

THEATRE: *Bedford Civic*

Listed Grade II

Address: Horne Lane, St. Paul's Square, Bedford MK40 1SJ

Local Authority:

Bedford Borough Council

Borough Hall

Cauldwell Street

Bedford MK42 9AP

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www.bedford.gov.uk

Current Freehold Owner: Bedford Borough Council

Current Leasehold Owner: Bedford Borough Council

Current Operator/Manager: Bedford Borough Council

Local Contact: Peter Davies, Save Bedford's Civic Theatre www.saveourcivic.org.uk/ and [Facebook Campaign](#)

The Theatres Trust Contact: Suzanne McDougall. Tel 020 7836 8591

Email: Suzanne.mcdougall@theatrust.org.uk

Original theatre architect (s): 1859: James Horsford, As an assembly hall to grammar school, 1900: Unknown, converted from assembly hall to theatre.

Building Description

The Civic Theatre was originally constructed as an assembly hall extension to the old grammar school building in St. Paul's Square. It was converted for theatre use in 1900. It is a handsome building in Ancaster stone, with chaste classical proportions, pediments and rusticated quoins, juxtaposed with big mullioned and transomed windows. The interior is a simply decorated Victorian hall, with a small shield featuring above the proscenium. Seating is tiered and removable in the stalls, and there is a small raked balcony supported by slim pillars, with plain front. It is described as having 'a wonderfully authentic atmosphere', and with its classic Victorian stage equipped with rope and wire pulleys, the Civic is a small venue admirably suited to providing performance space for community groups and smaller productions.

Theatre Use

The Civic is still in theatre use, though no current programming. In programming terms it complements the Council's other venue, the Corn Exchange.

Building Location

The *Bedford Civic* is in a central location within the town centre.

Risks

The theatre is currently operated by Bedford Borough Council but it wishes to change the use of the building into a 'one stop shop' for council services. If it does this Bedford will lose its only centrally located accessible small/middle scale theatre. It is an important venue in the mix of spaces managed and programmed by the Corn Exchange in the town centre and provides affordable facilities for local groups and arts organisations.