

Case Study

Theatre Severn



Delivered for Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council

Theatre with 650 seat auditorium, 250 seat conference room, dance studio, booking hall
February 2009 | Value: £19 million



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Introduction Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council issued a two-stage tender in early 2006. Willmott Dixon was appointed preferred bidder in April 2006 under a JCT 2005 design and build contract, with a maximum guaranteed price. It is one of a series of theatres by the company, including the Riverfront Theatre in Newport, Aylesbury Waterside Theatre and Guildford Civic Hall.

Key Facts The site turned out to be of significant archeological interest. To enable archeology, Willmott Dixon re-sequenced the build program to minimize delays, while incorporating some of the finds into the theatre's design.

Details With a beautiful riverside setting in Shrewsbury, the new theatre provides a host of exciting new opportunities. A 650-seat auditorium with air conditioning and full technical facilities will play host to an exciting and diverse programme of live performances, from ballet to comedy, and live musicals to drama.

There are three principal spaces, which are linked by foyers at ground, first, second and third floor levels. The main auditorium is a striking zinc-clad drum, which rises through the foyer structure. The glazed foyer maintains views through the site to the river.

The 250-seat Studio theatre houses more experimental programmes with cutting-edge performances by a range of creative artists. It also offers Shropshire's amateur and community-based groups a place to perform their work and has the technical facilities to match their aspirations. With the seating retracted, the Studio Theatre becomes the perfect venue for live music, enabling Shrewsbury to host a diverse range of performances and building on an already excellent reputation for live music.

Successes The new theatre replaced the existing Victorian Music Hall. This exciting development sent out a bold cultural statement for Shrewsbury. It continues to develop Shrewsbury as one of the most attractive places to live and work in the UK and will be a major factor in bringing visitors to the town.

As well as the performers receiving rave reviews, the facility itself has attracted nothing but praise from theatre writers and critics.

In its first year of operation, Theatre Severn's income was in excess of £2m with more than 120,000 tickets sold for a wide variety of performances. In fact, the first 20 shows were sold out before the Theatre opened, with extra dates having to be arranged.

Sustainable achievements The theatre was designed and constructed to comply with part L2 of the Building Regulations. A number of sustainability features, such as rubber flooring, linoleum, lime renders, green oak and recycled materials were incorporated into the design.

Testimonial Peter Nicholson, manager, Theatre Severn

"The reaction and support for Theatre Severn in its first year has been astonishing and beyond expectation. Our hope is to continue the diverse programming policy whilst maintaining the highest quality.

"It really has become a venue that both Shrewsbury and Shropshire can be proud of."

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