

Citizens Design Bureau wins planning for £5m arts hub revamp

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Citizens Design Bureau (CDB) has gained planning approval for the refurbishment and remodelling of the Jacksons Lane Arts Centre in north London



The Grade II-listed former Methodist Church in Highgate was first converted into an arts centre by Tim Ronalds Architects more than 30 years ago.

Today the building is used for theatre, televised rehearsals of BBC show *Strictly Come Dancing*, stand-up comedy and circus acts.

However, CDB says there are significant issues, including the 'rabbit warren of studio spaces' spread across different levels on a sloping site, problems with the acoustics and 'creaking services and outdated decor'.

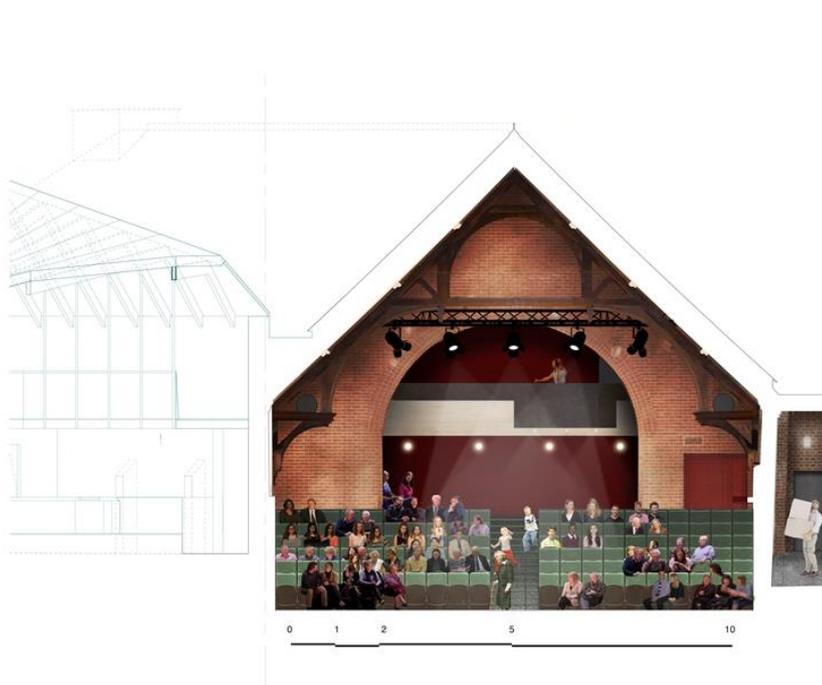
The revamp involves remodelling the interior to expose more of the structure of the old church and making the studio spaces accessible to disabled people. The foyer will be cleared out to reveal the central nave and side aisles, and a lift installed.

The theatre's capacity will increase from 150 to 180 and the full vault of the roof will be revealed to the audience by removing technical equipment.

The project was boosted in June by confirmation of a £2.26 million grant from Arts Council England, funded by the National Lottery. Haringey Council has also committed £1 million and the centre's public fundraising campaign, Love Jacksons Lane, launched last month to raise the remaining £1.7 million needed to complete the project.

CDB won the publicly-tendered commission in 2018, having completed a feasibility study in 2016. The practice defeated an undisclosed shortlist of five rival teams to win the £417,000 design contract to repair and upgrade the venue.

Katy Marks, director of CDB, said: 'We're proposing to de-clutter the building to reveal the beauty of the Grade II-listed former church and create a more sociable, accessible and intuitively functional building.'



'On the outside, plans include reopening the old church door to create a new, accessible entrance. Internally, we're inserting a dramatic new atrium foyer, increased audience capacity in the theatre, improved studio layouts with acoustic separation as well as the inclusion of better storage and back of house facilities, all while keeping the soul of Jacksons Lane intact.'

The project is expected to go on site in April 2020 for completion in April 2021.

Marks, who previously worked on the Stirling Prize-winning Everyman Theatre for Haworth Tompkins Architects, set up CDB in 2013. The practice's refurbishment and extension of Manchester Jewish Museum and St Peter-in-the-Forest church in Walthamstow are starting on site this month.