhall will be an active and enthusiastic partner with Engage in Gloucester and will seek to offer rewarding opportunities for volunteers to learn new skills and make a real contribution to the sustainability of the Guildhall and the City's cultural offer.

Building Purpose

3.9. The creation of a Gloucester Events Academy has the potential to provide a visible, tangible and high-profile role for the Guildhall in the cultural regeneration of Gloucester. The Academy would serve as the city's One Stop Shop to support events organisers, promoters and enthusiasts by providing advice and guidance, support with licencing and permissions, technical equipment hires and help, rehearsal and performance space, both in the Guildhall and elsewhere in the City. The Academy will rely on the expertise of the Guildhall team and a cohort of apprentices and interns seeking to make their livelihood in the cultural industries.

3.10. Guildhall Cinema and Arts Centre. We will repurpose, promote and market the Guildhall as a Cinema and Arts Centre focussed on offering a great boutique cinema and arts centre programme. Funding opportunities will need to be explored to overhaul the cinema environment and provide new seating. Programming will be revisited to take full advantage of the Guildhall's position as licenced premises offering an independent cinema experience in the heart of the city with adjacent free parking after 5pm. Live screenings in partnership with the National Theatre, Royal Shakespeare Company, Royal Ballet and Opera enhance the Guildhall's USP and provide opportunities for pre-booked food and drinks packages to generate additional income and predictable demand.

3.11. In addition to a boutique cinema experience the programme at the Guildhall Arts Centre will be developed to offer an exciting and culturally diverse programme of music, theatre, community engagement, circus, spoken word and cabaret.

3.12. We need to take time to better understand what sort of programming our customers want and meet the needs and expectations of those who are not our customers yet, so that we build a sustainable mix of popular, surprising, challenging and exciting offers. The programme needs to live up to the Cultural Strategy's vision of being innovative, excellent, quirky and edgy, diverse and community based – with a strong emphasis on

young people. This needs to be part of an active audience development programme to broaden and deepen our customer base. We need to do this so that we establish our position in national touring networks (a challenge due to our physical location between Bristol, Cardiff and Birmingham) and bring higher profile events to the city.

- 3.13. As part of the Building Skills programme (see above) we intend develop our programming, marketing and audience development skills. Together with the Building Purpose programme our plans are to increase average attendances by 50% over the next three years.
- 3.14. We will develop our programme with support from the Roundhouse and others. As part of this activity we will explore options to engage with Strike-a-Light, the Gloucester-based Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation to develop and implement an artistic vision and strategy that helps shape our programme, develops our audiences, stretches our horizons and helps deliver the City's cultural strategy and vision.
- 3.15. All of this activity will give renewed purpose to the Guildhall and we will actively explore whether seeking to become an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation in our own right to give focus and purpose to our development journey and bring high-profile recognition to our progress and our potential to do more.

Building Place

- 3.16. The Guildhall was a prominent part of the City Council's recent bid to the Cultural Development Fund and could play a role in supporting our proposals for activity and funding under the Future High Streets Programme or whatever future funding rounds become available. In addition, the Guildhall can play a role in supporting the Council's wider plans for the regeneration of Kings Walk/Square/Quarter and its ambitions for a safe and vibrant City Centre.
- 3.17. The Guildhall's part in this activity can include:
- Broadening the cultural offer, providing one-stop-shop for audiences and strengthening support to the local creative sector in a modernised and sustainable building.
 - Working in partnership with the new creative entrepreneurs' hub at Kings House.
 - Support the efforts of the Music Works to secure a studio in Gloucester which will help develop a new generation of artists, creative producers and cultural leaders who are more representative of the city.

- Shaping a live events programme overhauled to build better links with the city's festival and events, the University and regional/ national touring networks.
- Audience Hub/TIC. An audience facing service providing information about upcoming events across the city alongside visitor information and box office functions.
- In order to achieve this, a revamp of the fabric of the building is needed. This would include replacement of the cinema seating, the creation of new entrances and hospitality spaces, designed with artists and the upgrading of the lighting system to more sustainable LED.

3.18. In the 2018 Budget the Government announced the launch of a Future High Streets Fund designed to support and fund local areas' plans to make their high streets and town centres fit for the future. The Guildhall occupies a prime City Centre location and we would wish to explore how the Future High Streets Fund might be employed to improve the infrastructure within the Guildhall, add to the vibrancy of the City Centre – especially after retail closing time and enhance the visibility and profile of the Guildhall from Eastgate Street and the Kings Walk Car Park.

4. What's Next

4.1. This Briefing Paper does not pretend to be a final Development Plan, it seeks to outline the broad proposed direction of travel to enable officers, Councillors and partners to collaborate to deliver as much of our ambition as possible and maximise the external funding which is available.

4.2. To make the plans real we will need to:

- Clarify whether this vision and “our big plan” supported?
- Identify resource needs – short, medium and long term
- Identify infrastructure needs and scope – Future High Streets Fund etc.
- Prepare funding bids and fall backs
- Sharpen the goals, targets, and performance measures
- Harness existing partnerships
- Build new partnerships
- Go for it