

Combined Summary of Representations

Strategic

General

Need to regenerate - TW dying on its feet, basically unbalanced
TW needs investment in public facilities but should be ground-up (the Forum)
Develop TW's role as cultural capital, more dynamic, but preserve character
Masterplan (for town centre or civic buildings) essential to achieve strategic aims
Coherent strategy needed related to Local Plan and Council's sustainability agenda
Project too complicated, a sequential plan would be better (and easier to sell)
Development project must save (operating) cost of present facilities
Cost of project enormous in context of cutting services, size of Council budget
If borrowing £70m better spent on present civic centre

Calverley Grounds

Landscape plan needed now for CG – aim to enhance, not trespass on it
Improving access to CG from Mt Pleasant doesn't require new buildings
Consider alternative locations for major development, including RVP
Development (of MPA and GHCP) requires more modest scale and retaining green screen

Problems

Design (of buildings) uninspiring – I wouldn't go out of my way (to visit)
Traffic and access proposals problematic – might work but at a cost
TW needs more creative people to become arts hub, competition for suitable staff very stiff
More visitors means improving traffic/transport
Too expensive to make TW a conference centre

Opportunities

Build economy on basis of culture, tourism and creative industries
Integrate development with long-term programme to develop grass-roots arts
Short leases for creative users (in RVP) – pop up shops
Digital and special effects coming in rapidly (TW could be centre for this)

Process

General

Council's objectives the wrong way round - originate with determination to get rid of TH
Too risky as single project, assess TH and AH separately, step by step decisions
More evidence required of cost benefit of components, including civic complex
Important to reuse (development work) to date and not just start again
Inadequate costing of compensation of those affected by proposals
Present civic buildings ignored in costs and opportunities
Scope for multiple moves neglected, eg. temporary theatre, temporary town hall

Communications

CPO Inquiry didn't challenge Council, largely ignored impact on CG
Council evidence partial - advantages and disadvantages not spelled out
No opportunity for public to engage with options, only presentation on proposals
Effect of Bullock episode on people's memories – no hope of better outcome now
People have been thoroughly stirred up, feel they're being railroaded
Project not recognised in Local Plan – conflicts with Urban Design Framework
Aim for cross-party support, get buy-in from objectors

Car Park

Assess future need for car parking in town centre
Theatre needs parking but location not crucial
Proposed car park unacceptable – loss of trees and should respect contours
Car park expensive to build and run, unsustainable and wrong location

Current AH and TH

Problem

Part of important listed civic complex and focus of civic pride
Fine examples of art deco, especially foyer, stairs, cornices, ceilings
Past their sell-by date but present plans not a solution
Facades should be retained with insides rebuilt and continue in present use
Central to town but design unfashionable at present, figures used for moving not credible
Well-built and could be enlarged and altered as necessary for mixed uses
Regenerate as community space with facilities for Council, start-ups and theatre
Sustainability criteria ignored, assessment didn't reflect current practice (eg. RICS guidance)
Selling current site inconsistent with building offices to let

Assembly Hall

Problem

AH has space limitations and vulnerable to losing its subsidy
Cost of rebuild to full touring standard prohibitive (£31m?)
Aim to secure financially stable future within constraints of site
As theatre needs major reconstruction of back-stage and wing space
Depth of stage not critical but grid and fly-tower not high enough
Possible side galleries but major increase in seating capacity not possible
Lack of space requires breaking into TH footprint and/or police station
Closing AH would be disaster for TWODS, orchestra etc

Opportunities

The only 1000-seat auditorium in wide area - ideal for concerts and orchestral performance
A functional space similar to civic buildings elsewhere (Hackney, Lambeth)
AH with flat floor has a role distinct from that of new theatre
Different repertoire from proposed theatre – so no case for avoiding shutdown
Could be multi-purpose community space, or dedicated smaller theatre
As smaller theatre could operate in tandem with larger theatre elsewhere
Orchestra copes well at present, usually fill 80-90% of seats
AH could be community centre in place of Camden Centre
Closing for refurbishment would be problem but not insurmountable

Town Hall

Problem

Expensive to run, security problems, unsuited to modern working
Security requires exclusion of public, Gateway elsewhere
Council only needs about one third of present floorspace
Doesn't make use of town centre location, not a centre for the community

Opportunities

Lends itself to staged renewal, cellular offices could go (eg. BDP Report 1989)
Create atrium in lightwells and extend seating and catering
Amelia Scott Centre short of space, could be expanded into TH

Two floors of residential on top OK subject to parking and design
Develop TH for enterprise start-ups, WeWork concept
TW needs a creative epicentre – could be in refurbished TH

MPA Offices

Build offices for letting only at MPA with minimal (40-space) underground car park
Limit height, step design to follow slope, and preserve screen from CG
Proposed theatre and offices too large for sites – visual intrusion on CG
No necessary connection between commercial offices to let and civic centre
Residential at MPA more suitable, would provide 24hr oversight of CG `dead area`

GHCP Theatre

Need

West End musical touring productions have inferior casts, not appropriate for TW
Something very attractive and improved transport needed to bring people to TW
Touring lyric productions only unlikely to deliver cultural stimulus
Cost of acquiring 300 additional seats (over AH) not justified
Theatre appeals to a small sector of population, these will go to Canterbury or London
Doubts about future of live theatre in provinces – competition from other media
Execution of theatre development should be outsourced now
If run by large theatre group would be dominated by West End product
Aim for theatre complex, not just single auditorium (eg. Rose Theatre, Kingston)
Lots of informed people in TW who could help design and create this
Support for new 1200 seat theatre, quoted break-even and catchment over-cautious

Location

Siting of theatre not crucial
If major project wanted should be ecologically sound theatre/conference centre
Could be done on existing civic site linked to Amelia Scott or events field at Dunorlan
Benefit of building new theatre in new location

Specification

Design for musical shows requires amplified sound and a dry acoustic not suitable for orchestra
Improved facilities needed, more flexible internal design to allow range of programming
A separate studio theatre plus a more flexible auditorium and car parking
More adaptable format possible within planned envelope but more space needed
Design of proposed house threatens acoustic blank spots in auditorium
Shadow effect of balconies on seats below and fly-tower
Productions limited by fixed proscenium and no facility for flying over auditorium
Fixed seating doesn't allow flat floor for theatre in round, all-round digital projection etc
Inadequate access for larger trucks now becoming standard, and coach pick-up
Need to optimise F&B provision to make full use of situation

Opportunities

Support for new 1200-seat theatre and programme for younger audience
Need for creative excellence via community-based theatre and high-profile artistic leadership
Strong leadership required, working with local authority

Vibrant cultural infrastructure important catalyst to rejuvenate towns (Margate, Brighton)