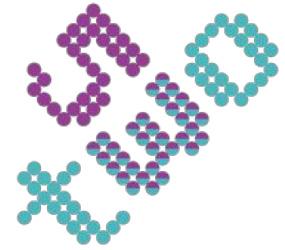


Introduction

The following pages will cover the proposed development and regeneration of Arch 18 on Watson Street arches following the regeneration of Arch 19 and subsequent letting to 53two, as a permanent theatre and events space. The information, projections and plans are drawn from financial records, experience and knowledge of the ever-changing industry and the City of Manchester.

Although some of this information is headline only, detailed further information on any specific aspects of the document can be provided.

Following extensive feasibility work, full planning permission was granted in 2020 and a 15 year lease for both arches exchanged with Manchester Central on January 4th 2021. Work on development of Arch 19 was started the same day and work on the Theatre Bar was completed in May 2021. The Theatre Bar is open 7 days a week as an arts hub and the Theatre itself is still awaiting full regeneration, currently operating as a pop up venue for performances and events for up to 150 people.



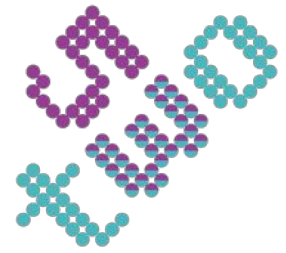
Context

Following three years of working under the brand 53two at the old Bauer Millet site on Albion Street, Manchester, the company moved into temporary accommodation in May 2019. Discussions had been ongoing with Manchester Central to secure the long-term lease of two arches on Watson Street, Manchester, just around the corner from their initial, temporary home.

During those first three years 53two, managed by Simon Naylor, drew in over 16,000 theatre and event goers, whilst establishing a reputation which led to a Best Small Theatre in the North award, along with other award-winning performances. Those years also saw 53two awarded charitable status in recognition of work done with and for diverse, disabled and underserved groups. Shobna Gulati, Lesley Nicoll and Tony Walsh joined the 53two team as patrons, whilst a strong and diverse team of Trustees was built.

During the Albion Street residence, 53two audiences enjoyed theatre productions, corporate events, music festivals, private parties, weddings and even wrestling! Clients have included MIF, Greater Manchester Fringe Festival, Forum For The Built Environment, Contact Theatre, Manchester Society of Architects & CAMRA to name a few. On top of this, thanks to the local community and their existing patrons, 53two Events has been able to grow exponentially, achieving a higher turnover than predicted with a net loss of only a small amount in its first 18 months of trading in its new home on Watson St. It should be noted that all theatre equipment - lighting, tech, sound etc - has been purchased from revenue.

53two was established to plug a gap in the market in Manchester. The Royal Exchange and HOME are big theatres and The Palace, Opera House and The Lowry are recognised as the main receiving houses in Mancunian theatre. Meanwhile, our good friends Hope Mill have forged a blistering path into the Musical Theatre world. However, 53two became the first independent or fringe theatre in Manchester to be more than a room above a pub, but an actual city centre theatre space. We were also the only independent theatre in the city to offer wheelchair patrons access. Indeed, after inviting the world-famous event Monologue Slam back to Manchester for the first time in four years, we were delighted to have the first ever actors with disabilities to the workshop, in the competitions' history. 53two had a specially adapted stage, allowing wheelchair users to perform actually on it and not in front of it. Our new venue has been designed with all of this in mind offering accessibility throughout including a modular table system and lowered bar for wheelchair users, staff training in BSL, tactile till pads for the visually impaired and fully accessible toilets. The pop-up theatre space has a floor-level stage and we have celebrated having wheelchair users both on it, and directing for it. The venue sees accessibility not as an 'add on' but as a part of its fabric.

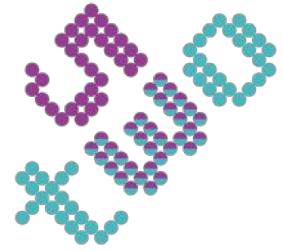


The management always knew that theatre alone would not provide an income to support the space, and so readily acknowledged the need for corporate events, private parties, dinners and more. The income from these have allowed for more than just managing the space, but have funded several in-house productions. These shows have all followed our ethos of producing professional, diverse, high-quality theatre using paid actors and production teams. For these shows we were nominated for 3 Northern Soul Awards & won a Manchester Theatre award. Best Small Theatre of the Year awarded by Northern Soul was a huge accolade for only our second year of operation and North West End reviewers named 53two as Venue of the Year. Accolades we hope to build on in the new venue.

Production companies that wish to hire the theatre must submit scripts which are carefully selected to ensure the highest standard. Of these shows, several have been nominated for GM Fringe Awards, a further two Manchester Theatre Awards and three Commendations from The Offies. Our work has seen World Premieres from award winning writer Anna Jordan, new writing from local creatives, stage debuts from emerging artists & our outreach programme allowed directors from the Oldham Coliseum to work with us in the theatre space and vice versa, as we took new writing to the community of Oldham, holding workshops for students at Oldham College. Our current outreach programme, launched from the new venue, is already working across Greater Manchester to bring theatre to several other underserved communities and youth groups. This year we have also launched our workshops to develop confidence and personal development for patients in Manchester Children's Hospital School, working on their cancer wards.

53two also run acting classes and showcase their work for emerging and established artists. The education arm is designed to benefit actors and its' focus lies primarily on providing professional services at an affordable cost. This platform also provides free services for DANC (Disabled Artists Networking Community) members. In a world saturated with practitioners, self-help specialists, show-reel producers, headshot photographers and more, it hopes to bridge the gap between the affordable and the achievable, also operating out of their accessible studio space in the Great Northern Warehouse. 53two also provides a footing on which small scale, touring and fringe productions can be launched, also providing opportunities to give both professional and training actors work with schemes such as [53New](#) and [FOUNDation](#). Having a stage to enable this has seen our writing course produce two full-length plays developed and professionally performed. From our singing course, one of our students has gone on to write a full-length musical which, after being named Best Show by North West End, opened in London.

The award of Charity Status allowed us to give back to emerging artists across the North West. So far the charity initiative, FOUNDation, has provided a platform for three newly created production companies, formed of recently graduated students and emerging artists. One such company, wrote, produced and performed a new play called FLUSHED, tackling a



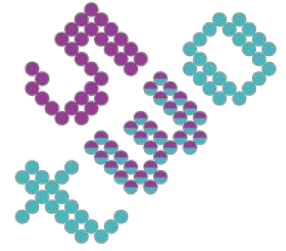
difficult subject, raising money for charity & holding a gala-night of rapid response pieces. We were able to provide support by providing performance and rehearsal space and offering production advice and support. This play then toured GM Fringe & Edinburgh Fringe Festival on the profits they were able to accrue, gathering rave reviews and winning 'Pick of the Fringe' from Voice magazine and recently moving to a four-week run in the Park Theatre, London. FOUNDation has also provided a financial bursary to a Drama School student who studied at Italia Conti in London, after impressing us at her audition for the school, which was held at 53two.

When COVID-19 hit, 53two operated on diminished trading and despite struggling, were still able to offer 'pay what you can' classes to creatives across the UK, free workshops for colleges attended by underserved students and disabled creatives group Triple C, as well as producing several Christmas projects. These projects included their second and third [Christmas commercials](#) - highlighting the lack of diversity in mainstream television using disabled creatives on and off screen. In 2021, in Lockdown, they also hosted a Christmas story project working with emerging and established actors and writers, [Manchester Children's Hospital](#) and schools from Greater Manchester. This project raised over £1,000 for children's charity, The Wood St Mission. [2022 saw them produce their fourth Christmas Advert, grabbing screen time on ITV, highlighting the struggles a young boy living with ADHD and Autism at Christmas.](#)

In the new space, 53two have used their theatre space to support the Community Media Crew (Disabled Artists Collective), The Hive, a student company formed during Covid to provide a platform for those creatives who lost opportunities in lockdown and Switch MCR their resident Next Generation Artists group of young, diverse creatives. 53two are also home to the RX Elders group and Creative Writing group for over 65's. 53two have also continued to offer Unwaged, £2 tickets, BSL performances for every production, relaxed performances and consistently operate under an [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#) whilst encouraging all visiting companies to do the same.

53two provide an open and friendly environment, breaking down the somewhat 'closed door' mentality that sometimes comes with theatre, also providing an events space for some of Manchester's most influential producers, agents and casting directors and a bar that is open to pop in and grab a beer or a coffee, read a script from our library or jump on the WiFi and send those important emails.

Ultimately, beneath our quintessentially Manc brickwork in just under two years we have a new, comfortable, accessible 'drip-free' bar and café for Manchester's thriving arts community and we are looking forward to opening our second arch to full capacity adding a changing places toilet and continuing to change the face of Manchester Theatre.

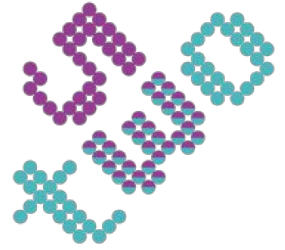


Fundraising

53two have employed several different fundraising strategies. As is the norm, our first port of call was to Crowdfund. Our patrons and friends have donated to date, in excess of our £11,000 goal for professional development fees, capital funding and charitable activities. Although this is only a small proportion of the total, it is an incredible amount to receive from the community.

A private donor pledged £120,000 and Backstage Trust offered a grant of £50,000 with a further match-funded £25,000 if we could raise the same amount in 6 months. The matching £25,000 was raised through further crowdfunding and individual donors. Several other charities donated smaller, important grants to reach the target needed to open Arch 19. This arch, now open as a bar, cafe and arts hub cost £250,000. Fundraising for Arch 18 and the theatre is constant, however, Covid has hit capital funds hugely, closing down many grants and funding opportunities. We have received a £30,000 grant towards our 'Freedom Suite' from Backstage Trust, however, the current climate has added further costs to what was initially planned and quoted.

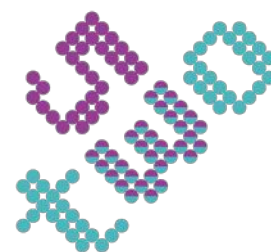
We have contacted a number of local entrepreneurs, large companies, charities and individuals with a view to them becoming ambassadors of the theatre space and charity.



The Theatre

The following pages indicate the level of support that 53two has provided not just for the creative arts in general, but for minority groups in terms of creating opportunities, along with physical access for the disabled since opening in their original venue. These values we will take forward into the Watson St venue, introducing even more accessible elements including a changing places toilet – our ‘Freedom Suite’. This addition will make us the only city centre, independent theatre with this facility.

Also included below are plans where you can see the existing bar, cafe and arts hub and the theatre connected as well as a selection of photographs of work achieved to date, at Watson St.



Charitable Activities

Since opening on Watson St, 53two has been able to offer support to:

Community Media Crew:

The [Community Media Crew](#) is an alternative to traditional Day Care Services, offering instead the chance for people with learning disabilities to engage in Drama, creating stage shows, films and working with industry professionals. The CMC were gifted the venue for their show, inviting industry agents, family and friends to watch their devised comedy about a failing parish council. The event was covered by [BBC](#).

Christmas Advert Launch:

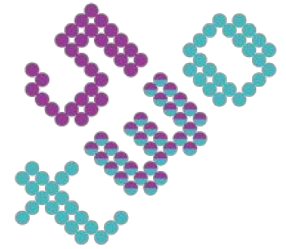
Every year for the last three years, 53two and partners TripleC have created a non-traditional Christmas Advert, selling nothing but diversity and good will. Our adverts can be [seen here](#). ITV also provide us with an annual £1000 grant to help us create the ad.

College Workshops – Bury and Oldham:

As a part of our outreach programme, launched from the arches, we have been able to connect to schools from more arts-deprived areas cross Greater Manchester. Students at Bury and Oldham College, some of whom has never been to the theatre, were invited to take part in free workshops in the theatre, around the ideas of producing a show. They were offered subsidised tickets, supported by 53two, to watch the productions and meet with the team to discuss personal development within the arts.

Little Amal:

Although not a specific charity project, the opportunity to support the 'Little Amal' MIF project was offered to us and the message behind the project was clear. In November, after walking over 8000km in support of refugees, the 3.5m puppet ended her journey in Manchester, including a [visit to 53two](#) where she was joined by a brass band to accompany her last leg of the journey.



GMIAI/Manchester Independents:

With our facilities we were able to join the Greater Manchester Independent Artists Initiative. Arts hubs from across Greater Manchester offered their skills, expertise, facilities and venues to support emerging and underserved creatives, specifically from the global majority in Manchester. 53two was able to offer rehearsal and performance space for several companies/individuals in this programme and as of 2022 are now the lead venue on this project.

The Hive Collective:

During lockdown, Greater Manchester creative and drama students struggled to reach their full potential missing out on hours and hours of classes and workshops and rarely, if at all, being in a position to perform live on stage. The Hive Collective was formed under the mentorship of 53two and gathered students from all the GM Drama Schools for a 'Scratch Night' of work-shares, performances and engagement. The space was given to the graduates free to enable them then chance to share their work.

National Diversity Award:

Before opening our doors 53two was nominated for a National Diversity Award in recognition of their efforts to make the whole space accessible. The bar and theatre/events space are fully accessible. There is a lowered bar area for wheel chair users. Tactile screens are available for the visually impaired and all staff are trained in BSL. Despite not winning, it was an honour to be nominated.

Breakdown Bolton Film Screening:

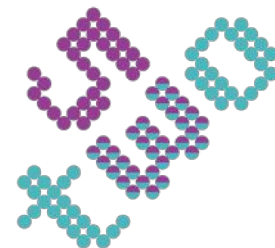
Breakdown Bolton are a community interest company who focus on using the arts to empower and support those with mental health issues. In August we were able to provide them with the theatre space to screen several short films made by their participating creatives, in front of an invited audience.

Brittle Bone Society Video:

World champion dancer and Brittle Bone Society Advocate, Monique Jarret, was in need of a space and crew to film a dance video to share at the BBS Annual meeting to banish the myths surrounding those living with Brittle Bone Disease. 53two gave their studio and time to create [a video](#) that has since been shown globally.

BSL Annual Meet:

Since opening, 53two have forged strong relationships with Manchester Deaf Centre. Because of this and the fact that staff are trained in BSL, in November 2021 we were honoured to host a 'pre-ball' drinks reception for 80 BSL users from across the country.



Manchester Children's Hospital:

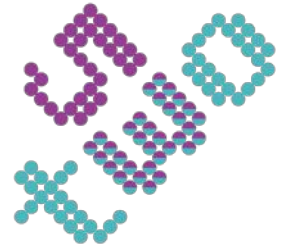
Our relationship with Manchester Children's Hospital School continues to grow, having worked with their students and patients in lockdown to create short-story videos read by local actors and children from across the region, including their own. We now run workshops developing confidence and creativity with their patients at The Christie, with a view to continuing to work across their departments throughout 2023.

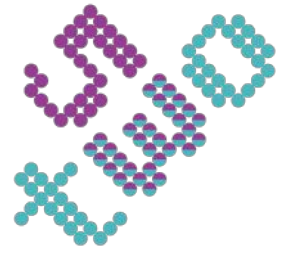
Manchester Deaf Centre:

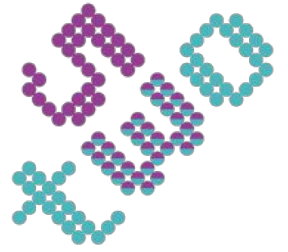
Since opening, 53two have forged strong relationships with Manchester Deaf Centre. Because of this and the fact that staff are trained in BSL, in November 2021 we were honoured to host a 'pre-ball' drinks reception for 80 BSL users from across the country. In 2022 we also hosted Glenn Meads, deaf artist, as he launched his new paintings.

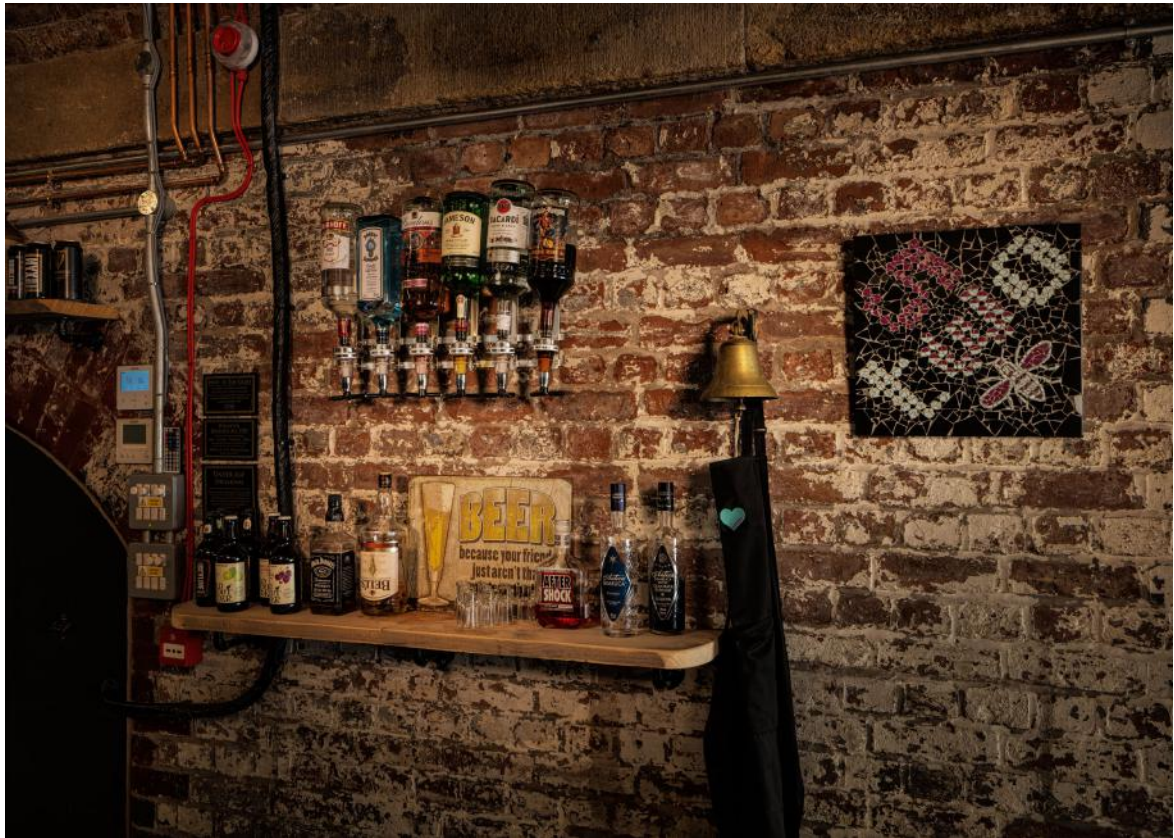
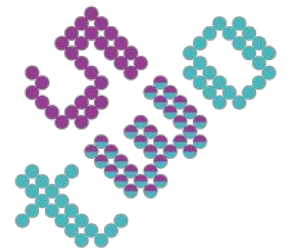
Alongside this, we have been able to host numerous productions, private events, live music, comedy and film screenings as well as our charitable activities prior to our new home on Watson St. Our bar/café has been open 7 days a week and provided an arts hub for creatives to work, meet and play. Below are a selection of photographs to show the venue now and just a snippet of the theatre/events we have hosted as well as shots of the proposed installation of the Changing Places Toilet.

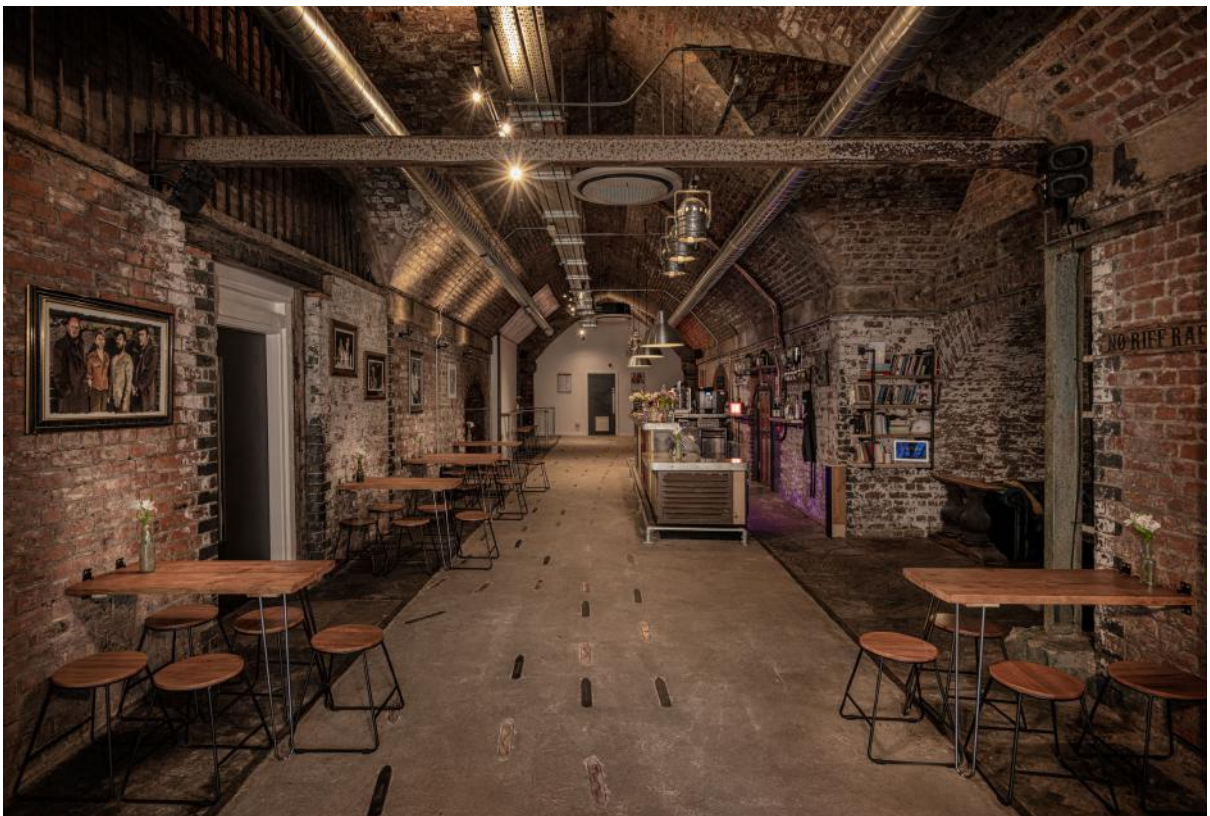
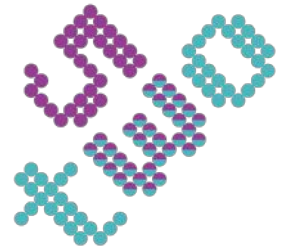


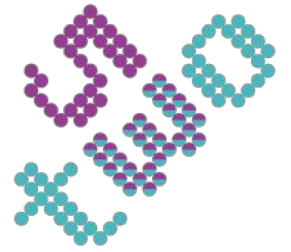


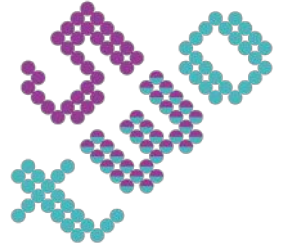








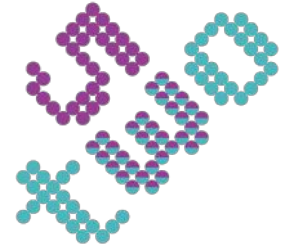




Arch 18 – Theatre/Events Space. Pre-development considerations/design brief.

Arch 18 is currently in use as a 'pop-up' theatre and events space. It is the intention to continue to raise funds for this arch to be made into a more permanent space with full ventilation, heating, accessible dressing rooms, changing places toilet/'Freedom Suite' and 150 retractable seats. Everything in the space is owned by the venue and has been acquired through fundraising over the past 5 years. It is the initial plan to maintain the same structure that we currently have, keeping the space flexible and therefore open to as many different events as possible. We have to date used the space for, alongside theatre; banquets, bands, private parties, film screenings, seminars, awards ceremonies and more.

Our plans show structures providing toilets and dressing room/breakout areas in the backstage area. An acoustic wall to separate backstage and the auditorium has already been built. Plans will mean that actors and patrons can be kept separate, as is expected in theatres. Soil-pipes/drainage etc, have already been installed in the first phase of the build, joining Arch 18's drainage on to the main drains of Arch 19.



Watson Street Arches - 53two

Drawings prepared by CODA Architects can be found [here](#). Whilst these may develop and vary during subsequent discussions, the general arrangement will, we anticipate, remain substantially the same.

As mentioned, the current capacity is as it will always be, at 150 seats. However, it is our goal to install these as retractable bleacher seats as opposed to the current steel deck which is heavy and cumbersome to move, taking a couple of days. This allows for easy and total clearance of the entire theatre area for set events such as weddings etc.

It is a requirement that the bar area can be acoustically separated from the performance area, to allow it to function commercially whilst performances are in progress. Although the theatre is operational, we do still require this acoustic booth. Full disabled access toilet, changing/dressing rooms/shower room have been included backstage, whilst the public toilets in arch 19 (including disabled and baby changing facility) fulfil statutory requirements.

Engagement with the unique qualities of the space through design, textures and finishes have been and will be further developed through collaboration with the architects, and other partners who will come on board during the development of the theatre and backstage.



Logistics

The arches at Watson Street provide the perfect location for 53two. The list of attributes, practical and commercial benefits in arches 18 and 19 is endless. Not least the development around the area, removal of the Gt Bridgwater Tunnel, construction of Viadux and recent plans to [develop Great Northern Warehouse](#) will put us in potentially one of the most commercial locations in the city, directly on the cross-over between First St and Deansgate. Moreover, the Viadux development includes a new staircase and elevator that will take pedestrians from Deansgate Metrolink Station almost directly to our door.

The layout and location of Watson St compared to our previous venue has meant that we are now able to open 7 days a week focusing considerably more attention on the bar/cafe to date. Now the theatre is opened to full capacity, although not operating at a desired level, footfall to the venue will increase ten-fold.

The 53two bar is open from 11am and at weekends remains open until 1am, creating a quirky, attractive meeting and social space during the day and for theatre workers who typically finish their work late in the evening. In effect a *Theatre Club*, operating in a similar way to The Press Club with card holders for Members, Industry Professionals and even Coffee Club. We have also used this bar-space to programme live music, Pianoke, Quiz nights and hired the space out for events, wrap-parties and more. We ensure that we sell only local products, supporting the Greater Manchester economy, selling gluten-free beers, vegan cakes and pies and locally roasted coffee.

Any work on Arch 18 to develop the theatre space will cause minimal disruption to programmes already scheduled in the cafe and bar of Arch 19. Any work on conjoining walls and drainage was completed in the first phase of work. Recently, an acoustic wall has been built to separate backstage and the theatre auditorium.