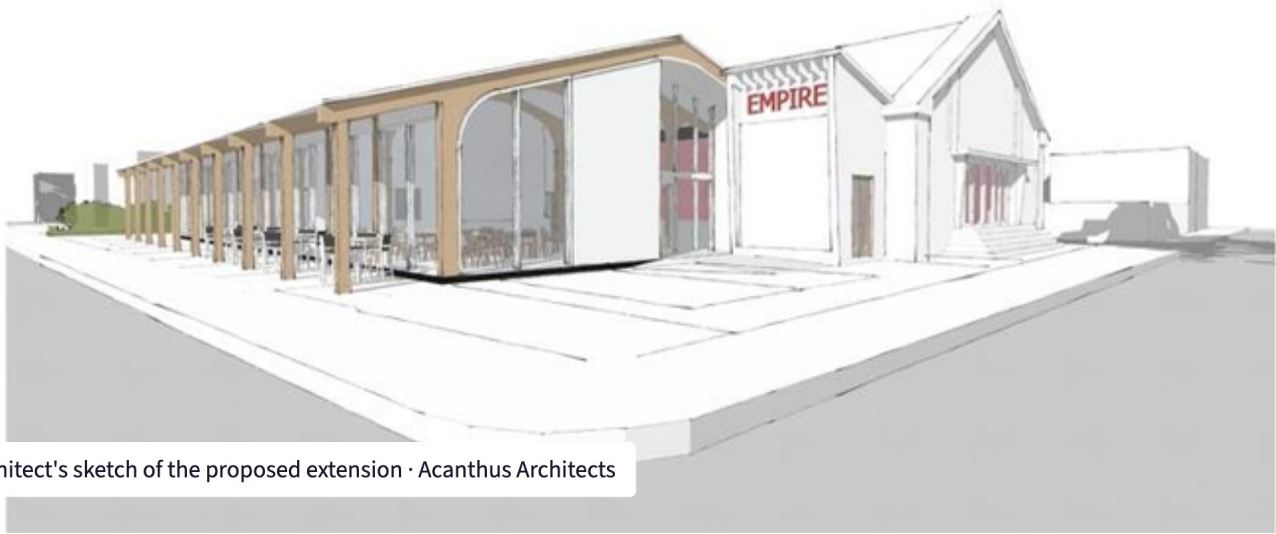


THE EMPIRE ARTS CENTRE

Community Arts Centre for Halstead and the villages



Architect's sketch of the proposed extension · Acanthus Architects

A new chapter for the Empire

For more than a century the Empire on Butler Road has brought Halstead together for films, shows and celebrations. Now we want to build on that success. Plans for a striking new extension would add a café, a welcoming foyer and flexible space for classes, clubs, rehearsals and community groups, giving the whole town a year-round home for creativity that sits alongside, and strengthens, the much-loved theatre and cinema.

£3.4m

fundraising target to build the new centre

Sept 2026

planning application submitted to Braintree District Council

1915

the year the Empire first opened its doors

Planning application submitted

In September we submitted the planning application to develop the Empire Theatre site, using designs prepared by our appointed architects, Acanthus. We now await Braintree District Council's decision.

Inside: the Empire today · the plans · our patrons · how you can help

Funding

We have applied for S106 funding (money from housing developers to support local infrastructure) and are approaching other grant funders for a combination of large and medium size grants.

ALREADY A SUCCESS

THE EMPIRE TODAY

The Empire opened in May 1915 as a purpose-built cinema and was rescued by the Halstead Empire Theatre Trust, reopening in 1978. Today it is run entirely by volunteers through the not-for-profit Empire Theatre Trust, and it is thriving.

Cinema for a fiver

Films at £5, from Saturday kids' mornings to the latest releases, now on a new digital projector funded by a £50,000 Braintree District Council grant.

Live on stage

Comedy nights, live music, theatre, cabaret and family shows, plus a free weekly bingo night.

For everyone

Dementia-friendly screenings, live-streamed ballet and West End plays, and the Dementia Friendly Choir.

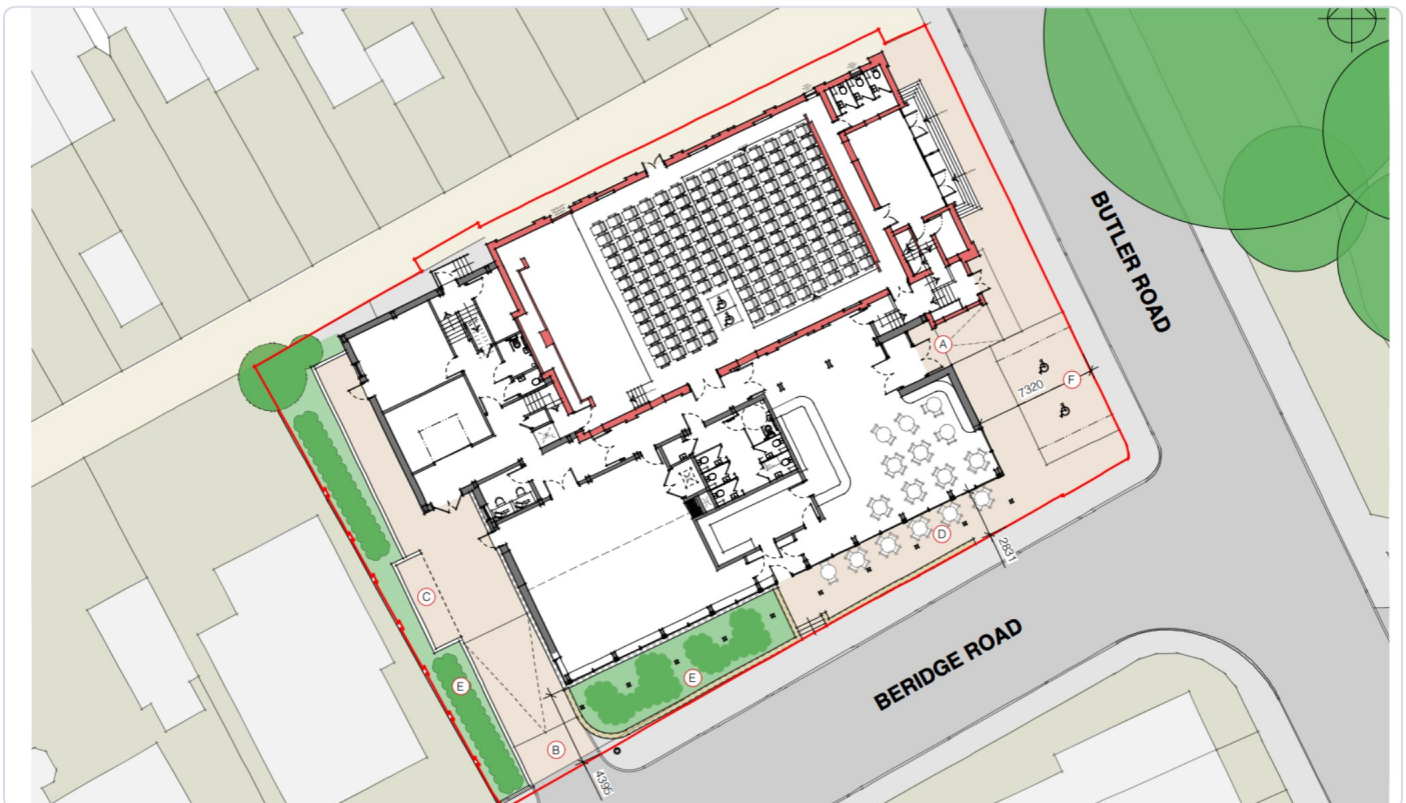
A home for groups

Performing arts classes, the Community Choir, school concerts and private hire, all powered by around 40 volunteers.

Demand is outgrowing the building. Groups across Halstead tell us they lack space to meet, rehearse and perform. The new centre will add that space while the theatre carries on doing what it does best.

THE PLANS

Ground floor plan · indicative, subject to planning



- **Existing auditorium** with its raked seating, kept at the heart of the building
- **Flexible hall and studio space** for classes, rehearsals, workshops and events
- **Accessible entrance and parking** off Butler Road
- **Glazed café-bar and foyer** on the corner, with outdoor seating on Beridge Road
- **Rooms for groups and meetings**, plus new toilets throughout
- **New planting** softening the street frontage

MEET OUR PATRONS

So many people and organisations have contacted us to offer support. Here are just a few of our patrons and what they have to say.



Sam Swainsbury

Actor

"The difference wasn't talent, it was opportunity. For some young people, it will be a place to perform. For others, it will be where they discover writing, directing, filmmaking, design, lighting, sound... a place where they feel inspired, supported and encouraged to believe that their creativity has value."



Kit Harington

Actor & Producer, Lavenham

"I fully and enthusiastically support the proposed plan for the community arts centre in Halstead. Being raised in the countryside myself, I cannot highlight enough how important hubs and centres like the one planned here meant to myself when young, and the role they played kickstarting my career in the arts."



Amy Cudden

Actor, Director & Producer · Co-founder,
Childs Road Films

"I think it's incredibly important that the region continues to invest in visual arts and to build inclusive and diverse spaces... I think it's a brilliant initiative and I will do everything I can to support it!"



Lucy Cudden

Actor & Producer, Colchester

"Halstead's proposed Community Arts Theatre could be a real home for theatre, film and community projects alike... and prove that a thriving artistic culture doesn't have to be centred on London."



Malcolm Root FGRA

Artist · lifelong Halstead resident

"With this expansion we have the opportunity to open up new projects which can satisfy the strong cultural needs of the local populace... Art has been my life and nothing would please me more than to see a Centre dedicated to the Arts in Halstead."



George Courtauld

Patron

George's family has long-standing ties with Halstead and the wider rural community. He backs the plans to develop a Community Arts Centre and is closely watching progress.

READY TO USE IT

Ramsey Academy

Wants to bring students, staff and families in for revision conferences, SEND and wellbeing forums, adult learning, clubs and seasonal community events.

Rotary Club of Halstead

Sees a much-improved home for the Dementia Choir and for the many volunteer groups that lack places to meet.

Richard de Clare Community Academy

Its choir already sings at the Empire each Christmas; more space means more chances for children to perform on stage.

Braintree Area Foodbank

Says creative activities reduce isolation and boost wellbeing, and Halstead has too few of them today.

From the stage: our burlesque and dance community

Halstead · Braintree · Colchester · Ipswich

"Every week I see people's confidence grow; they become themselves again, make friends, and get their glow back!"

Charlene (Crimson Desire), Ipswich

"A safe place to dance within, and grow in their confidence and empowerment."

Daisy La Diva, Halstead

"What an amazing venue that would be for our burlesque cabarets. Proper seating... as well as a great stage."

Denise Lee

Dancers and tutors tell us the new space would build confidence, friendship and wellbeing, and give local performers a stage close to home.

FUNDERS & BUSINESSES: JOIN US

A fast-growing town, a loyal audience built over a century, and partners ready on day one. Help us reach £3.4 million and put your name to Halstead's next landmark.

Grants & trusts

Partner with us on capital and programme funding

Business sponsorship

Back the project and reach thousands of local visitors

In-kind support

Offer trades, materials or professional expertise

Community fundraising

Get involved as an individual, club or village

**THANKS TO
FOUNDER SPONSORS**

Sainsbury's

Jackson Electrics Ltd, Halstead

jacksonelectrics.co.uk

So what's next?

1. Planning

Awaiting Braintree District Council's decision

2. Funding

£106 bid made; other grant applications under way

3. Fundraising

Look out for ways to support us, coming soon

Want to know more or get involved?

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