



Municipal Building: Cultural and Creative Transformation

Design Brief for Lead Design Consultant



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1. Introduction

Falmouth Town Council has an exciting opportunity to undertake a major transformation of the Municipal Building and is looking to commission a Lead Design Consultant.

This appointment covers 2 areas of work – internal and external works, which are intrinsically linked.

Internal: Reorganisation and Reimagination

Cultural and creative transformation will secure the future of the Grade II listed building. It will see the creation of essential infrastructure to support long-term sustainability, protecting our unique and significant heritage. This project will enable us to:

- Integrate service delivery for efficiency in operations and end user experience.
- Upgrade spaces to provide a fully accessible and exciting heritage destination.
- Improve our visitor's journey and flow.
- Reduce our carbon footprint.
- Upgrade and make accessible commercial areas (café and shop).
- Diversify revenue and enhance the local visitor economy and culture.
- Explore new ways of managing heritage by creating a high-quality programme of activities.
- Create high profile exhibitions and events which will be fun and inspiring.
- Build strong partnerships with new and diverse audiences.
- Build skills and develop capacity by encouraging new talent through work placements and new volunteering to develop a relevant and vibrant cultural offer.
- Deliver more effectively on the universal library offers i.e. reading, creativity, digital, health and wellbeing.

The proposed design work will focus on both the architectural elements and exhibition design. The design will mix how the spaces & services on offer are curated & presented to the public – ensuring cross pollination of ideas & interests.

The design will address our vision of being an empowering voice for creativity in our communities.

The brief includes consideration of the following areas:

1. Visitor entrance and welcome space.
2. Retail
3. Flexible gallery space for temporary exhibitions and digital presentations.
4. Artist studios
5. Library and archive, including study area.
6. Learning, events and activity spaces.
7. Improved stores with an element of open access.
8. Back of house provision for offices and staff welfare.
9. Lift and stair access and transition spaces e.g. corridors, landings.

10. Realignment of cloakroom and WCs.
11. Inclusion of a [changing places toilet](#).
12. The civic chamber will be creatively reimagined, retaining it's historic & civic importance whilst serving a modern diverse audience.

In line with our environmental policy, the team should reduce, recycle and reuse where possible in their designs.

Initially, the appointed team will undertake RIBA Stages 0-2 by December 2025. If further RIBA stages can be completed by December, then great. Future stages to be advised by the client, subject to funding.

External: Alterations to existing building comprising of thermal and energy related improvements, with associated repairs, to the Listed Building

This element will primarily be to the **external fabric** of the building.

Planning has been approved: <https://planning.cornwall.gov.uk/online-applications/simpleSearchResults.do?action=firstPage>

As has Listed Building Consent: [PA24/08325 | Listed Building Consent for alterations to existing building comprising of thermal and energy related improvements, with associated repairs, to the Listed Building. | Municipal Building The Moor Falmouth Cornwall TR11 2RT](#)

We are seeking a team to progress this from RIBA 3 through to RIBA 6 – **construction phase is subject to funding**.

The team must discharge and conditions related to these approvals.

2. Background

Address: Municipal Building, The Moor, Falmouth, Cornwall, TR11 2RT

The building is Grade II Listed and has list entry number 1269979.

Grid Reference SW 80620 32922.

The Listing Details state:

FALMOUTH, THE MOOR (North West side), Falmouth Art Gallery and Library
(Passmore Edwards Free Library)

Free library, council chamber and science and art school, now library and art gallery. 1896, by WH Tresidder; patrons J Passmore Edwards and Octavius Allen Ferris. Squared grey limestone with granite dressings including rock faced plinth, ashlar pilasters, moulded strings and sills, jambs, arches, copings

and finials; dry Delabole slate roofs with gabled cross wings with stepped finials; central octagonal lantern with lead dome on open Tuscan colonnade.

PLAN:(original use): large irregular roughly square plan with loggia and vestibule to large stair hall with imperial staircase; newspaper and reading room behind stair hall; offices and strong room to cross wing on the left; lending library, small librarian's room, wider reference library, service stair, caretaker's accommodation and rear passage to cross wing on the right; cross passages flanking reading room. 1st floor has small science room and cloakroom in front of landing; council chamber and mayor's parlour on the left and science rooms on the right. Eclectic style combining Italianate, Renaissance, neo-classical and Flemish details. EXTERIOR: 2 storeys; symmetrical 1:3:1-bay front. Cross wings have Venetian windows with inscriptions above framed by panelled pilasters, linked by 4 strings and surmounted by finials, and keyed round arch to 1st floor, and paired segmental-arched windows to ground floor; flanking end pilasters to each floor. Central distyle-in-antae Tuscan loggia; roll-moulded granite doorway with original pair of panelled doors behind, flanked by segmental-arched windows; moulded entablature above loggia (with name inscribed to frieze) surmounted by squat turned balustrade. 1st floor has 3 strings over Venetian window flanked by pilasters and narrower bays with round-arched windows. Casement windows to ground floor, sashes to 1st floor; central lights of Venetian windows of wings have glazing bars and spoked fanlight heads. INTERIOR retains most of its original features including: glazed screen between shallow vestibule and hall; granite flagged hall floor; open-string staircase with turned balusters and newels; moulded plaster ceiling cornices to principal rooms, the stair hall and reading room with deep coves, the reading room with 4 central panels; many panelled doors. The building was erected at a cost of £7,000, including £2,000 which was given by J Passmore Edwards and a bequest of £2,000 by Octavius Allen Ferris. Forms part of an important group in the centre of Falmouth, including the former Town Hall (q.v.), and comprises a good example of a Free Style library building of the late C19. (Best RS: The Life and Good Works of John Passmore Edwards: Redruth: 1981-: 45; Kelly: Kelly's Directory of Cornwall: London: 1910-: 105).

Falmouth lies in the central area of Cornwall on the southern coast, with a harbour and deep river mouth access. This significant position and historic trade routes, lead to the prominence of business and buildings in central Falmouth. Changes with public administration and the related development of public buildings in the town centre, as well as the historic setting for the Municipal Building, are described fully in the Heritage Impact Assessment accompanying this document.

The Moor character area of Falmouth Conservation Area comprises a busy civic centre and former market area, with a cluster of large historic institutional buildings around an extensive open public space. With the adjacent streets it forms an important urban focus and a key entrance to the town. The Passmore Edwards building is a fine example of the detailed stone facades popular for such prominent public buildings of the era, with limestone facework and granite quoins at the principal elevation.

Cornishman John Passmore Edwards is famed for philanthropic works during his lifetime, including funding and support of the development of free libraries across the county. The subject building for this proposal is one of these developments, constructed in the late Victorian period (1894-1896).

Existing Use

The existing use of the building is multi-purpose but centred upon continued provision of public services incorporating a library, art gallery and council premises. This includes the historically significant Council Chamber (at first floor level, immediately behind the related carved stone signage; at the Southern end of the principal elevation).

Description

The Municipal Building premises span across two primary floors, with an additional mezzanine and ground floor secure storage and plant rooms (at the rear of the building). Access to the property is gained at the front via the open public space, The Moor, with level access to the Northern elevation at the side of the premises for the gallery. The building is a mix of late-19th and early 20th century construction, connected by more modern link areas and includes modern alterations including changes to internal walls and installation of skylights.

Plans of the building can be found in the supporting documentation.

The last major capital works on the building took place in 1996 which upgraded accessibility provision for the building adding a lift and disabled toilets on both floors

3. Strategy 2024 – 2028



4. Masterplanning - funding the ladder, so others might climb

Setting the Scene

The Cornwall Council creative census places Falmouth as the #1 location in the county for both creative businesses and the most requested location for additional workspace

https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/dqck1fuj/creative-census-2024_infographic_final.pdf

Footfall to the ground floor (library) is significantly higher than that to the first floor (art gallery) and anecdotal and recorded accounts confirm the large central staircase is a visual, physical and psychological barrier to visitors entering despite the rear accessible entrance.

There is also the large, underused civic council chamber on the first floor, which currently serves as an ad hoc gallery education room for school visits and ceremonial space for mayoral and other town events. This room is full of large, inflexible furniture and vestiges of the traditional civic function, giving it a somewhat imposing air.

Masterplan Vision

Falmouth Town Council wish to continue to honour the ethos of the building's main funder, philanthropist John Passmore Edwards, who was committed to 'funding the ladder, so others might climb' – offering free, accessible, quality cultural learning opportunities and engagement for Falmouth's communities and visitors, as well as opening people up to new experiences, perspectives and stories; alongside this nodding to the civic pride that has traditionally been instilled in the building.

The building forms a bedrock for arts education, literacy and creative skills in the town, giving Falmouth and other Cornwall education providers access to a first-class resource showcasing a nationally significant art collection, also reflecting the historic tradition of supporting the arts in Falmouth.

The aspiration is to locate as many public-facing functions (gallery, shop, café) on the ground floor as possible, whilst developing the first floor for more specialised purposes e.g. back-of-house, storage, meeting rooms, artist studios whilst also offering an 'open experience' of some of these spaces e.g. visible storage.

We want the building to be equipped to hold blockbuster exhibitions enabling populations far removed geographically from major cultural centres, access to high profile and quality cultural experience thereby contributing to better cultural democracy in Cornwall.

We wish to introduce new functions and services into the building to form a vibrant creative hub in the town centre: think fully kitted out workshops, rentable studio/hot-desking space, meeting spaces, sensory/reflection spaces, areas for play and community, digital media suite.... The civic chamber will be creatively reimaged, retaining it's historic & civic importance whilst serving a modern diverse audience.

... enabling meaningful and responsive co-creation of the vision for the building going forward at the earliest possible stage with maximum opportunity to flex around community needs.

It is our aim to grow visitors from 140k in 2034/25 to 175k visitors by 2030 and engage with more diverse people. This project is a key part of achieving this ambition, alongside our programme of exhibitions and events.

We want the building to appeal to local people, families, school groups and tourists who already visit the Gallery, but we want to ensure that in addition, the Gallery attracts new visitors from further afield. The Strategy, outlined in Section 3 must underpin the Masterplan.

Masterplan Objectives

The masterplan will set out the transformation of physical spaces and will enable the Gallery and library to create:

- an engaging and immersive visitor journey that highlights collections and provides space for learning and creative activities.
- a space for people to connect, explore new perspectives, and celebrate our diverse culture.
- innovative, digital and interactive interpretation to create enriching and inspiring experiences for all.

Masterplan Design approach

The Masterplan should reflect the overall vision of Falmouth Town Council:

Falmouth will be a distinctive, vibrant, resilient, inclusive, and well-balanced, attractive sea-port town. It will form part of the sustainable social and economic heart of the wider Falmouth/Penryn.

Community Network, serving an important strategic role in enabling Cornwall's economy to reach its full potential, and responding effectively to climate change.

And align with the Objectives of the Council's Strategic Plan: [Strategic Plan - Falmouth Town Council](#)

We are looking for a conscious, sustainable design approach: we must ensure that designs are ethical, sustainable and regenerative. The Team will need to take a collaborative approach, undertake substantial stakeholder consultation and work closely with the FTC team.

Accessibility and inclusion are at the heart of everything we do. The building needs to be well-lit, with clear and legible text, fully wheelchair accessible, have multi-sensory elements, support neuro-diverse visitors and have seating points with arm rests. The building will become accessible to all, not only in physical sense but also in the way in which it connects with the entire spectrum of its users.

5. Scope of Work

We require a team to undertake the design and build to repair and transform the Municipal Building. This work will be delivered in stages, dependent on external funding applications. The services will be in line with the RIBA Plan of Work 2020.

Internal Works

Stage 1: RIBA 0-2: Strategic Definition through to the end of Concept Design (by end of December 2025)

Stage 2: RIBA 3 – 4: Spatial Co-ordination and Technical Design

Stage 3 RIBA 5 – 6: Construction to Use

Internal Design Considerations

Visitor experience (visitor welcome, route & facilities)

Essential

- Fully accessible entrance – power assisted doors etc
- A substantially larger shop area
- Lockers/cloakroom area and flexible storage for buggies
- Improved circulation and access throughout the building.
- Improved WCs for visitors, including accessible WC and Changing Places toilet
- Library area with clear delineation of children's, adults, young people, study etc
- Dedicated, environmentally controlled gallery space

Galleries and displays

Essential

- To be defined e.g. improved seating, improved accessibility (hearing loop, multi-sensory interpretation and wayfinding), better lighting conditions and controls, better environmental conditions and controls, improved hanging system.
- Collections to be accessible throughout the building.

Events venue(s)

Essential

- Power and data for AV for events
- Lighting controls to support events
- Hearing loop to support events
- Opportunities to display items from the collection in a secure but accessible way e.g. vitrines, display cases, wall and/or ceiling mounted
- Conveniently located storage for chairs and tables, AV equipment etc when not in use
- Easy, open access to the high street to encourage visitors to make purchases, and to improve the visibility and permeability of the Gallery.
- Catering facilities e.g. café or other public eating area (not necessarily revenue-generating)

Education and community spaces

Essential

- A fully accessible room or rooms, each capable of accommodating two classes of 30 children plus accompanying teachers. If not on the ground floor, then accessible by lift.
- Storage for coats, lunch boxes and teachers' bags
- Access to water for handwashing after messy activities
- Access to drinking water for school groups and community use
- Separate art sink with drainer
- Storage for art materials, learning resources
- Power and data
- Furniture, fittings and equipment - Tables and chairs to accommodate flexible use e.g. for school groups, community groups etc. New library shelving
- Continued provision of a good range of spaces, suitable for a variety of functions. These include some spaces which are bookable during Gallery opening hours as well as a much wider variety of spaces available for out of hours bookings.

Back of house operations and facilities

Office accommodation

- Office accommodation for 15 FTE by 20XX.
- Meeting room capable of accommodating 20 people.
- Smaller working 'pods' to support independent working away from open plan areas.
- IT and office infrastructure to ensure the team have the tools to work effectively and efficiently.

Staff and volunteer welfare

- Staff shower and toilet
- Staff cycle parking
- Staff kitchen/staff room with microwave, fridge etc
- Dedicated space for volunteers with secure storage for coats and bags.

Collections care and management

- Improved collections and archive storage, including an 'open storage' solution to improve accessibility to the collection and dedicated workspace.
- Plumbed facilities to assist with cleaning
- Potential improvements to back of house/art lift?
- Loading bay facility to assist with artwork installation and storage, including of large scale and heavy items
- Air exchange/HVAC system
- Crate storage for touring exhibitions and permanent collection

Retail

- Secure storage for retail stock to support a substantially larger shop area.
- Suitable space for packing online orders.
- Window display facility for merchandising

Mechanical, electrical and plant

- Define the requirements for maintenance of mechanical and electrical plant. Storage for spares (lightbulbs, filters etc), tools ladders, cleaning materials? Plant room, servers etc.

External Works (Planning and Listed Building Consent approved)

Stage 1: RIBA 3 – 4: Spatial Co-ordination and Technical Design

Stage 2: RIBA 5 – 6: Construction to Use

A highly experienced architectural and exhibition design lead consultant is sought.

We require a full design team approach which has a proven track record of working with historic buildings to develop architectural, exhibition and engineering technical design.

It is envisaged that this will be a well-managed multi-disciplinary team led by a qualified Architect (RIBA) who will appoint and manage the team including but not limited to:

- Architect and exhibition designer
- Mechanical and Electrical Consultant
- Structural Engineer
- Acoustic Consultant
- Principal Designer
- Building Surveyor
- Quantity Surveyor
- Fire Consultant
- Contract Management
- Conservation Specialist, etc.

Designers will be expected to take on the role of CDM /Principal Designer for the project, should be able to demonstrate their capability to dispense that responsibility and should cost for the time it will take.

We require the team to follow the typical RIBA stage activities and outputs. All documents and drawings prepared by the consultants for the purpose of the Project will be the intellectual property of Falmouth Town Council.

Given the importance of this project to Falmouth, the length of time that this contract could run into, communication and a strong relationship between the client team and the design team is of utmost importance. A two way design process is critical – the client team must have input to the design.

6. Project Management

Falmouth Town Council will be the direct client / commissioning agent for this work. The Project Director will be Morwenna Lewis – Cultural Service Director.

A client-side Project Manager will be appointed who will oversee the contract on behalf of the client. All communications must be copied to the Project Manager, who must sign off the Stage Reports in writing. The consultants must not commence work on a Work Stage until written authorisation has been received from the Project Manager. No variation to cost or programme can be undertaken without specific confirmation in writing from the Project Manager.

The Project Director and Project Manager will attend a series of monthly Design Team meetings organised by the architect, to review, in detail, the progress of the work and to identify any issues arising.

A Project Board will be set up with meetings taking place monthly, the architect will be expected to attend these meetings. Further attendance may be required from consultants and specific presentations. Separate Design Team meetings will be held and facilitated by the Architects.

A monthly Checkpoint Report should be provided, to an agreed timetable, to the Project Manager to detail the progress of the entire design team, enabling the Project Manager to report to the Client identifying amongst others:

- The progress of the Consultant's design.
- The progress of all other Consultants' designs.
- Updated design risks and programme status.
- Assessment of the current cost of the project against the agreed budget.
- Comments in relation to quality of the Project on and off site.
- Progress of the documentation to be provided on completion of the Project.
- Prioritising of works in terms of urgency and phases if applicable (this is required in the event that the funder make a a reduced offer which must then be directed at highest priority issues).
- Costed risk register.
- Timetable of delivering the works.

The purpose of the monthly report is not to catalogue past achievements but to set future objectives and to assess potential problems.

Project Programme/ Milestones

It is critical that the delivery of this commission adheres closely to the following programme. Any issues or risks should be identified and reported at the earliest opportunity. Future work packages are funding dependent. Funding deadlines are key milestones. The indicative milestones for the project are summarised in the table below.

Milestone	Internal/ External Works	Date
Submission of Arts Council MEND application	External	23 rd September 2025
Complete RIBA Stage 2	Internal	31 December 2025
Contract Paused		
Arts Council MEND Determination	External	March 2026
Complete RIBA Stage 3	Internal	tbd
Complete RIBA Stage 4	Internal	tbd
Detailed Planning Application	Internal	tbd
Estimated Planning Approval	Internal	tbd
NLHF Development Phase Bid submission	Internal	tbd
Contract paused whilst awaiting NLHF Bid decision	Internal	tbd
NLHF Bid decision	Internal	tbd
Mobilisation & start of works	External	TBC
Practical Completion	External Works	March 2029

7. Contract Information

The contract will be for 4 years approximately. The anticipated start date of this contract is October 2025.

The design team should anticipate the need to attend regular site visits, virtual or face to face meetings and workshops with the client, statutory services, and significant stakeholder consultation. This will be facilitated by the client but led by the design team.

The successful team will be required to liaise with other consultants and actively liaise with the local planning authority to discharge any planning conditions.

Different iterations of the proposals are likely to be required in response to technical reports, any further public engagement and client feedback.

Report Formats

We will require editable versions of each report and drawing produced i.e. Word, Excel or an agreed format for drawings, plus PDF versions of the same. In addition to this, we require 3 full colour paper copies of each final stage report and drawings (full size).

Cost estimates should be presented in Excel and pdf.

Every report must include stakeholder and funder logos which will be provided by the Project Manager.

Documents to consult

- Heritage Impact Assessment
- Building Plans
- Condition Survey
- Asbestos Report