

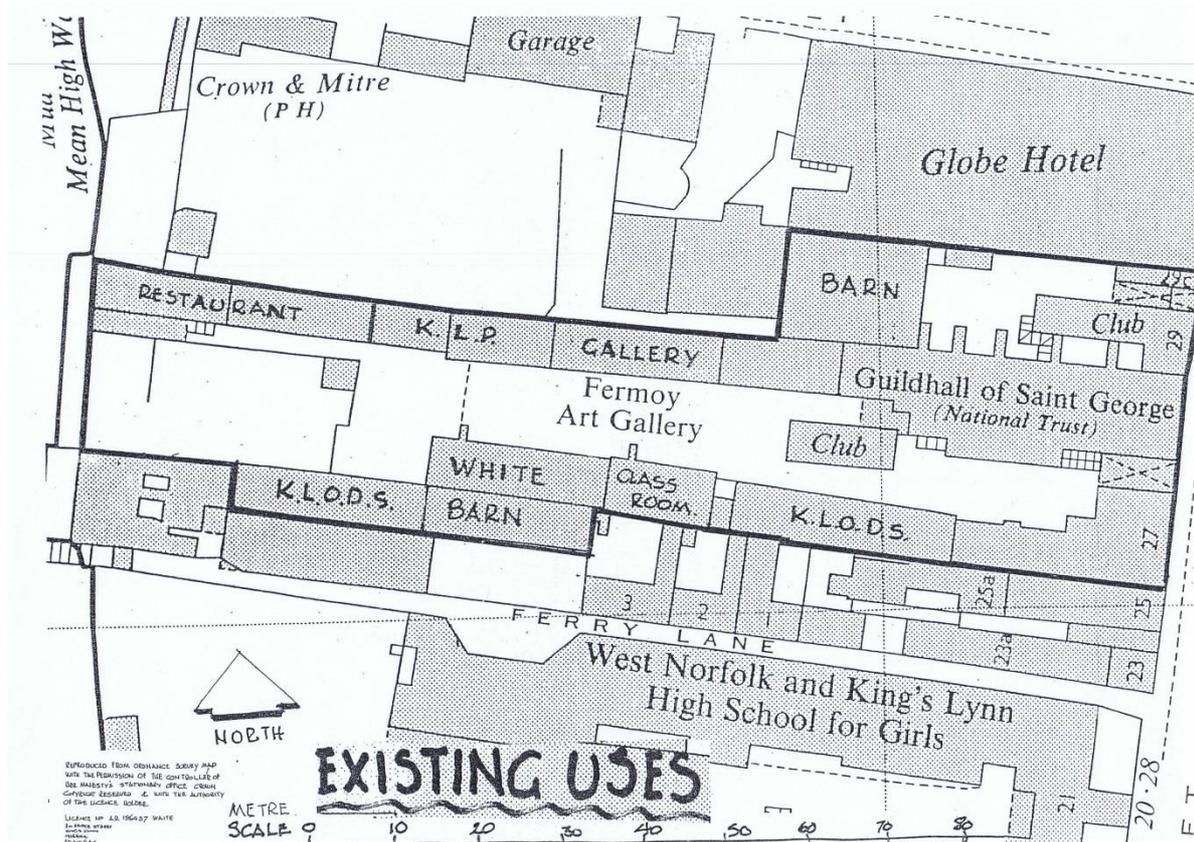
The King's Lynn

Arts Centre

An Imperative need?

- The Arts Centre facility is for community opportunity to aspire in Performance, Arts & Crafts, fit for engaging community use and also affordable, attractive, exciting and viable as is the Sports Centre
- Viability has seemingly failed again in spite of staff endeavour.
- So what is wrong?
- Are there clues and solutions ?

Desmond K. Waite MVO January 2016



NB 29 King St “Club”. is now an Insurance office and the Red Barn “Club” is used by the Art Gallery

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STATUS

Without prejudice or commitment, my comments are intended only to help.

They are flavoured by optimism but are sincere, based upon 55 years of resolving design concept and being involved with some amateur performance groups, art classes, painting setting scenery for at least ten magical shows at the Corn Exchange and Arts Centre venues, front of house duties and negotiations with local Councils in Norfolk, Charities, the Art Centre consultation groups and the King's Lynn Civic Society representations.

They are not privy to the Bor. Council intentions or Policies and therefore any suggestions/proposals/comments made, may require correction and or modification from further study and information.

- I am unaware of Bor. Council involvement, or its Policies/finance for the Centre

- My comments are ideas only, not a solution and subject to correction or modification from further study and information.

- I am very concerned about closure and hope that it can be mended.

- I have discussed nothing with Liz Falconbridge (or others) but feel that she must be part of the solution if she is willing.

- There seems to be a need to widen the scope and opportunity for uses at the Centre for it to become a magnet in the community.
- Perhaps a Champion is needed to promote interest and funds to assist viability and profitability.
- In the meantime perhaps interest might be lost for good due to closure .
- I do not have a crystal ball! It all needs a sequential approach.

THE CHALLENGE?

- How to achieve expanded uses and independence?
- Perhaps Find, fund and facilitate an Arts Aspiration Champion (not a consultant) politics free, experienced, gregarious, flexible and motivated with helpers, to lead, explore a Business Plan for viability and report.
- Build upon the existing and beneficial re-arrangement of use for spaces with positive marketing,
- Seeking a new means to ignite and promote Arts Awareness, Performance and independent profitability within Landlord obligations & expectations.
- A new name perhaps? “Arts & Crafts Aspiration Centre”? (ACAC)

- Re-Start Finance?

Comparison:- The American YMCA, sent Jack Bale over to King's Lynn in the 1960s, to orchestrate the means for a new YMCA attitude and new building. The Town Council made available some land and the tiny end room at the Arts Centre complex for his headquarters overlooking the river.

Jack Bale was charismatic, roped me in to upgrade the leaking Shakespeare Barn next door in which to run a temporary YMCA. He roped in a titled authoritative person as his Champion to seek funds/support from local business and the community, visiting many (including me) and raised promises of £30,000 locally against another £30,000 (values now perhaps £300,000 each) from London headquarters for the new building which I was commissioned to design He formed a group of Governors (I was one). The design was approved and built. Jack Bale returned to the States.

The YMCA project seemingly failed in the end perhaps due to poor location, inexperienced well-meaning governors, lack of appropriate ideas/ funding/promotion/users. It was not a success thus not self- supporting, it needed inspired grass roots leadership and better understanding of YMCA principles

IDENTIFYING CIRCUMSTANCES

- **Amateur Arts Groups** are seemingly prolific and not using the Centre.
- **The Art Gallery & Shakespeare Barn, Auditorium** may not be fully used.
- **Premises suitability is paramount** for satisfying desire for aspiration. Parking facilities are inconvenient.
- **The excellent Corn Exchange converted as a Concert Hall** is now a **theatre** rented out to survive. It has first class parking facilities.
- **The Arts Centre Auditorium as it is & as a theatre** with its own marketing brochure, suits those seeking affordable premises in the community to aspire to learn or experience performance in crafts and fill it enough to satisfy input

and endeavour from interest as a popular venue . *It has however no dedicated parking spaces and that confounds use, interest and Charity opportunities.*

- **A flat floor Auditorium conversion** will probably compromise the only suitably appropriate public venue for amateur experience in performance arts in King's Lynn. * It will compete with other flat floor venues and will injure amateur performance culture. * Flat floor opportunity already exists in the Corn Exchange, the Dukes Head and Town Hall.
- **The King's Lynn Operatic & Dramatic Society (KLODS)** had the foresight/opportunity to acquire part of the High School Buildings for its exclusive use at the heart of the Arts Centre and the Borough Council did not acquire No. 27 King Street also at the heart of the Arts Centre. *Is that to remain part of the problem?*
- **The Art Gallery with the Class Room, Red Barn and Shakspeare Barn are all used for core facilities but** occupy prime space perhaps needed in providing more facilities and to enhance the uses of the Auditorium.
- **The Riverside Restaurant is a delight** for only some, yet in its present location it is not close to the Arts scene.* It requires vehicular access thus limits use of the court yard and grassed area. * It must by now be competing with so many eating places in the town .
- **The White Barn does not contribute** to the viability of the Centre
- **Other remaining buildings** are used by the KLODS and the KL Players, intermittently but might run tutorial events for the benefit of the Centre.

POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES?

The White Barn is the only space available to diversify and create more opportunity. It seems to be used only for Council storage but it might be better used for Arts & Crafts .

a)---**The building exists**, expensive to be accessed to replace with new, so why not seek a basic upgrade and use it? **It needs a feasibility study.**

b)---Later with steel framework perhaps, help support the old structure, a potential first floor, a new roof with north light and south solar panels with new uses all seen and accessible through the fully glazed door opening.

c) ---It could be an Academy for ground and first floor expanded Art Gallery needs, encouragement for artistic/craft education groups, tutoring and performance aspiration. Meanwhile it might be used for physical pursuits.

d)---Eventually, current gallery spaces might be vacated and used to enhance the attractiveness of the Auditorium and Restaurant facilities.

e)---Finance for conversion --a project to target:- The Champion/ Bor. Council might explore for viability as a project for restoration from public/business participation, a business loan within a Business Plan and Government, Lottery and philanthropic funds to be pursued/ fought for in some way. **(as in the Sports Centre).**

St. Nicholas Chapel similarly funded for the classics is a profound experience, hopefully not to compete with the Arts Centre for its established historic uses.

Nationally, the Arts are seemingly not fully self- funding yet business enterprises (it is said) seek location in places where there are facilities for the wellbeing of employees, If pursued, they might be encouraged to be more generous in support for the facilities they seek, taking into account:-

a) --Customer car park reliant National businesses trade out of town. Some of their vast parking areas are perhaps not fully included in rates assessment on land which could have been built upon thus rateable. Some consider these vast open acres of car parking are detrimental to the approach to the town from which their proprietors seek to benefit.

b) --An imposed or voluntary commitment might mitigate (a) for distribution or just to the Arts Centre, to provide and sustain arts facilities towards a cultural path as part of a pleasant town in which to live, work and play.

c) --The Rescue of the 15th. Century Building was successfully championed by Lady Fermoy in the 1950/60s for the restoration of very tired buildings back to use for the Arts. On display is a long list of those making donations. ***There must still be a source in the affluent community for support in current times.***

FURTHER INCOME POTENTIAL?:-

Inevitably, The River Great Ouse Merchant Port which made King's Lynn wealthy, is now a ceased asset wasted. It will be bridged one day, possibly at Millfleet.

Perhaps bridging is still seen as a stupid idea at this current time, it is nevertheless good sense if it is significantly beneficial.

With River/Wash crossings it would be capable of massively sustaining wild life and its protection, preventing flooding, producing volumes of renewable energy, encourage tourism, riverside development, leisure sports, industry and the Arts nearby, open up currently remote but nearby western land for town and residential expansion, reduce traffic problems on London Road and attract financial support. It might thus be affordable and very beneficial.

With that scope it must also be an extra benefit for more people to seek the Arts education/experience to plan for and expedite.

NB County Council had bridging the river in mind in the Town Plan in the 1960s and protected a route to its likely location. In 1968 Fred White published his ideas for a Wash lake.

Donations of £60,000 have been given to charity from performances at the Arts Centre by the Lynn Academy of Dancing over 50 years. In December 2015 it staged a colourful dance extravaganza there, raising £3,500 for Cystic Fibrosis and giving opportunity for the young to aspire over the years (some reaching West End Stages) and the older to extol. The Corn Exchange to be fair, does not have the right facilities for that back stage and has too many remote seats for close family participation. Sums raised in a similar way in future by others might go to the Arts Centre as a charity for culture and benefiting young and old. *To be pursued.*

Educational Grants offered for a few are likely to have constraints thus an obstacle for others to aspire. Perhaps they might be managed differently within the profitability and function of the Arts Centre for the community as a whole. *The grant funding uses might then be catered for within the Business Plan.*

OTHER NOTIONS?;-

Using the White Barn as it is for cheap lock up craft workshops would probably not attract enough public to warrant the use of space for a few & **would inhibit its conversion.**

A converted White Barn might with Champion input, hire out some of its space for assembly rooms, art/craft tutoring, additional dressing rooms, the needs of business Employer facilities, visiting markets specialising in art, jewellery, antiques, minor arts and craft demonstration, Marshal Arts etc. and much more at the same time, (which the Shakspeare Barn cannot).

Volunteer enthusiastic vocational Craft experts might be found, to give various vocational evening, Saturday morning classes at say £15 per session per paying student, to tutor for beginner's fun in return for say £60/70 each tutorial.

Comparison:-Art classes for relaxation/fun in the 1990s.with artist Gerry Barnaby- attracted about 16 adult students in use of acrylics. At £240 income per 3 hour session per other crafts also, at say 14 days per month= £3360 (less costs) profit for each tutorial.

The Shakespeare Barn is not a welcoming space yet. It might, if vacated and perhaps in negotiation with the Riverside Restaurant, better serve as a **“Shakespeare Restaurant”** franchise if the White Barn is converted and be better accessed from the Arts Centre area and via its exclusive beneficial use of the north side courtyard with a coffee shop and coffee yard seen from the street with its lights, table canopies and marketing. The insurance premises next door might be acquired and a lift installed/funded to benefit the community and the Theatre with access for the restaurant and all users to circulate. , **to help the following:-**

- a) **The Undercroft** might, if the White Barn is converted, be assessed for renting out perhaps as a franchise, used for community or Artistic perhaps regular modern

music/performance events- perhaps noisy gigs and popular pursuits/performance for young and all. Designated toilets would help . (there seems to be space enough)

- b) **The Auditorium is already splendid** (it needs an appropriate hoist mechanism for stage scenery), and homing in on current interest of all ages marketed by the Champion.

- c) **The Red Barn with the corridor** to be an information centre, merchandise, medical need/rest room and bookings centre for the arts funded culture, National Trust etc. with strong illumination / external signage seen through all glass gates from the street. ***That would be a service to the town and might deserve subsidy and help from other outlets***

- d) **The Art gallery (when vacated)** might, when alternative location is ready, be hired for business or any meetings, education hire, parties, small banquets, weddings, dance classes etc, with access to restaurant and toilets . The Champion might use its office.

- e) **The upper outside grassed rear river backed platform and lower lawn is a magnificent spot because it overlooks the river activity with western sunsets.** Enhanced by the prestigious riverside rooms for hire—open air Theatre performances/re-enactments, weddings, birthdays, study, research, Arts Centre history lectures, Seminars with the River Great Ouse/Lake potential to exploit now and in the future as a magnet for lakeside customers and tourists perhaps with an eye catching glass building of spectacular design! – **a special project for seeking funds**

- f) **The open courtyard might become a Forum space if fitted with a glazed roof or semi- permanent canvas cover for it to be hired** for art sculpture and display/assembly or hired in tune with other Arts Centre events for fine or foul weather weddings and lectures and the arts etc. arts/antique yard sales etc.-- ***To be explored by the Champion for viability and strongly marketed/promoted/Grant aided***

Issues to plan for-- Needing Resolution:-

- a) **Grant aided Solar panels** (reluctantly!) **might benefit the Centre** if fitted to the south side roofs of rear buildings (not on the Grade 1 St. George's Guildhall)

- b) **Lack of Available parking spaces is a most difficult problem to be resolved.** Has that problem been worsened by a sense of need just to enhance the Tuesday Market Square and the nature of its architecture in advance of solutions by prematurely removing spaces needed for Theatre groups? The parking of coaches within already reduced public parking spaces during group visits and for performances at peak shopping and theatre times is also not very helpful .

The Tuesday Market Place paving is little used during evening periods. Perhaps controversially, parking spaces on it might be sold/controlled with theatre tickets to display on theatre nights. *That could play a considerable part in the solution for survival of the arts.*

- c) **The control of running the Complex by the Local Authority** might be best to be avoided but Bor. Council commitment to funding for the care of buildings to suit its obligations needed with aid potential plus a compassionate attitude to the Arts.
- d) **A Director with staff.** He/she might be the Champion, seek fund sources and have responsibility for the complex viability. **He/she will be needed.**

OPTIMISTIC OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPLORE?:-

- a) **The ACAC. Abuts a Sailing club, an Hotel, a pub and the river.** As a group they might in time, benefit in sharing the opportunities arising from a future lakeside proximity when linked to the Corn Exchange Concert Hall and Tuesday Market Place for pageants on occasions & the St. Nicholas Venue. A chance for lake Ferry owners or others to run a boat trip and access to a temporary pontoon or pier-like access to pass the flood protection walls if they are still needed, at the riverside --perhaps a lakeside social excursion package using the Arts Complex & adjacent/nearby facilities --*perhaps realistic later.*
- b) **The infrastructure around the Tuesday Market Place needs a solution** in due course for town cohesion with all Arts venues and for mass assembly of leisure activities in the Complex (even just for the Arts) especially at peak times. The County might agree to help with this if shown to be justified by:-

- c) **The currently narrow incoming route** (14' 6" wide) "one way" with a negotiated exit route "one way" around behind the north side buildings via Page Stair Lane and out in the gap facing (and focusing on) St. Nicholas Chapel, as a "roundabout" giving access to development land and multi storey car parking perhaps and not far from St Nicholas, Trues Yard and Council Offices. ***Overdue now.***

- d) **Promoting the Arts Complex, with varied facilities is paramount.** Selling advertising spaces enhanced with innovation in the Red Barn and Corridor. * The front glazed cabinet display might blazon the activities more. *An externally lit better hanging sign & a fascia sign over new glazed entrance gates on the fascia boarding "ARTS & CRAFTS ASPIRATION CENTRE" * A symbol on a flag on an angled flag pole & the pole used for supporting flood lighting the gable façade. * A banner across the street for events. Using the Internet, Twitter, Facebook, web site & advertising locally & more.

- e) **Absence of Street side Car Parking is a distinct disadvantage** for using the premises. An on site electric transporter as in airports, or perhaps two, might be sponsored/required for handicapped use, perhaps grant aided for handling goods and people/ performers delivered to the frontage with:-

Time limited parking west side of King Street for offloading theatre props, performers with gear, art gallery and other goods, event organisers and hotel arrivals. It partly happens anyway but is dangerous in competing with bollards and opposite parking.

SUMMARY OF IDEAS FOR THE CHALLENGES BEING FACED

- **A dedicated, dynamically resourceful pied piper like Champion to be Appointed to make contacts and a Business Plan** for the viability of the centre.

- **The means to ignite and promote viability** might be upgrading the White Barn for beneficial use, creating a general forum area in the court yard and reassessment of uses of the buildings in the complex for arts/craft opportunities for local people, encouraged but not run by the compassionate Landlord willing to contribute towards the cost of the Champion and any events/uses for the community.

- **Rename the complex “ARTS & CRAFTS ASPIRATION CENTRE” (ACAC)** to impart a new fresh exciting meaning and affordable presence for all levels of need, to entice use from creating but not imposing opportunities for the benefit of the ACAC.
- **Rearrangement within the complex** to facilitate ACAC, with the White Barn conversion for multi- use, to aid relocation and the expansion of the Art Gallery and major tutorial opportunities making way for a relocated restaurant with a lift, **drawing people into the complex.** The Auditorium tiered seating to remain

Customer numbers to be pursued from:-

- a) Having faith in slowly emerging numbers resultant upon the initiatives of the Champion.
- b) Plan for The nationally acknowledged, imminent and significant increase in population thus growth in industry, trade, and leisure needs to be pursued .
- c) Long term planning for benefits in bridging the River Great Ouse/Wash to resist all flooding risks thus creating access for more people and lakeside opportunities for town and lakeside prosperity, maximising the assembly of leisure uses near and around the Tuesday Market Place with a north side roundabout solution to infrastructure circulation and parking , perhaps some theatre parking in Tuesday Market Place on the new paving or a multi storey Car park.
- d) **Finance may only come from success and forward planning** but that success will depend upon an appropriate Champion, allowing him/her freedom to create and lead exciting features and to explore within guidelines, mustering/enabling finance, events from commerce, trade and industry, public and Lottery, Government, Philanthropic sources, **a viable/activated Business Plan and really strong promotion.**

POTENTIAL CRITICAL PATHS

PRIMARY TO IMPLEMENT ASAP

A charismatic Champion, funded by endeavour input and Bor. Council help.

A new Master/Business Plan for viability.

Set aside the present regime where possible to allow improvements.

A new name.

White Barn conversion .

Re-arrangement of uses and innovation for all spaces for profitable lettings.

Shakespeare Barn Restaurant with lift, linked to the Auditorium and all facilities.

Parking solutions.

Promotion and new enthusiastic attitudes.

Seeking National/Philanthropic/community/ Bor. Council financial support.

TO PLAN FOR:-

Tuesday Market Place parking and circulation improvement

Long term planning for lake side opportunities/benefits.

Desmond K. Waite MVO

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