

PLAYHOUSE



LIVERPOOL
everyman
& PLAYHOUSE
theatres

The Liverpool Playhouse
Theatre Capital Refurbishment
Feasibility Study

Foreword

The Liverpool Playhouse Theatre is a cultural gem of both local and national significance. The Liverpool and Merseyside Theatres Trust Limited (LMTT) are acutely aware of the pressing need for an extensive refurbishment of the Council-owned Playhouse theatre to make it more welcoming for audiences and safer for theatre groups, and to enable the theatre to play a key role in the future of our region and for the mid-scale touring market.

In 2008, LMTT commissioned a feasibility study, supported by Arts Council England (ACE) and the Northwest Regional Development Agency, to consider the capital options to transform both the Everyman and Playhouse theatres given their dilapidated condition at the time.

While the study concluded that both were in urgent need of repair, given the finance available, the Everyman Theatre ended up being the focus of the resulting capital campaign. We now have a Stirling Prize winning, state-of-the-art, theatre as a result in the Everyman.

Despite investment and best efforts to preserve the Grade II* listed building, the Playhouse theatre has continued to deteriorate and 14 years on the need for a full Playhouse refurbishment is pressing.

In partnership with Liverpool City Council, Liverpool City Region and Liverpool Business Improvement District (BID), LMTT have been exploring the long-term future of the Playhouse and seeking to better understand the role it can and should play in the sector both locally and nationally. We are working more widely in driving the future of Williamson Square and enhancing links between the Playhouse and other cultural nodes such as St George's Hall and the Bluecoat Arts Centre, together with the Royal Court and Liverpool Empire theatres.

LMTT's 2030 strategic plan includes a vision for refurbishing the Playhouse theatre with environmental sustainability as a key focus. The potential to improve the Playhouse's impact on the environment is massive and we believe the Playhouse theatre has the potential to be an international exemplar for the successful preservation of ageing theatres.

We are in a position to appoint a suitably qualified and experienced multidisciplinary design practice to prepare a Liverpool Playhouse Theatre Capital Refurbishment Feasibility Study (the "Feasibility Study").

The Feasibility Study will be used to support our future Liverpool Playhouse Theatre Capital Refurbishment bid and must therefore clearly identify the likely capital project timeframe and related costs to deliver a full capital refurbishment of the Liverpool Playhouse Theatre by 2030.

We are looking for a team who can work with us over a period of five months in the preparation of a Feasibility Study that will safeguard the future of Liverpool Playhouse Theatre for generations to come.

We look forward to your response to this invitation to tender.

MSD Vanzo *Andrea Nixon*

Mark Da Vanzo
Chief Executive
Liverpool
Everyman and
Playhouse
Theatres



Andrea Nixon
Chair of Trustees
Liverpool
Everyman and
Playhouse Theatres



Photo © Paul Kallée-Grover



Liverpool Playhouse Theatre Staircase

Context

"In its present incarnation the Playhouse built in 1866, hovers aesthetically somewhere between Victorian charm and civic 'down-at-heelness'. Whereas the Everyman's patchwork history has mysteriously created a patina that defines it, the Playhouse looks as though generations have struggled to retain its original personality, so that all that remains are layers of gloss paint and "practical" carpet. Its sightlines are poor; its stage machinery antiquated or non-existent; its legroom meagre; its sound-proofing a hostage to the buskers and passing drunks and its spirit sadly diminished. Built originally as a music hall, The Playhouse was never designed as a gasp-inducing Matcham jewel. But from its wooden benches in the gallery, to its imposing chandelier or mosaic-floored box office there is the whisper of a thousand good nights out had by all reaches of Merseyside society.."

LMTT Feasibility Study 2008

The Liverpool Playhouse is a theatre of reinvention and adaptation. This former Music Hall has been transformed and rebuilt over generations, has embraced new artistic ideas and technologies, championed new architectural styles and continued to delight audiences for over 175 years.

However, the constant maintenance issues associated with patching up this historic Grade II* listed theatre are no longer confined to the original building, as there are now also maintenance challenges with the 1960s extension. Together they are a major drain on organisational energy and resources.

There is a pressing need to make changes to the Playhouse so that it meets the needs of 21st century audiences and artists. LMTT are looking for a team who can work in a bold and creative way to support making a compelling Liverpool Playhouse Theatre Capital Refurbishment bid by March 2023. We are seeking to appoint a team that clearly align with our vision, mission and values (as set out overleaf) whilst also inviting new and innovative thinking that could transform the Playhouse and our offer for future generations.

The Feasibility Study must consider the Playhouse as a whole, as well as the civic role the theatre plays fronting onto Williamson Square. It must contain a structural survey and explore how the Playhouse should adapt all of its spaces to improve the experience of audiences, touring productions and our staff. We are seeking a team who will respect the architectural heritage of the building, whilst also finding modern and innovative solutions to our needs that can also respond to the challenges presented as a result of a changing climate.

A key driver for us is to improve the Playhouse's environmental performance, by identifying sympathetic adaptations that could be delivered through a capital refurbishment of the entire building as well as opportunities for the greening of this landmark heritage asset.

We are also committed to diversity and equality and will be seeking to appoint a team that represents a wide range of lived experience, and that can demonstrate real added social value in everything they do.

We are looking for a team that can propose radical and original solutions to reimagine the Liverpool Playhouse as an exemplar for the successful preservation and rebirth of ageing Victorian theatres the world over.

Photo © Paul Kallee-Grover



Our role

The Liverpool Everyman & Playhouse theatres are a local artistic force with national significance and an international reputation. Operated by the LMTT, our two theatres are united by our passion for our art-form, our love of our city and our belief that theatre can transform lives.

We believe our theatres can be a vital focus for the communities in the Liverpool City Region, telling stories which are compelling locally and nationally, supporting and attracting talent and contributing to Liverpool's reputation as one of the country's most vibrant cultural cities. Our theatres strive to reflect the aspirations and concerns of our audiences, to dazzle and inspire them, welcome and connect with them, nurture the artists within them and fuel their civic pride.

Wherever these connections happen - whether in our theatres, through Young Everyman Playhouse (YEP), in the community, in schools, or outside Liverpool - we hope to ignite the imagination, explore what it is to be human, and always to exceed expectation. Across the two theatres - one a 440-seat thrust, the other a 670-seat proscenium - there is an opportunity to produce and present the richest range of work for the widest audience.

We have established relationships in the communities of Merseyside, nurtured through an extensive and innovative outreach and education programme, and believe passionately that the creation, delivery and experience of the highest quality theatre must be open to all.



OUR VISION

WE WILL BE THE MOST RELEVANT
CHANGE MAKING THEATRE,
ARTISTICALLY INNOVATIVE,
TALENT ENHANCING,
SOCIALY IMPACTFUL,
AND REPRESENTATIVE OF EVERYONE



OUR MISSION

TO USE THE POWER
OF THEATRE TO INSPIRE,
ENTERTAIN AND NURTURE
POSITIVE SOCIAL CHANGE



OUR VALUES

COLLABORATIVE
WE LISTEN, WE SHARE, WE CO-CREATE

CREATIVE
WE BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF CREATIVITY TO
INSPIRE AND CHANGE LIVES

COMPASSIONATE
WE ARE OPEN-HEARTED, GENEROUS
AND SUPPORTIVE

COURAGEOUS
WE ARE DARING AND BRAVE - A VOICE
FOR THINGS WE BELIEVE IN

Photo © Natalie Gilmore

The historic Playhouse

From the Star Theatre Music Hall to Liverpool Playhouse

The Liverpool Playhouse sits on the east side of Williamson Square, a large civic space in the heart of Liverpool.

Initially laid out as a residential square in 1745, Williamson Square became home to a number of theatres and concert venues as the wealth of the city increased, including the Theatre Royal which opened on the northern side of the square in 1772 and was demolished in 1965.

The Playhouse Theatre itself started life as the 'Star Music Hall' in 1866, with the 'Star' name coming from an earlier 'Star Concert Hall' that had stood on the same site in the mid-19th Century. In 1866 the Star Concert Hall was demolished and rebuilt to the designs of the Liverpool Architect Edward Davies and included a semi-circular auditorium said to resemble that of the Oxford Theatre in London.

The Star Music Hall was later reconstructed to the designs of renowned architect Harry Percival in 1896, reopening as the 'Star Theatre of Varieties'. The 1896 construction saw the introduction of the imposing vestibule entrance that opened into Williamson Square.

The new construction enabled what were at the time cutting edge fire prevention solutions to be installed along with the introduction of heating through hot water. The building also included rudimentary air conditioning via a system of lattice work in the ceiling to ensure the gallery could be maintained as cool and as comfortable as the pit. The new stage design enabled cloth to be worked on and raised in one piece opposed to being rolled as was the practice at the time.

The Star Theatre had a fairly short life as a variety theatre, as the building was subsequently sold before reopening in 1911 as the Liverpool Repertory Theatre. Alterations to the theatre were carried out to the designs of Professor Stanley Davenport Adshead, the first Professor of Town Planning at Liverpool University, and Charles Herbert Reilly Professor of Architecture at the University.

The theatre was renamed again in 1917 when it became the Liverpool Playhouse, the name it retains to this day. Subsequent alterations to the theatre included an extension to the building to house a paint frame and workshop from a former café next door in 1961, with the stage and dressing rooms enlarged in 1966. The biggest transformation took place to the theatre in 1968 with a new glass fronted tower built next to the theatre to accommodate a new entrance and booking office for the theatre and a new restaurant.



Liverpool Playhouse Theatre 1950s





Photo © Paul Kallee-Grover

Listing

The modern Playhouse

The 1968 redevelopment of the Liverpool Playhouse saw the original building unchanged apart from some minor redecoration and upgrading of lighting, sound and toilet facilities. The new extension which was on a footprint similar to that of the original theatre alongside it, provided at ground floor a new entrance, new booking office, foyer and cloakroom. A series of new circular interventions into the glazed front space provided for a first floor Playhouse Restaurant above which was also the Redgrave Room and the Star Buttery and Bar. The new extension also allowed for the introduction of new staircases serving the whole theatre, a lift and new administrative space and welfare facilities, together with a rehearsal room.

In the following year the St John's Beacon was opened by the Queen, providing a radio and observation tower which included a luxury 5-star revolving restaurant. The Playhouse extension and the St John's Beacon share a similar modern design, which was described by Historic England in 2020 as "embodying the technological bravura spirit of the space age".

The Liverpool Playhouse Theatre was officially listed in March 1975 and graded II* (listed building ref: 1218642). Any planned capital works will need to be able to demonstrate that they are sympathetic to the grade II* listing. The listing citation reads as follows:

II* theatre 1865, interior remodelled 1912 by Professor Stanley Adshead, extended 1966-68 by Hall, O'Donahue & Wilson. Stucco with slate roof. 3 storey, 7-bay front. 3-bay centre breaks forward under broken pediment. Entablatures to floors. Ground floor central triple entrance with angle pilasters and fanlights in architrave. End bay paired round headed entrances. 3 blind round windows to each side of centre. 1st floor has flat composite pilastrade, centre emphasised by paired pilasters at ends. Windows with panelled aprons, pilasters, cornices; round windows over. Windows to centre bays have balustraded windows with tympana under relieving arches. 2nd floor has oculi between panelled pilasters to central bays, bullseye windows to flanking bays. End bays have cupolas on short Tuscan colonnade. Addition to left of reinforced concrete with glass cladding provided new foyer and cloakroom on ground floor with box office, restaurant and bar spaces above. To rear large open workshop and studio theatre plus further dressing rooms. Ground floor facade has sets of double entrance doors, above are two cylindrical cantilevered projections largely clad in glass. Interior: Auditorium has tiers of balconies on cast iron columns; decoration in Neo-Greek style. Additional foyer, restaurant and bars have exposed shuttered concrete walling with suspended steel staircases bolted through the shuttered walling. The Architects' Journal described the refreshment areas as a brilliant concept, joyously realised, which exploits asymmetrical volumes and ever varying spaces yet achieves unity and also balance with the adjoining Victorian facade.' The original theatre is significant as an early and rare work by one of the pioneers of the Liverpool School of Architecture, in the Grecian style favoured by the school at that date; it is also historically important as one of the first repertory theatres in Britain. The foyers added a vivacious tone making the theatre a place to see and be seen in the true spirit of 1960's theatre going, a true citizens' theatre.

The challenge...

The Foyer - whilst the historic foyer is closed to the public, the 1960's foyer lacks the capacity required to allow patrons to circulate freely. A challenging layout to navigate and a lack of circulation space, coupled with dominant staircases and structural features, make for a confined and lifeless entrance. Concession stands, the booking office, bars and customer facilities are all constrained and sit uncomfortably in the space available. The foyer currently does little to entice footfall from a busy Williamson Square.

Poor Sightlines - the auditorium geometry causes the gallery and seats towards the sides of the auditorium to have a limited view of the stage which constrains creative use of much of the stage space. Audiences find the interruption of view by pillar and vertical cut off caused by the circle and gallery overhangs unacceptable; this reduces potential income due to many seats having to be sold at reduced price to compensate or off plan altogether.

Poor Ventilation - in dressing rooms, workshops and offices together with ineffective and inefficient heating and ventilation systems that give audiences an uncomfortable experience and also poor working conditions for staff and performers in dressing rooms, workshop spaces and offices.

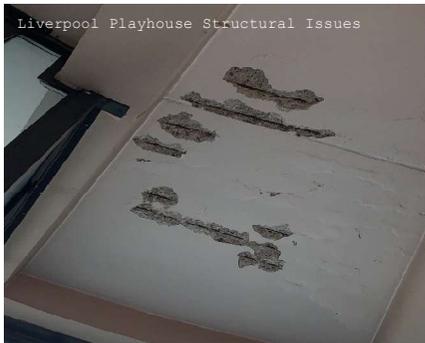


Photo © Paul Kalle-Grover

Cramped Legroom - does not meet modern audiences' expectations of standards of comfort and limits audience development, particularly in terms of contemporary accessibility requirements.

The Grid - limited height, limited width, unlimited health and safety challenge - Just one aspect of the inadequate stage house, which is limiting creativity as well as creating unsustainable risk levels and costs. The structural limitations of the 140-year-old, much adapted timber grid are a major contributor to the conclusion that the theatre is living on borrowed time.

The Age of the Playhouse - given the theatre has been in use since 1866, there are inevitable "wear and tear" issues consistent with a building of its age. Concrete spalling, cracks, leaks and damp all adversely impact on the audience and staff's experience of the theatre.



Photo © Paul Kalle-Grover

Maintenance - We need to ensure that we have a serviceable building for the future. Proposed works to the building will need to be mindful of sufficient life expectancy and availability of spare materials to maintain the building into the future. From an operational perspective we are looking to harmonise with key infrastructure elements of the Everyman Theatre to improve long term maintenance of both theatres. As an output of the study, we will be seeking a Condition Report of the building to identify anything else that may need addressing before 2030.

Access - One of the greatest challenges we face as a theatre is that the building is not as accessible as we would like it to be for staff, performers, or visitors. The design team will be expected to identify workable solutions that could improve access that also respond to the age and listed status of the theatre.



Photo © Natalie Gilmore

We will be expecting the appointed design team to explore ways of improving accessibility throughout the building, as well as identifying solutions to unlock areas of the theatre that are not currently fully accessible. In terms of access, we expect the design team to explore the following issues:

- Access to technical areas, including stage and rigging
- Stage access for disabled actors
- Accessible toilet provision, particularly for staff
- Emergency egress for disabled audience members
- Infrastructure to support disabled staff and audience members
- Activation of our historic entrance and foyer from Williamson Square
- Improved access for staff and visitors from Houghton Street
- Access to future spaces that are to be identified through the study

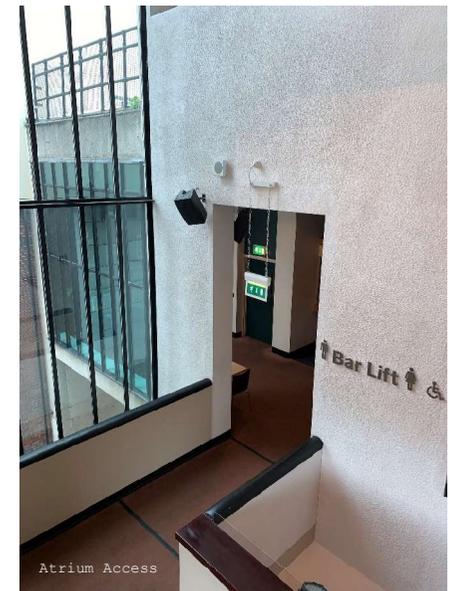


Photo © Paul Kalle-Grover

Beyond the Playhouse...

The Liverpool Playhouse Theatre does not sit in isolation and the capital refurbishment is therefore expected to explore the physical relationship of the Liverpool Playhouse Theatre with its immediate surroundings. As well as fronting onto Williamson Square, which has been identified by Liverpool City Council as a major civic space in the city centre and the focus for informal events, the Liverpool Playhouse Theatre also sits along a mile of cultural institutions that weave through the city centre.

The 'Cultural Mile' as coined by the Liverpool BID study 'The SQ' (August 2022), connects the cultural institutions centred around William Brown Street within St George's Quarter through to the cultural institutions situated on Liverpool's iconic waterfront. The 'Cultural Mile' includes the World Museum, the Walker Art Gallery, The Empire Theatre, St George's Hall, the Royal Court, the Liverpool Playhouse Theatre, Liverpool's contemporary arts centre The Bluecoat, the International Slavery Museum, the Maritime Museum, the Museum of Liverpool, and Tate Liverpool at the Royal Albert Dock.

As well as sitting along the 'Cultural Mile' the Liverpool Everyman Playhouse also connects to the primary shopping area, the internationally renowned Cavern Quarter, and the Commercial Business District. Proximity to the main line rail terminus Lime Street, the Queens Square Bus Station, Haymarket Bus Hub, and three of Merseyrail's city centre underground stations including Moorfields, Liverpool Central and Lime Street, together with access to several multistorey car parks means the Liverpool Playhouse Theatre is highly accessible.

A series of published studies and planning guidance set out the future role of Williamson Square as a key civic space in the city centre and together seek to transform it from a district square to a world class city square. There are a number of proposals contained in the Cavern Walks and Williamson Square Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) which was published in October 2019, that seek to transform Williamson Square into a key civic and performance space for the city, with proposals for the Playhouse theatre to spill out onto Williamson Square. It is understood that it is the council's intention to take the SRF to cabinet in late 2022 for formal adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) under the Liverpool Local Plan which was adopted earlier this year.

As part of the Liverpool Playhouse Capital Refurbishment Feasibility Study, the design team are expected to explore the projects identified in the SRF and other relevant studies to determine which of the projects could form part of a Liverpool Playhouse Capital Refurbishment bid in March 2023. The feasibility study must look beyond the physical confines of the existing Liverpool Playhouse Theatre and explore how the proposed refurbishment could facilitate wider aspirations for the future of Williamson Square and the surrounding streets that radiate from it.

Photo © Jane McNicol



Liverpool Playhouse Theatre in the context of Williamson Square

Delivery and budget

LMTT in partnership with Liverpool City Council, Liverpool City Region and Liverpool Business Improvement District have been exploring the long-term future of the Liverpool Playhouse and we are seeking to better understand the role it can and should play in the sector both locally and nationally. LMTT's 2030 strategic plan includes a vision for refurbishing the Playhouse with environmental sustainability as a key focus.

The potential to improve the Playhouse's impact on the environment is massive and we believe the Playhouse has the potential to be an international exemplar for the successful preservation of ageing theatres as well as being a catalyst for the regeneration of Williamson Square.

To assist us in preparing a Liverpool Playhouse Capital Refurbishment BID, we have identified a sum of up to **£50,000** (excluding VAT and inclusive of expenses) for the drafting of the Feasibility Study. The Feasibility Study is to be prepared between November 2022 and March 2023 as the current aim is to have the Liverpool Playhouse Capital Refurbishment bid ready for submission in April 2023.

Alongside the Feasibility Study, and subject to securing additional funding, we will also look to instruct the selected multidisciplinary design practice to prepare a separate study called the 'Williamson Square Activation Study'. The Williamson Square Activation Study is to have an additional budget of up to **£20,000** (excluding VAT and inclusive of expenses) and will be expected to explore how the refurbishment of the Liverpool Playhouse Theatre could facilitate wider aspirations for the activation of Williamson Square and surrounding streets.

Photo © Paul Kallee-Grover



Liverpool Playhouse Redgrave Room



Photo © Paul Kallee-Grover

Selection process

The LMTT will be undertaking a two-stage procurement process to appoint a multidisciplinary practice to prepare a Liverpool Playhouse Theatre Feasibility Study and a Williamson Square Activation Study (which is subject to securing additional funding). These two studies will be used to inform a Liverpool Playhouse Capital Refurbishment bid in March 2023. The selection process will incorporate:

Stage 1

Multidisciplinary design practices are invited to prepare a bid response to this brief. Once the bid responses have been assessed, the three highest ranked bidders will be invited to the Liverpool Playhouse for an interview. Submissions will be scored on a basis of 40% price and 60% quality.

The selection criteria for this first stage will be based on the relevant experience of the individuals presented in the bid, the overall ability of the team to meet the requirements of this brief, the direction of the ideas encapsulated in the bid as well as the practice's approach to diversity, equality, and inclusion. We will also be assessing the 'green' credentials of your practice in their alignment with our own.

Stage 2

The top three bidders will be invited to an interview at the Liverpool Playhouse where a panel including external experts will ask for a presentation of your bid together with specific questions relating to but not limited to:

- Your response to the brief, including any initial ideas that you have presented drawn on your own experience of delivering similar new build or theatre refurbishment projects
- The structure and management of your team, including the key personal who would be delivering the two studies

- Your approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion, including how broad representation will be ensured across the project team.

To ensure we maximise social value through the procurement process, we actively encourage collaborative bids from design consortiums, particularly those that include emerging practices in Liverpool and wider representation within the project team.

Following the interviews one multidisciplinary design team will be selected to produce the Liverpool Playhouse Capital Refurbishment Feasibility Study and the Williamson Square Activation Study (subject to securing additional funding).

Key Dates

- **Bidding:** bids to be submitted to assistant@everymanplayhouse.com by 12pm on Monday 3rd October
- **Initial Selection:** all bidders will be notified of our shortlisting decision by 5pm on Monday 10th October, with the top three bidders invited forward to Stage 2 interviews
- **Interviews:** the top three bidders from Stage 1 will be invited to interview between 9-1pm on Friday 21st October (all bidders are asked to hold this date)
- **Appointment:** the successful bidder will be appointed by 5pm on Friday 28th October.

Note: A bidders information event with the LMTT will be held at the Liverpool Playhouse Theatre on Tuesday 13th September 2022. This event will provide an opportunity for clarifications, in addition to a tour of the Liverpool Playhouse. If you are interested in attending the information event on the 13th September please can you register your interest with assistant@everymanplayhouse.com by Tuesday 6th of September 2022.

Submission and scoring

Responses to this brief must be submitted electronically to assistant@everymanplayhouse.com by 12pm on Monday 3rd October 2022 and must include:

- 1 x A4 page response to the brief (max 5 marks)
- An outline of your experience of similar projects completed in the last 5 years with specific reference to illustrative case studies. Please limit this to a maximum of 8 x A4 pages and include project values, completion dates, final /anticipated budgets where possible (max 10 marks)
- An Initial assessment/response to challenges we face (max 2 x A4 pages) (max 5 marks)
- Design ideas/philosophy (max 2 x A4 pages) for the refurbishment of the Liverpool Playhouse Theatre (max 5 marks)
- Design ideas/philosophy (max 2 x A4 pages) for the activation of Williamson Square (max 5 marks)
- Pen Portraits of all team members plus full CVs for those who will be responsible for the delivery of the commission on a day-to-day basis. (max 2 x A4 pages per full cv) (max 5 marks)
- Demonstration of your approach to delivering economic, social and environmental benefits to local communities (max 3 x A4 pages) (max 10 marks)
- A resource and programme proposal for the two studies showing activities and staffing with a max 1 x A4 page description of the process you envisage to deliver the two studies (max 10 marks)
- An indicative fee proposal and associated draw down against tasks for two studies as outlined in this brief (max 5 marks)

Please Note:

- Bids will be scored on a basis of 40% price and 60% quality
- The successful bidder will be required to provide PI and PL Insurance documents (minimum £5 million)
- The successful bidder will be required to provide two references for two of the case studies pretended in your document

Photo © Paul Kallee-Grover



Liverpool Playhouse Box Office

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Front cover photo © LMTT

Back cover photo © Jane McNicol