



REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

PORTFOLIO AREA: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Date of Meeting: 17 DECEMBER 2007

Public

Key Decision: No

Recorded in Forward Plan:

No

Inside Policy Framework

Title: THEATRE/PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE - LONSDALE
BUILDING

Report of: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

Report reference: CS 88/07

Summary:

This report provides an update on the position regarding the Theatre/Performing Arts Centre, particularly in relation to the former Lonsdale Cinema building.

Recommendations:

It is RECOMMENDED that:-

1. The Executive notes the conclusions of the consultants' report
2. This report be referred to the Community O/S Committee to consider at its meeting on 17 January 2008 at which the consultants will attend and present their findings

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Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: None

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1.1 The issue of the Theatre/Performing Arts Centre and in particular the potential to utilise the Lonsdale for this facility was discussed at the Council meeting on 28 June 2007. This report provides an update on the issues related to the motion (C127/07) from that meeting:-

“The Council notes the outcome of the Theatre/Art Centre Feasibility Study, with its main recommendation being for a new build at an estimated cost of £21 million and the recent decision by the Secretary of State to list the Lonsdale building.

In light of these developments without prejudice to any legal implications arising from them, this Council requests the Executive to:

- (a) provide support and assistance to the Save the Lonsdale Group as it considers appropriate to facilitate the use of the Lonsdale Building as an Independent Cinema;
- (b) assess the potential to establish a Theatre/Art Centre and associated facilities in the Warwick Road/Mary Street area as part of a mixed use development”.

- 1.2 In responding to this motion an essential first step was to gain access to the Lonsdale Building to determine its suitability for use as a Theatre/Arts Centre. Following a period of discussion between the Chief Executive and the owner of the Lonsdale it has been possible to gain access to the building to enable DCA Ltd, the consultants appointed by the Council to fully assess this option. A copy of their subsequent report is included as Appendix A. Officers have also completed an exercise to reference land and property interests in the surrounding Warwick Road/Mary Street area.

- 1.3 Before looking at the outcomes from this report it is worth re-capping on the focus of the work undertaken by consultants regarding the Theatre/Performing Arts Centre. The background work undertaken initially by Roger Lancaster Associates included consultation with interest groups, potential local, regional and national users of such a facility and potential audience/user ranges for each component. This was then used to size the space requirements for each of those uses, together with ancillary aspects to support the business. The outcomes from this were then tested against a range of locations and this has now been extended to the Lonsdale once access was achieved. It is also important to emphasise that the outcomes of the earlier work identified that the Arts centre components were as, if not more, important than

the theatre space, particularly in helping to generate income from ancillary elements which are an integral part of these facilities. This work built a model to provide a sustainable and top class facility for Carlisle meeting the aspirations of those consulted during earlier studies, anything less would sell the City short.

- 1.4 The consultant's report on the suitability of the Lonsdale is appended and the consultant's key findings are based on the model evolved through earlier work.

The consultants main findings are set out in a summary to the report but the key issues they identify with the Lonsdale are:-

- not all the desirable uses can be accommodated in the Lonsdale building i.e. larger secondary studies, good quality education and multi purpose spaces and the layout/potential configuration and form of spaces would be less than ideal from the needs defined by the arts community
- the main auditorium would be a 'theatre in the round' which has significant implications on the events that could be programmed, although this layout has successfully formed the basis for other theatre only venues
- the current 'listing' would provide difficulties for any adaptation
- the capital costs in converting the building to meet the scaled down provision would be 'close to equivalent to the costs of a new build theatre and arts centre' (based on indicative areas this would be in the region of £12-18m excluding any building acquisition costs)
- the revised business case identifies the need for an increased revenue subsidy to around £530,000 with some concerns about future maintenance and energy costs

- 1.5 Based on the information provided by the consultants it would appear that the whole range of uses in the facility required by Carlisle, based on all the background work, can not be located in the Lonsdale Building. A 'scaled down' model could use the building but still at a significant capital cost and with major concerns about the viability and sustainability of the business case. The current financial capacity of the Council is such that it would not be possible for the Council to directly deliver and support a project of this scale, as was the case for the new build proposal which DCA have previously suggested. An important issue for the Council to balance is that if it wishes to pursue a facility which meets all the identified needs or one which achieves only some of those. The City is likely to only have one chance to achieve such a facility in the foreseeable future, through Carlisle Renaissance.

- 1.6 In accordance with the Council motion there has been a meeting with each of the main interest groups and regular dialogue with representatives of the 'Save the Lonsdale' group. If it is impractical to incorporate all the identified elements of a theatre/PA centre it is important to assess what uses could be undertaken within the building. It is understood that the Save the Lonsdale Group are considering options but as yet no detailed, costed proposals have emerged.
- 1.7 In discussions with the owners of the Lonsdale it has been clarified that they have applied to the Department of Culture, Media & Sport/English Heritage to remove the recent 'listing' of the building. This is currently being assessed but it could be up to 6 months before the outcome is known.

2. OPTIONS FOR PROGRESS

- 2.1 As outlined in an earlier report there is an identified need for a Theatre/Performing Arts Centre in Carlisle but the City Council does not have the financial capacity to directly progress the project development with the potential for grant funding currently limited for such facilities on their own.
- 2.2 The most likely means of delivering such an ambitious project would be as part of a comprehensive masterplanning/redevelopment programme, i.e. included as part of the development brief for the site. The proposals for Rickergate provide an opportunity for this where it may be viable through other uses within that development. A similar assessment could be undertaken for the area at the top of Warwick Road, including the Lonsdale. However attention is drawn to the consultants summary of main findings which identifies problems with locating the main auditorium in the Lonsdale building. One of the key conclusions from the study is: "Although other sites may become available, the weaknesses in any proposal to convert the Lonsdale cannot be readily addressed by the acquisition of further adjacent sites as the key problem with the proposal is the difficulty in inserting any appropriate new auditorium in the main space of the Lonsdale itself."

The basis of the previous Consultants recommendation was based in part on opportunity for cross subsidy due to scale of development proposed for Rickergate. These conditions do not apply to Warwick Road area, less value etc even before the consultants views are taken into account regarding difficulties in locating the main auditorium in the main space of the Lonsdale – so a masterplan would need to be based on new-build within a constrained area with little room left for valuable other uses to cross subsidise.

- 2.3 Should development interest arise in this area then the Council should respond positively on the principles set out within the Carlisle Renaissance Development Framework.

3. CONSULTATION

- 3.1 Consultation to Date - through the preparation of feasibility studies to date.
- 3.2 Consultation proposed - Community O/S Committee.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is RECOMMENDED that:-

1. The Executive notes the conclusions of the consultants' report
2. This report be referred to the Community O/S Committee to consider at its meeting on 17 January 2008 at which the consultants will attend and present their findings

5. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are based on the findings of a report undertaken by consultants commissioned by the Council.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- Staffing/Resources – None at this stage.
- Financial – As stated within the report, any scheme for a Theatre/Performing Arts Centre (whether a conversion or new build) would require significant capital and revenue investment. There is no provision in the capital programme for a theatre, and any such provision (including revenue implications) would need to be considered in the light of other priorities for the Council. If the scheme proceeds, a full business case would need to be prepared which would include addressing the scope for generating external funding.
- Legal – The Council has the power under the Local Government Act 1972 to acquire land and is able to expend money for the economic, environmental or social well-being of its area in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000. In carrying out its functions the Council must be cognisant of its fiduciary duties to local tax payers and act accordingly. Any expenditure of public funds should be fully considered and prudent.

- Corporate – The needs and benefits of a Theatre/Performing Arts Centre have been recognised and incorporated within the Carlisle Renaissance Development Framework. There may be only one opportunity for this facility and it is important for Carlisle that a sustainable facility is delivered.
- Risk Management – At this stage the key issue is the deliverability of a Theatre/Performing Arts Centre which has a sustainable business plan.
- Equality and Disability – Would be encompassed within the design of any facility.
- Environmental – Would be encompassed within the design of any facility
- Crime and Disorder – Would be encompassed within the design of any facility
- Impact on Customers – There is an identified need for a Theatre/Performing Arts Centre in Carlisle.



DCA with Keith Williams Architects

Carlisle Theatre/Arts Centre

Appraisal of the Lonsdale Cinema

September 2007

Carlisle Theatre and Arts Centre

Potential for redevelopment of the Lonsdale Cinema

Summary

This report summarises the findings of a short study to explore the potential of the former Lonsdale Cinema in Carlisle to meet the needs for new arts facilities set out in the report of the Carlisle Theatre/Arts Centre Feasibility Study published in April 2007.

This study sets out a brief description of the Lonsdale, explores how best, within the constraints of the building and its listing, it might be developed to provide new arts facilities and compares the resulting scheme with the template established in the feasibility study.

The main findings are as follows:

1. Although the Lonsdale has a loyal following in the City, it was built quickly and with poor materials on an infill site. The building is in moderate to poor repair and considerable work would be needed to bring it back to use.
2. It is possible to develop a scheme in which some of the main elements of the arts centre proposal could be accommodated within the envelope of the existing building, but there would be significant omissions of important spaces such as the larger second studio space.
3. Other spaces would have to be realised in quite different formats than those specified in response to express needs of the arts community.
4. The main among these would be that the main auditorium could only be realised as a theatre-in-the-round freestanding auditorium drum (the "Royal Exchange Manchester" model). This would have very significant implications for programme as no proscenium arch, rock music or cinema events could be hosted.
5. Other spaces would be compromised by location in the building and form - for instance the gallery, studio and backstage facilities.
6. Education and participation uses in particular would be prejudiced by the difficulty in providing good quality education and multi-purpose spaces.
7. This scheme has been developed as the best response to the space and to the constraints of the recent listing. However, we believe that there would be a significant chance of the scheme experiencing difficulty in listed building consent, involving the demolition of the existing balcony as an essential to any proposal to create an auditorium.
8. We would have concerns over the ability of the building to generate large attendances and to support a high volume catering operation given the lack of a significant street frontage and the difficulty of making visible to the public what goes on in the depth of the building.
9. The financial implications of these compromises would be to substantially increase the funding required to operate the building, perhaps by some £160,000 per annum net of savings.
10. To this added funding we would recommend that the Council set aside increased annual commitments to life-cycle costs arising out of the cost of maintenance and of poorer environmental performance.

11. Setting aside the issue of acquisition costs, the realisation of the scheme would be likely to cost a sum per metre equivalent to that for a new build centre.
12. Whilst there exists the potential to restore the original c1,800 seat auditorium, we do not believe that this would address the requirements for new arts facilities in the city that are identified in the Feasibility study. Neither do we believe that there is likely to be a commercial interest in running this space for rock/pop, cinema or other cultural activity.
13. Although other sites may become available, the weaknesses in any proposal to convert the Lonsdale cannot be readily addressed by the acquisition of further adjacent sites as the key problem with the proposal is the difficulty in inserting any appropriate new auditorium in the main space of the Lonsdale itself.

DCA/KWA
September 2007

DCA with Keith Williams Architects

Carlisle Theatre and Arts Centre

Potential for redevelopment of the Lonsdale Cinema

1. Scope for supplementary study

Carlisle City Council has commissioned DCA/KWA to undertake two supplementary studies on sites originally proposed for the potential location of the arts centre, and which were not highly scored in the analysis we conducted in Spring 2007.

These are the former Lonsdale Cinema, Warwick Road and the Methodist Central Hall in Fisher Street.

These two sites have previously commanded some support as locations for the development and the purpose of these studies will be to ensure that:

- The City understands whether the Arts Centre as proposed could be delivered on these sites and, in outline, what could be developed to contribute to the fulfilment of arts needs on each site.
- The City understands the implications of any decision to proceed with a development on either of these sites.

We have made initial analysis of the two sites on the basis of material made available to us. In these supplementary studies we will:

- Review the size and layout of the sites
- Set out the planning context - listing, restrictions on development, changes of use and other factors constraining what might be delivered
- Establish the constraints imposed by the nature and layout of the buildings on the sites, and their potential for clearance or alteration
- Establish, from these factors what arts facility might be realised in each location
- Comment, on information available to us, on the likelihood of successful development on each site in terms of acquisition, planning, construction, cost, funding and timetable.

This report contains our findings for one of these sites, the Former Lonsdale Cinema Warwick Road.

DCA with Keith Williams Architects

Carlisle Theatre and Arts Centre

Potential for redevelopment of the Lonsdale Cinema

2 Size and layout

The former Lonsdale Cinema, now closed and in a dilapidated state, has been subjected to a series of alterations carried out over time with little reference to the building's design style or materials.

This is a venue that has undergone a significant remodeling over time and reflects the changes in public taste which occurred in the seventy plus years since its completion, including use as a dance hall, bingo hall, concert venue - whilst of course still continuing to offer something for the city's cinema goers until its complete closure in recent years.

As a result of these activities the Lonsdale holds a place in public affection with Carlisle residents for, as the then Culture Minister David Lammy said in the rationale for recent listing of the building:

'I understand that the Lonsdale Cinema holds an important place in many people's hearts and many people were disappointed when it was not listed last year. At the time, the advice from English Heritage was that the building has been altered to such an extent that the original design and sense of space have been compromised. But we have since received more information which confirms that the original features have survived under lightweight cladding. For this reason, I am happy to confirm that the Cinema will now be listed at Grade II.'

The building currently consists of two main volumes accessed by different doorways opening off the main entrance from Warwick Road. The ex-bingo hall is located on the ground floor, with access gained from the right hand entrance of the complex through a long entrance foyer and the auditorium accessed in turn at right angles from this area.

There is very little backstage space, as befits its original cinema function with the screen located against the east wall. The north, west and south walls are in effect exterior walls containing a number of fire exits which give onto Cecil Street, Mary Street and the yard between the building. Toilets, plant rooms, some office and catering/bar spaces open off the western edge of the main auditorium.

The main auditorium floor has a slight, barely perceptible, rake to it. Originally the cinema auditorium space would have risen uninterrupted through the ground and first floor. However the partitioning of the cinema involved inserting a new floor at balcony level. This has resulted in the ground floor space feeling rather claustrophobic with a low ceiling and dominated by the bulky presence of the underside of the balcony.

At first floor level the auditorium space has been divided into two separate spaces to create further cinema screens. These spaces are flanked by fire exit corridors which exit down stairs onto Cecil Street and Mary Street.

The upper spaces are accessed by a long corridor, running parallel to the bingo hall's foyer then up via a staircase into a corridor, with entrances from it giving onto the cinemas. This area provides an anteroom, originally what must have been a cinema bar, with toilets and offices to one side and access to the two separate auditorium spaces on the other.

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Carlisle Theatre and Arts Centre

Potential for redevelopment of the Lonsdale Cinema

3. The planning context

The main constraints on development as a theatre and arts centre are the form and condition of the building and its recent listing. We return to the form and condition of the building in the next section. The letter outlining the reasons for the buildings listing contains the following statement:

‘the Secretary of State accepts that the alterations have meant that the original sense of space of the building is not currently palpable. However she considers that it is appropriate to consider the reversibility of those alterations, as the more reversible the alterations the less impact they could be said to have on the surviving fabric and the less the loss of the sense of space could be said to compromise the special interest of the building. She considers that it is appropriate to consider whether, if the sense of space has been lost, it has been permanently lost or whether it could be regained, bearing in mind that limited, lightweight alterations can result in the temporary loss of a sense of space. With regards to this building she accepts the evidence, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, that the alterations have led to the loss of sense of space are not substantive enough to mean that this is irrecoverable’.

This seems to indicate that any redevelopment should seek to stay true to the buildings existing spaces and volumes and that any major remodelling of the building internally would be problematic.

Reasons for the designation are given as follows:

- “The survival of high quality stained glass in the foyer is particularly notable in the national importance.
- Alterations notwithstanding, the façade screen is a good classical design with characteristic Art Deco detailing.
- Despite partition and alteration a substantial amount of good quality detailing remains in situ.
- The cinemas was the largest in the region and constitutes one of the principal mid-c20th survivals in Carlisle”.

DCA and KWA were able to gain access to the building which allowed for limited opportunities to view some of the features which we believe are pertinent to its listed status. Although this was a difficult task due to the presence of extensive cladding of the current buildings spaces, these features include:

- The ‘moderne style’ entrance exterior façade on Warwick Road.
- The moulded frieze-work running round the upper level of the auditorium space, though this has been damaged by some of the remodeling work undertaken in previous eras.
- The form of the ‘proscenium arch’ of the cinema
- A rising sun stained glass window above the main entrance, which features scenes of Carlisle Castle, which seems in reasonable state.

- A number of jazz age mouldings and other period features within the main foyer area.

Any new scheme for the use of the current Lonsdale building for arts activity would need to make a reasoned response to the fundamental point about the reinstatement of the original sense of space of the building, and to its effect on these individual items thought worthy of merit in the listing.

DCA with Keith Williams Architects

Carlisle Theatre and Arts Centre

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4. Redeveloping the Lonsdale for arts centre use

In order to assess how far the Lonsdale could be a solution to the arts needs identified over the previous stages of the project, first by Roger Lancaster Associates and then by ourselves, we have sought to identify the most advantageous scheme for redevelopment that can be achieved within the form of the building, taking into account the constraints imposed by the listing.

The following scheme outlines the facilities which could be provided on the Lonsdale site and how this corresponds to, and significantly differs from, the specification for Carlisle's proposed theatre and arts centre.

This scheme was developed out of discussions about a range of other approaches and the reasons for not pursuing them may be worth touching on here. The listing of the building emphasises the imperative to reinstate the original 'sense of space' of the large volumes of the building. It might be argued that this could be done by reinstating the original auditorium, with its original large capacity. Accessibility and rules of emergency egress would be likely to limit this somewhat, but it might still accommodate 1,500 - 1,800 people in a combination of standing and seated formats.

This auditorium size and form really only works for the presentation of cinema and rock music. The lack of any backstage, stage depth, flying and pit means that it will meet few theatrical requirements - and at this scale and capacity, the space would be inappropriate for all but the largest theatrical presentations in any case.

In its original form, the main auditorium monopolised the building volume - there are only the smallest secondary spaces and with this auditorium retained, none of the education, arts development, arts practice and exhibition functions demanded by respondents to our original research could be met. Trading opportunities would be strictly limited as there is no significant space outside the auditorium for bars, cafes or the hire of spaces for conferences and meetings.

It is unclear where demand and finance for events in the main house would come from. It is possible that the building could host rock and pop gigs once again, for which the usual cut off in capacity is at about 1700 to attract bands with significant earning potential. It seems to us unlikely, however, that there is a sufficient economy without the essential trading spaces (bars in particular) to persuade an investor to make the significant capital investment that this would require.

Equally, it would be possible to see the building returned to use as a single screen cinema, but this would run contrary to the logic of cinema operation in the UK now - where the trend remains toward more and smaller cinemas. In our view none of the commercial chains will wish to make an investment in a large-scale single screen project. Even in a split-screen format, the Lonsdale is unlikely to appeal -

when cinema companies can make inexpensive new cinemas in locations where car-parking and co-location with food and drink and retail offers are possible.

Finally, there are some examples of large single auditorium cinemas being developed by the private sector as conference/banquet facilities (for instance the former Odeon, now Athena, in Rutland St in Leicester (www.athenacb.co.uk) but these are exclusively private sector developments and do not meet the arts and theatre needs reported in the studies by Roger Lancaster Associates and ourselves.

In light of this analysis, we have attempted to develop, for testing, a scheme that does meet at least some of the needs and possibilities set out previously. The scheme is illustrated in the attached drawings and provides the following:

4.1 Entrance foyer

This proposal re-instates the full width entrance foyer on the ground floor area, so preserving the foyer's detailing - including the stained glass window above the main entrance.

This area would serve as a reception/box office area signaling to the passing public, as far as possible through the rather narrow and limited street frontage onto Warwick Road, activity and a sense of the facilities available in the building. This area could possibly accommodate a small shop area - with display cabinets/stands but not a dedicated, separate retail area.

4.2 Café/Front-of-house spaces

The foyer leads through to a large public space capable of containing the main body of the auditorium - a freestanding self-contained theatre-in-the-round style performing arts space - encircled by an interior 'court' space. The latter would act as circulation space allowing access to all areas of the building and easily accommodate the centre's café - crucial in operational, revenue and visitor terms for the future sustainability of the centre.

This area is produced by the removal of the existing balcony, perhaps the major construction task within this proposal and one which it is difficult to assess the response from English Heritage which while it would result in the bulk of the building being 'saved' would also mean the loss of this significant feature which gives the building much of its sense of space.

The catering and kitchen spaces servicing this area would open directly off it, as would the cloakroom and WCs, which would provide accessible and plentiful toilets - including disabled toilets, first-aid space and baby changing facilities. There would also be adequate provision for catering, cleaning and catering staff as well as storage for all the materials associated with these services in this area.

This space could be welcoming to children and capable of dealing with school visit participants arriving and being organised throughout the day.

Locating the main bar/café areas in this area would mean that they would be central to the building. The main café/bar area should be attractive and inviting in aspect, with areas for social interaction - these issues could probably be resolved satisfactorily with the creation of the inner court area.

The foyer area also provides access to the balcony seating to the main auditorium on the first floor as well as providing a balcony bar and a suite of offices for centre staff.

4.3 Main auditorium

The Arts Centre specification sets out two alternative scales of development typified by the difference in capacity between the main auditorium - 500 in the larger and 400 in the smaller.

Here the capacities envisaged can be achieved, but there is a fundamental issue over the form of the auditorium.

The pentagonal shape of this space is formed by five banks of raked, retractable, bleacher seating on the ground floor with balcony seating to three sides. Therefore the largest space in the proposed Lonsdale centre would be capable of seating an audience of 550 with five banks of seating each accommodating 75 people on the ground floor or stalls area (a total of 375) and a further 275 in three banks of seating on the balcony/circle area.

Audiences would be seated in comfort and with uninterrupted sight-lines within the pentagonal theatre space indicated. Although this would provide a space with a flat floor it would not be one that was large and uninterrupted as demanded by the original report.

Nor would it provide the most flexible, multi-purpose space required - the performance area extending to some 65 sqm rather than the minimum requirement of 100 sqm. This would preclude use by some of those artforms or performers who require a significant stage/performance area - such as dance, theatre/musical theatre and choral works.

In particular it does not make for adaptation to allow 'a formal proscenium arch staging'. Importantly some performers and audiences prefer the more traditional theatre experience and some solo performers such as comedians or the individual celebrity appearance events as well as the amateur sector might be daunted by this configuration.

This configuration reduces the options for staging work significantly and could result in it being effectively off limits to a number of the more traditional touring productions who would require a proscenium arch venue, with the stage area being severely restricted and no option for 'flying', no understage and no orchestra pit.

The mix of programming suggested in the report would be compromised, with significant portions of that programme not being deliverable within the arts centre. There are a number of innovative companies working in a more site-specific way who could respond to the space in this configuration but they are limited in number and perhaps also audience appeal.

The overall area of the theatre-in-the-round space extends to some 130 sqm. Whilst the ground floor seating would be retractable and offer the opportunity for flat floor performances it would not accommodate the significant audience numbers for required for larger music events, even using the balcony seating.

In this configuration perhaps a total of 200 people could reasonably be expected to stand on the ground floor with 275 seated on the balcony, giving a total of 475 in an odd combination for rock and pop gigs (where you would expect all or at least the majority of the audience to stand. This is some way short of the need for 'a standing only venue, for instance for rock gigs, we would expect the space, dependent on entry/exit arrangements and fire evacuation, to have, a capacity of least 600' that was suggested by the report. In any format, the difficulty in making a convincing end-stage for gigs subsists.

This format would work reasonably effectively for conference and larger meeting presentations provided that one bank of seats was removed to make a staged area and participants did not demand a more traditional 'theatre style' format. It would provide a continuous flat floor auditorium required for participative activities, banquet formats, stalls, trade and other exhibitions and standing events.

The pattern of programming within the main auditorium would be significantly altered from that asset out in the initial report and we would be concerned that the revenue from a number of activities such as music gigs would be severely constrained.

4.4 Cinema

This configuration does not make for easy adaptation for cinematic use as it is difficult to accommodate a screen within the pentagonal format of the main auditorium. For unlike some theatrical presentations cinema cannot be presented in the round but requires a flat screen.

Cinema audiences expect to sit face on to a screen at the end of space and this will not be possible in this format - except perhaps on one block of 75 seats in the stalls and one block in the balcony.

We suggest that cinema would not be programmed in the venue given the auditorium format.

4.5 The Studio

A second space, called the 'studio' was key to the initial theatre and arts centre proposal - responding to needs for participation and learning space and freeing up the main auditorium to allow a mix of larger programmes and hires for conferencing to drive trading income.

This is not possible within the Lonsdale - where the largest space possible would be a rehearsal space in the eastern wing of the building.

There are issues of functionality relating to this space in this location - it does not readily suggest use as the second space, not least because it could not serve its audience effectively. This space - an irregular rhomboid shape - situated on the second floor extends to some 200sqm is almost 70sqm less than required by the larger option in our report. This impacts on all performances across its programme, reducing its capacity to accommodate audience numbers substantially.

In this form this space could function as a rehearsal space but it would not be possible to present work in this space to an audience at this scale. Therefore one would have to question whether it would function effectively as 'an auditorium for

smaller work and as the primary rehearsal, participation and recording space'. And for these reasons it does not make for 'a useful, complementary multi-purpose production and presentation space for dance and music as well as for theatre not presented in the main auditorium.

Again these are significant reductions in flexibility and earning potential and would result in significant drop in the global audience volumes taken across the year. Again as per the comments above in relation to the main auditorium would have an impact on the takings from this space. Income from this space would be likely to reduced from over £172,000 per annum to less than £100,000 per annum. The loss in income of more than £70,000 income per annum, which would not be balanced by a significant savings in operating costs.

4.6 Gallery

Having a well-equipped gallery space is one key function of a successful arts centre. This space should also be capable of providing a venue for talks and presentations in different formats by visiting artists, teachers and schools groups amongst others.

The gallery should be in a prominent and open, visible location and designed to ensure maximum footfall from both those intending to visit and the casual visitor.

The only possible location for a gallery in this option for development is to site the exhibition space on top of the auditorium drum.

This could also be a breakout area for conference goers and other social functions. However this exhibition space will not be visible from the staffed ground floor of the building and is likely to suffer from a lack of visibility generally. Whilst useful, it is not likely to fulfill the brief for visual arts discussed in the brief in our last report, to provide: 'a highly specified gallery space of at least 120sqm' which should be capable of accommodating touring exhibitions across all the visual arts with appropriate environmental control, lighting and AV equipment.'

Whilst the gallery does not of itself generate a great deal of income, being free to visitors it is an important factor in attracting attenders and activities around to the centre such as gallery talks, workshops and projects.

4.7 Education Spaces and meeting rooms

Our original report states that: 'it is essential that there are flexible, interlocking spaces that can be used for education and other purposes. These should be at least two spaces that meet or exceed the recommended specification for classrooms. Provision should be made for both visual arts and performing arts workshops with dedicated clean and dirty workshop spaces supporting formal and informal teaching'.

There are currently a dearth of such spaces within the city and one of the main reasons for the creation of the arts centre would be education, outreach and access programmes. The need to embed inclusion and participation in arts and cultural activities for both residents and visitors in the arts centre's activities is central to its ethos.

Whilst having less impact on the revenue planning for the arts centre, not having the capacity to deliver these crucial aspects of the programme would severely hamper delivery of the arts centre's objectives around social inclusion, creativity and audience development. In social impact terms this is an important consideration, particularly for a local authority concerned with raising the expectations for, and increasing the opportunities of, its inhabitants of all ages.

4.8 Backstage, office and technical areas

This proposal makes for a limited amount of backstage space on the ground floor, with technical support/workshop and plant areas. The storage space required by a building of this sort is severely limited which could prove problematic for the arts centre, whose primary activities require regular get in and storage of equipment - it is particularly important as there should be good storage of items in transit, equipment, crates and materials. Given that there would be no scenery flying in the auditorium and that the gallery is much less prominent, this may be survivable, but this reinforces the sense of limitation on the range and quantity of programme that could be staged.

4.9 Summary

In the attached schedule we set alongside the original specification for the Theatre and Arts Centre accepted by the steering group for the project the potential of the Lonsdale, as explored by the scheme set out here, to meet requirements.

Across the specification, there are both omissions - spaces that cannot be delivered in the Lonsdale, and very significant alterations to the nature of spaces and consequently the programmes they can deliver.

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5. Other considerations

5.1 Location and Access

The location of any arts centre forms an important aspect of its operation. Generally, successful arts centres in urban areas tend to be located in prominent public spaces or sites at key junctions, an indication of their civic function - a place where important communal and cultural activity occurs. They also tend to be centrally located in order to benefit from the traffic passing through a city's main thoroughfares, in order to generate and sustain significant visitor numbers.

The Lonsdale is located within a densely built up area to the west and south of the city centre. It is located on Warwick Road, one of the city's main arterial roads - the A69 to Newcastle. Indeed it lies close to - but not directly on - the junction of Warwick Road and the city's main north/south axis which runs from Botchergate past the citadel/station area onto the market square and beyond.

The Lonsdale is within close walking distance of the city's mainline station and is easily accessed by car. There is significant on street parking in the surrounding streets, though this is under pressure during the daytime. A number of pay and display car parks are located within close walking distance of the Lonsdale in the area around Cecil Street.

A significant portion of the city's main axis consists of an extensive pedestrianised area with few interruptions and which broadly runs up English Street to the Lanes shopping centre and beyond. It is this area which contains the city's main retail core.

The Lonsdale therefore sits slightly away from the main mass of the city's retail offer as well the band of catering establishments which sits between the main retail area and the well-defined entertainment district of Botchergate, with its series of vertical drinking establishments to the south of the city centre.

It would seem that this night-time trade has migrated from other areas of the city and the concentration of drinking establishments on Botchergate has impacted on a number of establishments, such as the nearby White Hart pub situated on Warwick Road which is currently boarded up.

There are a number of retail units running along Warwick Road but these soon give way to office and residential accommodation after the adjacent blocks around the Lonsdale with Brunswick Street area having a series of handsome Georgian terraced housing and squares.

Warwick Road lies some way from other cultural facilities in the city which lie mainly to the north of the centre in the historic core of the city and include: Tullie House, the cathedral, the Sands and other venues where the bulk of cultural activity takes place. Though it does lie close to the city's remaining cinema the Vue, a popular multiplex situated on Botchergate.

In short the Warwick Road area does not have a particularly defined identity. Whilst it remains a secondary, though important thoroughfare within the city it does not generate significant footfall in terms of pedestrian traffic. This is not a reason to not pursue this option in itself but it does make the task of promoting and marketing the arts centre in this location more difficult than if it were sited on a prominent or stand alone site.

5.2 Street presence and architectural significance

The Lonsdale's public entrance on Warwick Road is bounded on one side by the city's main post office, an imposing neo-classical building and on the other by a short row of early Victorian terraces, which are currently used as retail units. It suffers from this proximity with a muscular civic building on one flank and domestic scale buildings on the other. Its narrow, low rise entrance belies the fact that when built it was an infill building on a difficult site. This in turn throws up a challenge when considering its redevelopment as an arts centre, one further complicated by the listing notice, which highlights the façade as being worthy of retention.

The surrounding built environment would make it difficult for the arts centre to assert itself and this could prove problematic as such a venue cannot rely solely on those with an existing knowledge of the building's location to drive its attendance. In essence it would be a new venue and would need to attract the city's residents and tourist visitors unaware of its location.

The building needs to signal its presence within this densely built area. One way of attracting such an audience, drawing visitors to the building and creating a 'buzz' around its activities is by creating a landmark building sitting on a prominent site.

It is not possible to create a setting on this site whereby the building has a strong presence in itself - i.e by siting it within a public space - as the entrance opens immediately off the street and needs to be retained.

One would need to create a welcoming entrance by creating a significant 'shop-front' through which passers-by glimpse activity or facilities inside and attracted into the building to experience the venue and its facilities, this is especially important for those new to the venue or the city. This again might be difficult to achieve with such a narrow frontage in effect masking the bulk of its activities.

We would be particularly nervous about the potential for significant café and bar trade when set deep inside the site, behind the narrow foyer. As the business plan for the theatre and arts centre anticipated a significant income from a highly visible café/bar used by members of the public and not just venue visitors, any weakness in this business would impact substantially on the viability of the centre.

5.3 Life cycle implications

The cost-in-use of the Lonsdale redeveloped would depend to a large degree on the extent and nature of the redevelopment. However, we would suggest that there are three reasons for caution:

- Although the reuse of older buildings can offer an immediate environmental benefit over demolition and new build, this may dissipate over time. It is

more difficult to achieve standards of environmental performance in older buildings, whereas we would expect a new-build centre to achieve BREEAM Excellent standard. Poorer performance carries a cost in energy use over time.

- The building may be substantially improved in the redevelopment (so for instance it may well be that the roof has to be replaced to achieve natural light in the public areas) but the fabric of the Lonsdale is not good, and we would expect further gradual deterioration and continuing maintenance and renewal bills over the life of the building.
- It does seem to us that the area around the building will be likely to be developed as time progresses and this in turn may increase pressure to improve the poor quality external faces of the building onto Mary Street and Cecil Street in particular.

DCA with Keith Williams Architects

Carlisle Theatre and Arts Centre

Potential for redevelopment of the Lonsdale Cinema

6 Implications of realising an adaptation of the building

6.1 Acquisition and development

The site is currently owned by a Manchester-based private developer and therefore Carlisle City Council would need to enter into negotiations with this company in order to develop or acquire it. It is difficult at this point to assess whether the building could be acquired and at what cost.

Aside from the listing issues outlined above a full planning application would need to be made, with consideration given to its listed status and its location within a conservation area. The latter need not be a major issue as it is likely that the exterior of the building is unlikely to alter substantially, in fact the retention of the façade would be a point in favour when conservation and planning issues are being taken into account.

When considering the potential Theatre and Arts Centre in other locations, there have been discussions of the possibility of public/private mixed-use schemes to combine the arts building with residential or retail uses and generate funds toward the cost of the arts facilities.

This will not be possible within the envelope of the existing Lonsdale, which struggles to accommodate the arts brief alone, and whose spaces are not suitable for conversion to residential use or smaller retail units.

6.2 Capital costs and funding

Without surveys of the building condition and a developed scheme it is difficult to be certain what the costs of the realisation of the theatre/arts scheme set out above would be. The building is quite large, and the scheme described above extends to something in the order of 3,600 square metres, as against 5,400 square metres for the recommended theatre and arts centre model. The approximate areas proposed by this option are:

- A ground level area of circa 1800 sqm;
- A first level of circa 950 sqm
- And a second level of 500 sqm,
- Allowances for fire escapes etc, of 350 sqm

Working with existing buildings can be very expensive. In the case of the Lonsdale works would include at minimum:

- Making good the envelope,
- Demolitions and reinstatements of areas of rot and structural inadequacy,
- Replacing or remodeling the roof to allow access of natural light where required,
- Wholly replacing all services and introducing new services through the original structure,

- New access arrangements and lifts,
- Wholly new structures for the auditorium and for many of the backstage and trading spaces,
- Wholly new floor, wall and ceiling finishes
- Fit out and equipment

Our initial indication of costs suggests to us that the conversion of the Lonsdale would generate costs close to equivalent to the costs of a new build theatre and arts centre. The overall cost for the Lonsdale would be lower than the £21m estimated for the recommended new build centre, but only in respect of its smaller area and restricted facilities.

The funding model as outlined in section 7 of the Carlisle Arts Centre report still stands - in that it might still be possible to secure funding from a number of sources of lottery, RDA, regeneration and other public, private sources. However CCC would remain the largest net contributor to the scheme and given that the building would not necessarily make a great contribution to the improvement of the public realm we fear that it might prove more difficult to secure regeneration funding for the project on this site.

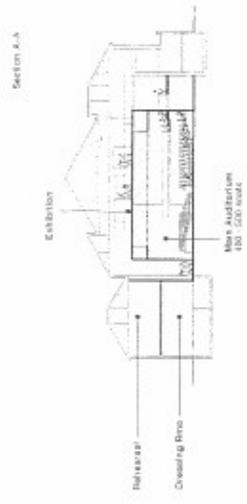
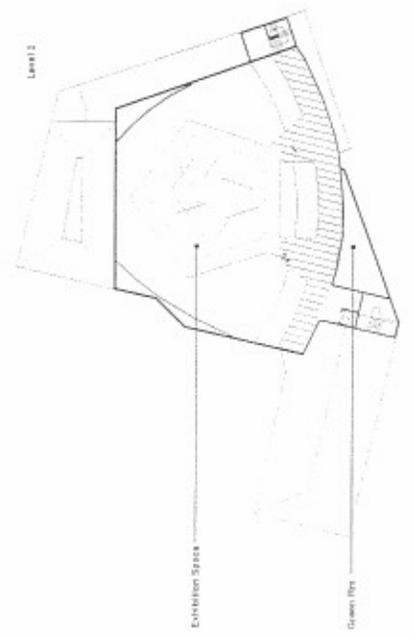
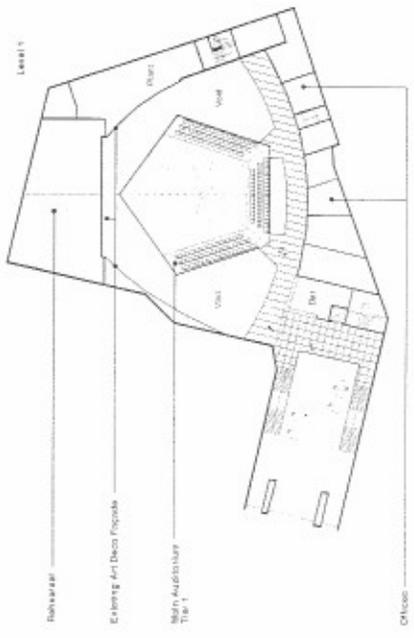
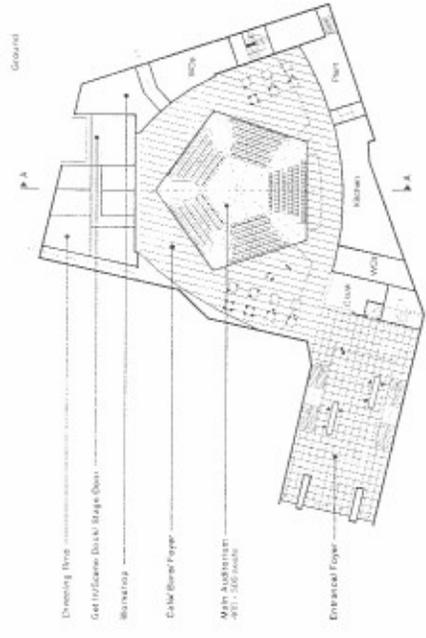
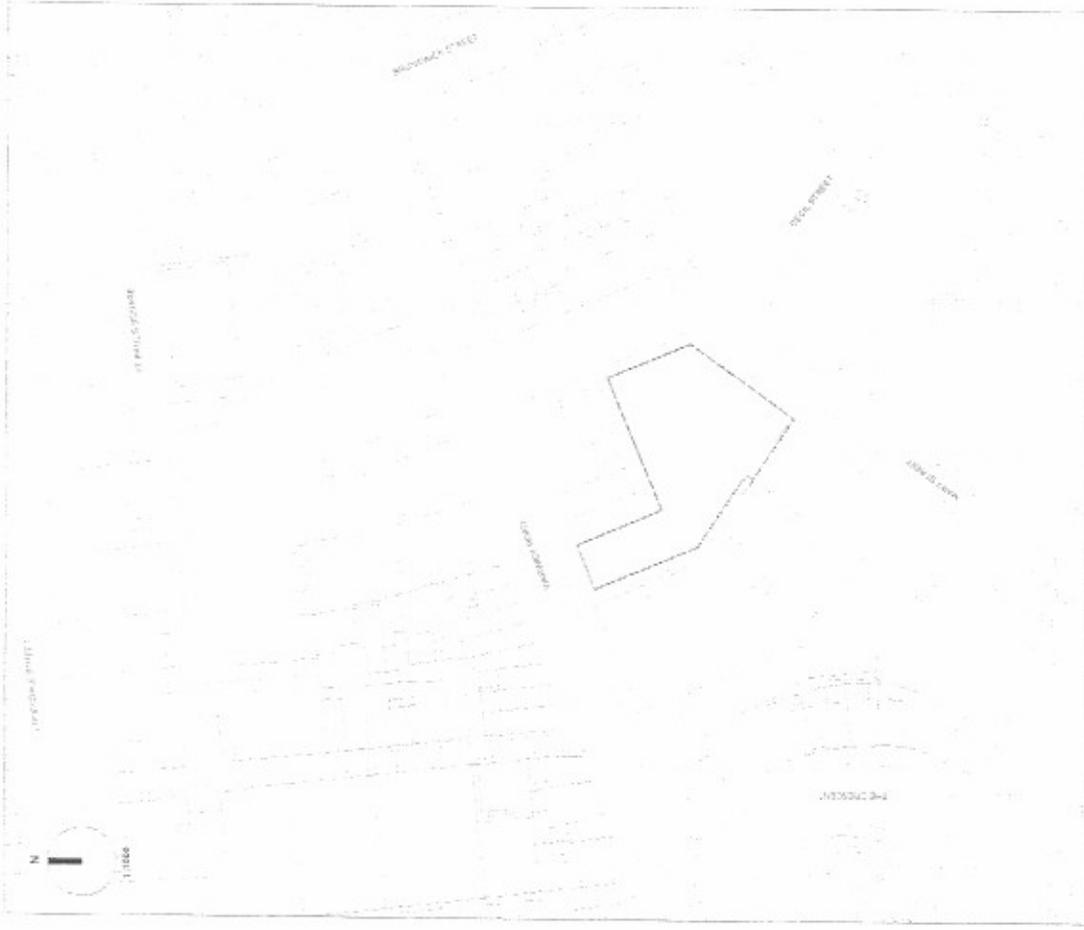
6.3 Operational finance implications

The Lonsdale in this configuration presents a compromised solution, which would be likely to result in significant changes to the centre's programming mix. In turn this programming mix affects the projections for cost and income that were presented in the original Theatre and Arts Centre report. So far we have identified that the operation of the arts centre within the Lonsdale would result in a funding gap in the order of £169,000 opening up, against the projections for the larger of the two specifications in the original report. This comprises:

Reason	Amount
Loss of cinema income (net)	£45,000
Loss of income in the main auditorium (net)	£35,000
Loss of programme income in studio	£25,000
Loss of meeting room income	£24,000
Loss of catering income due to changes in audiences and position	£25,000
Retail loss of income (net)	£15,000
TOTAL	£169,000

These are not likely to be the only costs incurred by moving to this proposal but are those most readily identifiable at this point. Such a figure would therefore need to be need to be found from existing sources sources.

If Carlisle City Council were to pursue this option it might therefore need to increase its recurring subsidy to the new arts centre, which the report suggested starting at some £360,000 for 2011/12 to over £530,000.



Approximate Site Area: 1980 sqm

AREAS SCHEDULED OPTION 1

AREAS INCLUDED:

- Foyer, Bar/Office, Shop, Concessions, Foyer incl. WCs
- Main Theatre (400 - 500 seats)
- Rehearsal Hall/Bar
- Cinema Booth, Kitchen
- Stage Deck, Stage Deck
- Dressing Rooms
- Workshop
- Cafe, Bar
- Stylish Exhibition Space
- Offices

AREAS EXCLUDED:

- Studio Space (Baron Studio)
- Main Exhibition Space (Back Door/Backs Bus)
- Cinema 1/2
- Exhibiting Workshops
- Meeting Rooms

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**CARLISLE CITY COUNCIL
 CARLISLE PERFORMING
 ARTS CENTRE
 LONSDALE CINEMA**

Scale: 1:5000 A2

Date: 25.09.2007

Sheet: 215

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SKETCH



KWA/DCA			
PROJECT CARLISLE PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE PRELIMINARY ACCOMMODATION SCHEDULE		Review of Lonsdale Cinema Sep-07	
ROOM SCHEDULE		ORIGINAL AREA SCHEDULE	Potential to realise in Lonsdale Cinema
1.00 FOYER	0.9sqm per person assume 550 maximum at one time	495	This is possible given a "Royal Exchange" approach to the new auditorium
1.01 Box Office		25	Yes
1.02 Shop		45	No - unlikely to be sufficient space
1.03 Cloakroom		50	No
1.04 First Aid		15	Yes
1.05 WCs (PUBLIC)		125	Yes
2.00 MAIN THEATRE		500	Can be achieved with a "Royal Exchange" approach - but will necessitate removal of existing balcony. The space will have capacity over 500 but limitations on format from a basis of 'in-the-round' format.
2.01 Stage Area	12m deep x 15 wide	180	No - staging would be severely restricted. Unlikely to be possible to make satisfactory proscenium arch
2.02 Flyloft			No - there is no potential for flying scenery
2.03 Grid		0	Limited lighting and sound grip with no pantries
2.04 Understage		100	No
2.05 Orchestra Pit	To be discussed	50	No
2.06 Lighting Bridges & Technical	Could treat as area or specific cost centre	0	No
2.07 Control/Projection Room	including projection	35	A control room could be provided. The space would not work well for cinema and we would not recommend projection other than for conference data projection.
2.08 Dimmers 1	inc AV racks	25	Yes

KWA/DCA			
PROJECT CARLISLE PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE PRELIMINARY ACCOMMODATION SCHEDULE		Review of Lonsdale Cinema Sep-07	
ROOM SCHEDULE		ORIGINAL AREA SCHEDULE	Potential to realise in Lonsdale Cinema
3.00 STUDIO SPACE	175/150 seats assume 1sqm per person (co	264	No - there is insufficient space
3.01 Stage Area	Assume sized for dance		No
3.01 Control/Projection Room	including projection	25	No
3.02 Dimmers 2		25	No
3.03 Lighting Bridges & Technical	Could treat as area or specific cost centre	0	No
4.00 REHEARSAL ROOM			
4.01 Rehearsal Room/Dance Studio	Same dimensions as acting area plus run-a	121	Yes - can be provided
4.02 Piano Store etc		0	No
5.00 GREEN ROOM		60	Yes
5.01 Kitchen		15	No
6.00 SCENE DOCK	Could increase subject to layout and internal vs external loading	50	Yes - but small
7.00 STAGE DOOR		24	Yes
8.00 DRESSING ROOMS			
8.01 Dressing Rooms (Main House)	Preliminary	135	3 or 4 rooms are possible
8.02 Dressing Rooms (2nd Space)	Preliminary	50	No
9.00 Running Wardrobe/laundry		20	No
11.00 CINEMAS			
11.01 Cinema Screen 1	Assume in MAIN THEATRE	0	No
11.02 Cinema Screen 2	Assume in STUDIO	0	No

KWA/DCA			
PROJECT CARLISLE PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE PRELIMINARY ACCOMMODATION SCHEDULE		Review of Lonsdale Cinema Sep-07	
ROOM SCHEDULE		ORIGINAL AREA SCHEDULE	Potential to realise in Lonsdale Cinema
12.00 WORKSHOP	inc storage & maintenance for electrics	60	Yes
13.00 CAFÉ/BARS			
13.01 Main café bar in/connected to foyer		150	Yes - around the auditorium drum
13.02 2nd Bar	serving drinks at performance times	30	No
13.03 Kitchen & washup		80	Yes
13.04 wc etc for kitchen staff		25	Yes
14.00 EXHIBITION/GALLERY			
14.01 Main Exhibition Space \	Projection & Seminar capability for 50	120	No
14.02 Chair Store		15	Yes
15.00 EDUCATION WORKSHOPS			
15.01 Education Workshop 1 (DRY)	accommodating a class	60	No
15.02 Education Workshop 2 (WET)	accommodating a class	75	No
16.01 4 No meeting rooms for 20 people	1.5 sqm per person	100	No
16.00 \			
16.02 Centre Manager	1 person	10	Yes
16.03 Front of House Manager	1 person	10	Yes
16.04 Marketing	2 people	16	Yes
16.05 Technical/Stage Manager	2 people	16	Yes
16.06 General Offices	assume 20 general staff @ 7.5sqm per pers	150	Limited further office space
17.00 GENERAL STORAGE		200	No - the solution would be very short of storage - probable that off-site storage would be required
SUB TOTAL		3,551	
18.00 Add Circulation, Lifts Stairs ducts at 40		40%	1,420
19.00 PLANT ROOMS (9% of gross)		9%	447
TOTAL		5,419	