

Case Study

# Aylesbury Waterside Theatre



Delivered for Aylesbury Vale District Council

Facilities: A new landmark theatre | November 2010  
Value: £38 million



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

**Introduction**

Aylesbury Vale District Council wanted a landmark theatre to attract the UK’s best entertainment acts and be a catalyst for future investment in the town centre and surrounding area.

**Details**

Aylesbury Waterside Theatre, named by local residents because of its proximity to the canal and local brook, the Bearbrook, is the centrepiece for Aylesbury with a design that is as dramatic as the plays it shows.

The appearance reflects the undulating Chiltern Hills nearby, with the architect Arts Team saying the 106 glulam beams around the building create a “forest of fins” echoing the ancient woodlands nearby. It stands on a concrete base that rises and falls like a rollercoaster, with the timber beams - each one unique - rising out to support the glass façade.

The theatre has a 1,200-seat auditorium that converts into a 1,800-capacity hall. It can also become a 220-seat suite for smaller events including dance, drama, meetings and conferences. It replaces Aylesbury Civic Centre and is expected to attract 300,000 people each year.

Theatres, with their complex sound/lighting and audiovisual requirements, are always challenging projects but at Aylesbury the site team took innovation one stage further.

The floor in the stalls area can be hydraulically raised, while the seats, which are on air cushions, can be detached and “hovered” to the basement area via the orchestra pit lift. This opens the floor space up to other functions including weddings, exhibitions, pop concerts and the celebrated annual Farmers’ Ball.

**Successes**

- Apart from the fly tower which houses the stage equipment, there are no straight lines at all on the exterior
- The project met all of the client’s brief and requirements
- Completion was coordinated to the public opening date to align with the operator’s requirements
- The surrounding area is being developed with private sector partners who recognise the growth opportunities stimulated by the theatre

**Community initiatives**

- Full corporate responsibility plan established and integrated within the community
- Examples include: Raising money for local cancer charity, skills centre lectures, CIOB site visits/lectures, school visits
- Bronze Considerate constructors award

**Testimonials**

**Councillor John Cartwright, Leader of the Aylesbury Vale District Council:**

“This is a magnificent project for local people and they should be very excited about what will be a wonderful new theatre.”

**Mark Chamberlain, Project Director, Willmott Dixon:**

“We experienced challenges along the way, but the result is a landmark building that the whole of Aylesbury can be very proud about. We will continue to ensure a smooth transition from construction site to operational theatre as we complete the landscaping works. We would like to thank the local community for their hospitality and understanding and we look forward to working on more projects in Aylesbury”.

**Contact**

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