



# ARMSTRONG HALL TRUST

Public dissemination – CARPIT brief

7<sup>th</sup> December 2023

Thornbury Baptist Church

# Welcome & introductions

Welcome

Health & Safety

Introductions

Jayne Stansfield – Chair

James Murray – Vice-chair

Danny Bonnett – Project manager

Other trust members present

# Plan for this evening

1. Background.
2. Aims & possibilities.
3. Introduce CARPIT project plan.
  - i. Update from Group Client.
  - ii. Update from leads of group A, C & T.
4. What comes next.
5. Opportunity for feedback & input.



Image courtesy of Doug Fowler

# What's the background?

- The Armstrong Hall and the Cossham Hall were used on a regular basis pre-Covid, providing a theatre space and a more traditional hall (the Cossham Hall), with a foyer and a bar, kitchen, changing rooms and toilets.
- **The condition of the complex had been deteriorating in recent years, with an increasing number of tasks creating a maintenance backlog.**
- The Armstrong Hall complex is owned by the Armstrong Hall Trust. There is one trustee of the trust, who is Thornbury Town Council.
- **Legal advice received by Thornbury Town Council indicates that separation is needed between the AHT and the daily activities of the Town Council. In practice, this means that the Officers of TTC are not able to work on behalf of AHT.**
- The current town councilors have been in post since May 2023, and since then we have been getting to grips with this task, and working out how we can;
  - Make forward progress....
  - Fund our work (with both expertise and cash)
  - Be faithful to our obligations as trustees of the AHT.
- **And so this is what we're now presenting to you, interested parties from Thornbury and surroundings.**



# What are we aiming for?

- For use as a public hall or halls, community & recreation centre & ancillary uses.
- For the recreation & leisure time occupation of the inhabitants of Thornbury & the surrounding areas including use for meetings, lectures & classes without distinction of political, religious or other opinions with the object of improving the conditions of life for said inhabitants.



# What are the possibilities?



Re-create a vibrant collection of spaces for use by all parts of the community, the town and surrounding areas.



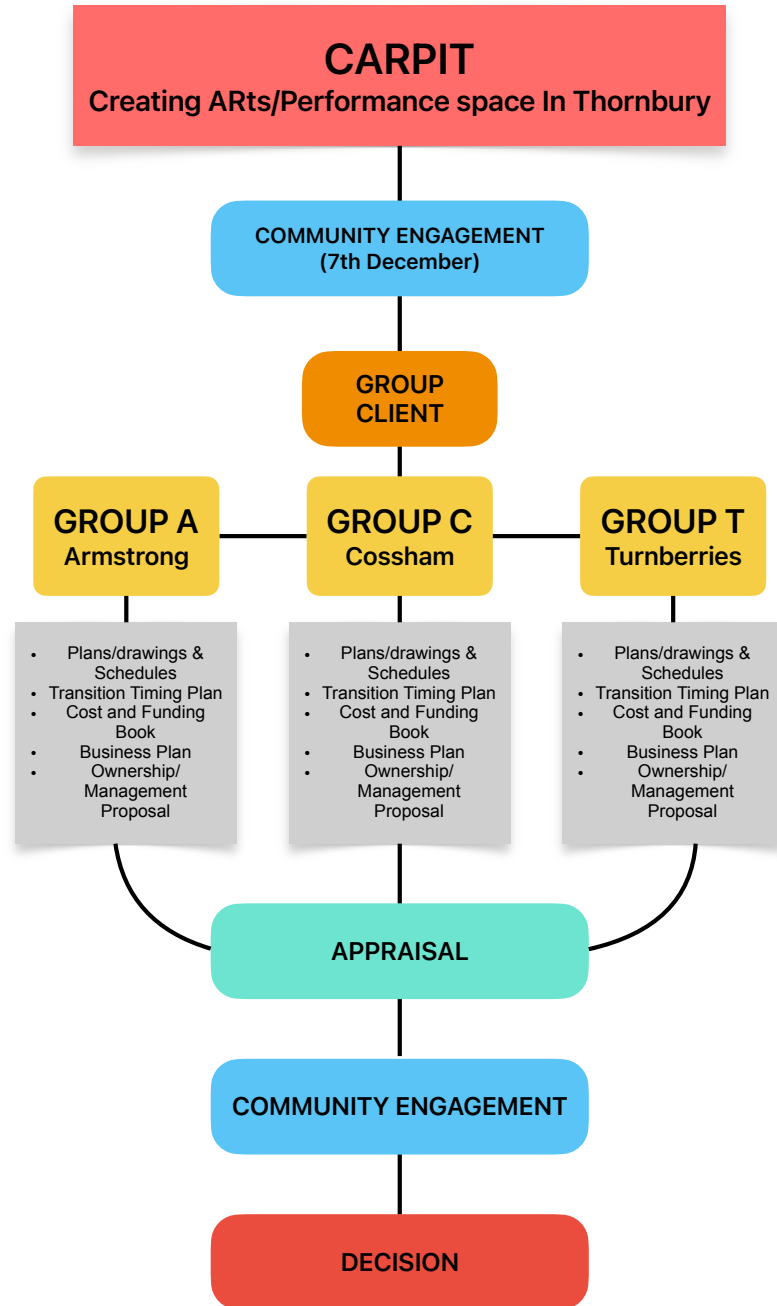
Economically self-supporting enterprise or collection of enterprises, supported by the community and supporting the community



Space in the accessible part of town drawing people into Thornbury and so adding to the vibrancy of the town.



And more, and more and more.....



**CARPIT**  
Creating ARts/Performance space In Thornbury

Community Engagement

**GROUP CLIENT**

James Murray. Danny Bonnett. Simon Johnson & Chris B will be preparing a client brief, producing client spec, looking at funding routes & facilitating the appraisal stage of group dossiers.

# GROUPS BRIEF

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Plans, drawings & schedules

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Transition timing plan

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Cost & funding book

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Business plan

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Ownership/management  
proposal

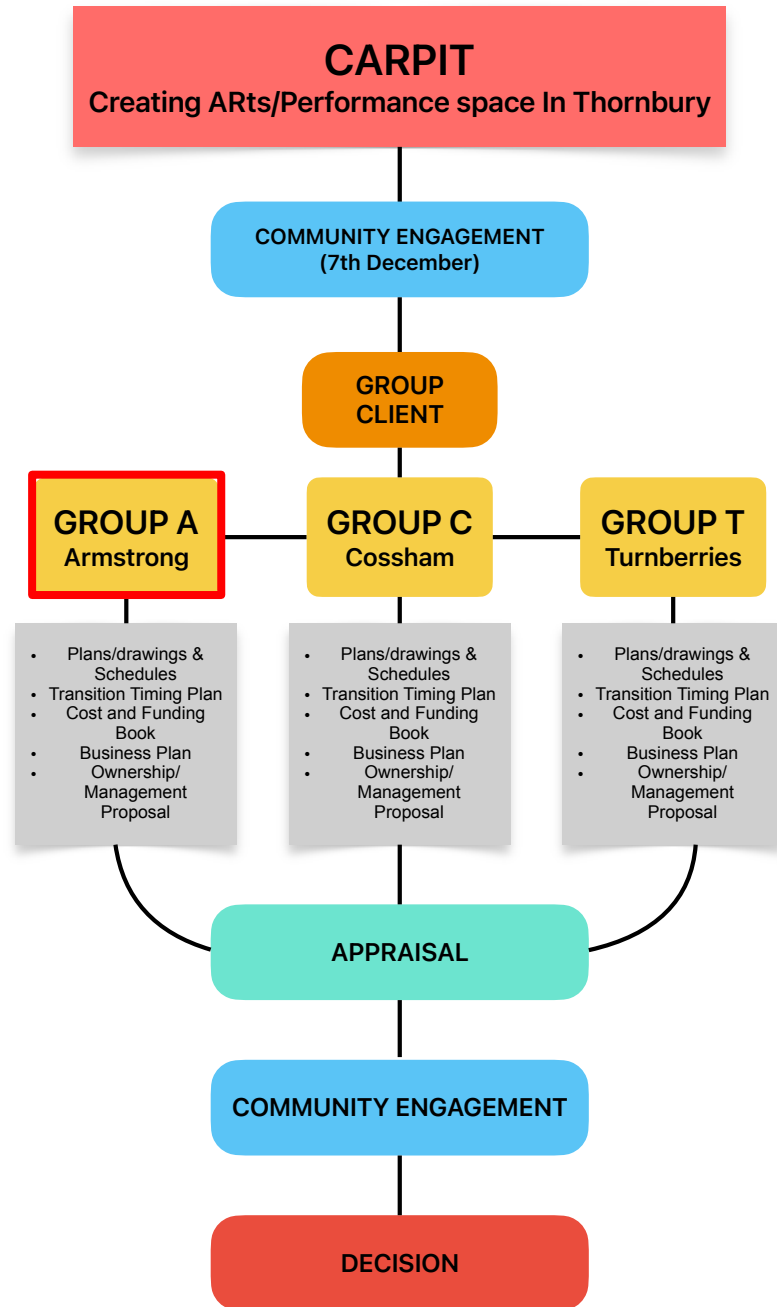


**AHT Client Specification**

**Theatre/Arts/Leisure Space in Thornbury - Requirements**

	Danny Bonnett	Name of person			
	danny_bonnett@yahoo.co.uk	Email address of person or organisation			
	CARPIT - Group Client	Name of organisation			
<b>Title</b>	<b>Sub-title</b>	<b>Must have</b>	<b>Nice-to-have</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Main Hall</b>		300	450	people	450 people flat seated will need circa 350 to 400m2
	Permanent staging		yes	m2	what area of stage to be provided to be determined
	Removable staging		yes	m2	Minimum spec is good quality removable staging.
	Fixed Proscenium Arch		yes		
	Demountable Arch	yes			Minimum spec is a demountable arch.
	Fly Tower				Not needed
	Loose/horizontal seating	Yes		no. seats	
	Banked retractable seating		yes		Some banked seating would be ideal - 100-150 seats. Preferably moveable.
	Sub-divisions for hall	yes			Divide into 1/3s. Some soundproofing between sections.
	Projector screen		yes		minium spec is screen in smaller hall.
<b>Secondary Hall</b>		100	150	capacity	100 people requires about 80 to 85m2
	Permanent staging	Yes		m2	
	Removable staging		yes	m2	removable stage extension would be ideal.
	Fixed Proscenium Arch				Not needed
	Demountable Arch		yes		
	Fly Tower				Not needed
	Loose/horizontal seating	100	150	no. seats	
	Banked retractable seating				Not needed
	Balcony		40	no. seats	
	Projector screen	Yes			
<b>Foyer</b>	foyer	100		m2	100m2 minimum - may be combined with Box Office/Bar. Foyer size will be related to maximum venue capacity.
<b>Rehursal rooms</b>		yes - 2	2 more		Use for music practice, singing, briefings, counseling, small group rehursals.
<b>Bar</b>		yes			
	Permanent Bar Area		yes		some kinds of event would expect a bar/refreshments. Bar/cafe could be franchised.
	Area for temporary bar	Yes			Events like weddings and theatre will need a bar
<b>Toilets</b>		Yes			Unisex toilets ideal wide range of uses. Include disabled facilities.
	for audience/public	Yes			must include baby change/family toilet and disabled facility
	for performers	Yes			must include disabled facility
	Baby changing/family toilet	Yes			
	Showers for performers or staff.	Yes - 2			necessary as a good employer to provide showers for staff
<b>Changing rooms</b>		Yes	yes		consideration shall be given to safeguarding - separate facilities for youth and adults, or changing cubicles for all.
<b>Make-up area</b>			yes	area	May be incorporated into Changing Rooms area.
<b>Offices</b>		Yes - 2	2 more		Open plan for 4 people - nice to have space for 2 more.
<b>Kitchens</b>		Yes			Some food preparation area will be needed for some users.
	Main Kitchen		yes		Consider if main kitchen will be available to all users or will catering be provided by a franchisee? Business case to justify.
	Small kitchen	yes			
<b>Other Facilities</b>					
	On-site parking for performers	Yes			Some parking will be needed for performers - space for 1 truck and 3 cars
	On-site parking for public				Not needed. Will use town parking.
	Building Regulations compliance	Yes			
	Fire Safety compliance	Yes			
	Electrical safety compliance	Yes			
	Exemplary energy efficiency		yes		an evaluation of lifetime energy emissions and carbon emissions will be done for all options.
	Security of tenure in perpetuity		yes		this is clearly preferred, but may not be achievable. How long is enough?
	Security of tenure for 100 years or more	yes			
	Within walking distance of public car park	yes			The space needs to be within walking distance of St Mary St/Rock St car parks
	Cycle parking facilities	yes			Cycle parking space on-site for 10 bikes. Overspill can park near library.
	Disabled access provisions	yes			Ideally level access throughout to minimise ramps and lifts needed.

# CLIENT SPEC



# GROUP A

ARMSTRONG

complete refurb

Introduce members

Update from lead – John Reynolds

- A reassessment of the future of the Armstrong Hall, together with options, was undertaken in early 2018.
- One option was to go for a full rebuild (excluding the Cossham Hall), and the other was for an extensive refurbishment of both halls, and with new-build additions to the Armstrong Hall. It is fair that we look at both.



# Full rebuild

After demolition, which would leave the Cossham Hall and Museum untouched, there would be a sizeable new construction, surrounding the Cossham Hall and joining on to the Museum. The Armstrong Hall would be one lofty storey in height, and the remainder 2 storeys high. Total projected seating capacity of both halls would be 502



# Refurb /extend

The refurbish and extend option remains essentially within the existing footprint, but with extended and upgraded changing rooms at rear, and at front a 2-storey extension of the foyer area and with a much-improved WC provision, and a slightly smaller bar and kitchen layout. There could be extension into the Bakery Annexe. Total projected seating capacity of both halls would be 442

Both options would include retractable, tiered seating in the Armstrong Hall and must include a high quality of fit, compliance with all current legislation, and a high standard of thermal insulation.

## Transition timing

- This is difficult to estimate without first having run both options past an architect and a Quantity Surveyor, but the **rebuild** option, once **planning permission** has been obtained, might require some manual demolition, given the proximity of residential accommodation. This, and possible noise and dust nuisance could slow down the process. Then there is the not-insignificant matter of debris removal and vehicle access. A guesstimate would be 3-4 months to clear the site, break up floor slabs and excavate for new foundations, followed by probably 24 months of construction. Again, this would all have to be verified by professionals. The Cossham Hall, being in the middle of new build, would not be usable until well into the contract.
- The **refurb and extend** option would need planning permission for the changes, and for construction work to start with the 2-storey entrance foyer, at the same time as the refurbishment of the Cossham Hall, so as to enable safe public access to the Cossham Hall as soon as possible. This would be used to restart the income stream. The dressing room extension, Armstrong Hall refurbishment and Bar/Kitchen/WC/Function Room refit and upgrade would have to be timed to prevent mutual interference. A guesstimate on contract duration is still a guess, but maybe 18 months.

These were estimated by architects in early 2018 to be as follows:

- Full rebuild £4,910,000
- Refurb/extend £2,839,000

Updating these costs to 2023 values is something best left to a Quantity Surveyor, but an indicator of **inflation taken from the CPI** in the interim would result in the following:

- Full rebuild £6,119,000
- Refurb/extend £3,538,000

Construction costs do not necessarily follow the same rate of increase since world events can influence materials costs.

The construction materials price index would indicate the following:

- Full rebuild £7,383,000
- Refurb/extension £4,269,000

The next question is, where will the money for this come from?

- A professional fundraiser will be needed. There must be an obvious commitment and financial contribution of some size from Thornbury residents, or it will be impossible to attract external funding of any appreciable size from donors.

## Costs

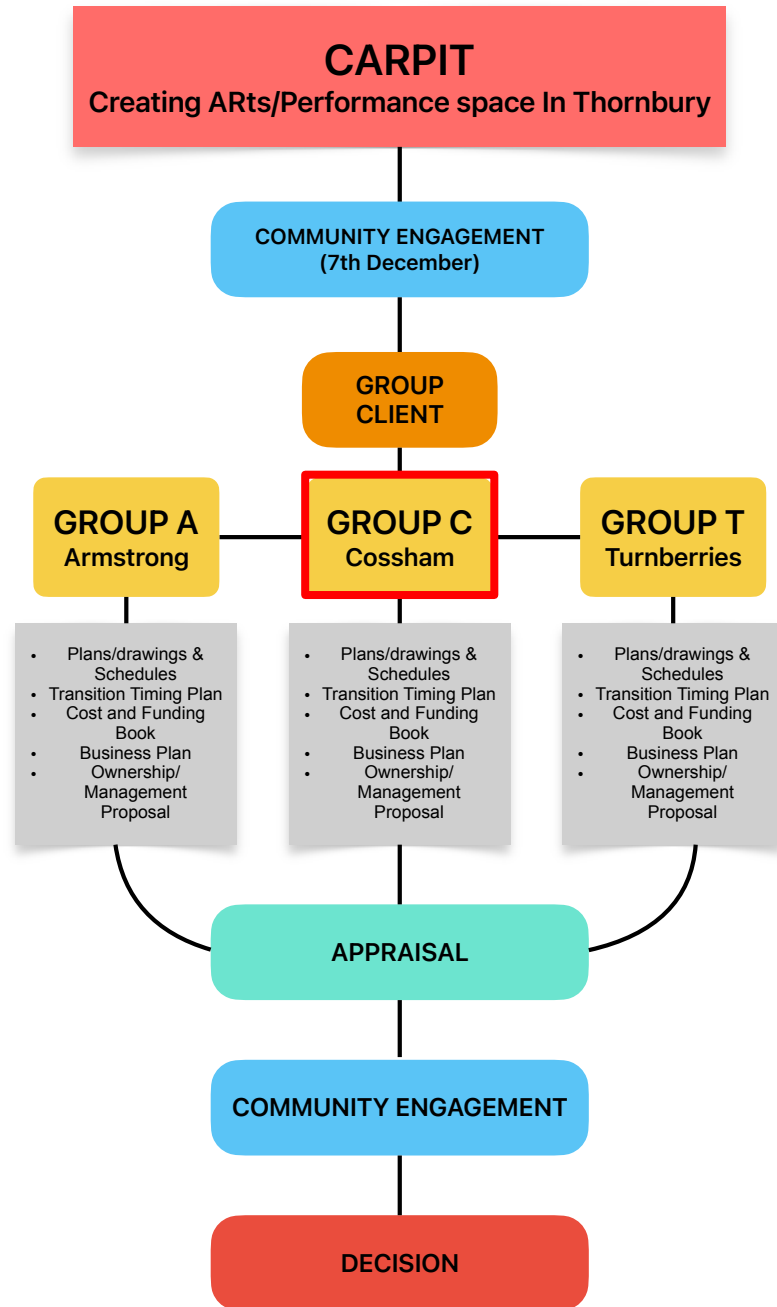
## **Business Plan**

- This needs specialist attention. Without a sound plan, there is no means to attract funding.

## **Ownership/management proposal**

- The Trust has been considering a CIO/CIC arrangement for this, and it has been made clear by a professional 2023 update that:
  - The venue will need a manager and business-getters, to ensure ongoing use by a wide range of clubs and organisations (diversification of income streams)
  - There must be a management committee including people used to dealing with theatrical business and community activities. Town Councillors, as Trustees, do not necessarily have these skills
  - There should be no reliance on grant funding. The venue will have to pay for itself.

Business plan &  
management  
proposal



# GROUP C

COSSHAM

phased refurb

Introduce members

Update from lead – Jill Dimond



## Option C

- Option C Group

- The impact on many of the larger community groups which used to hire facilities in the Armstrong Hall Complex has been substantial since its closure post-Covid.
- As an example, our musical theatre groups have been obliged to take their major productions far away from Thornbury, thereby reducing accessibility for local people, which in turn reduces activity within the town. Thus a cycle of diminishment is now underway, and the trend needs to be reversed with urgency.
- Accordingly, Option C Group will be focusing on returning provision to the area as quickly yet as efficiently as possible, with a clear eye on the long-term future.
- The Armstrong Hall Complex, despite its lack of maintenance in recent times, still offers an excellent layout in a very good location at the top end of the old town.

Flights:  
Emergency Exit

Changing

Stage  
stage level 101.00

Armstrong  
Hall

Armstrong  
Hall  
level 100.00

Preparation Room  
at level 102.80

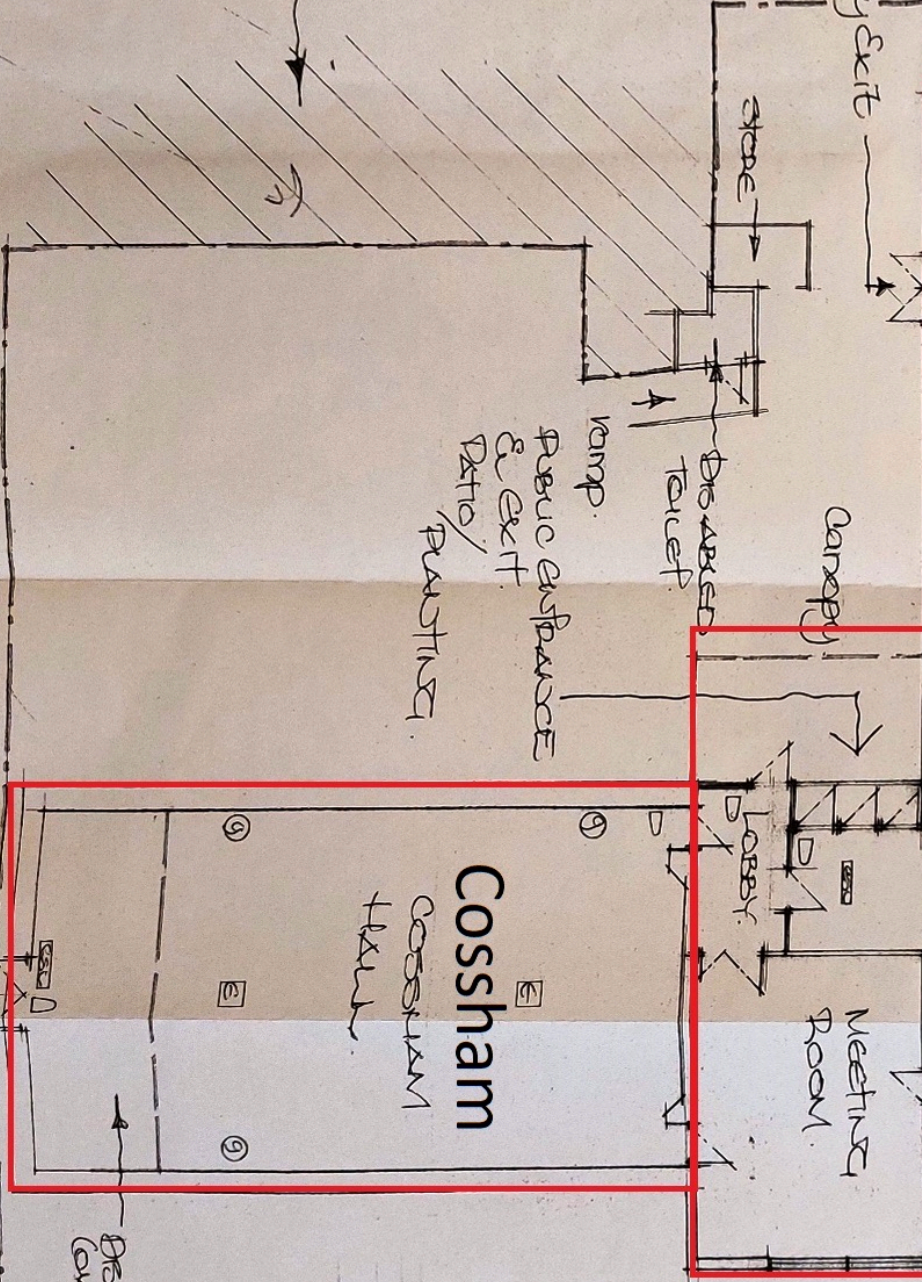
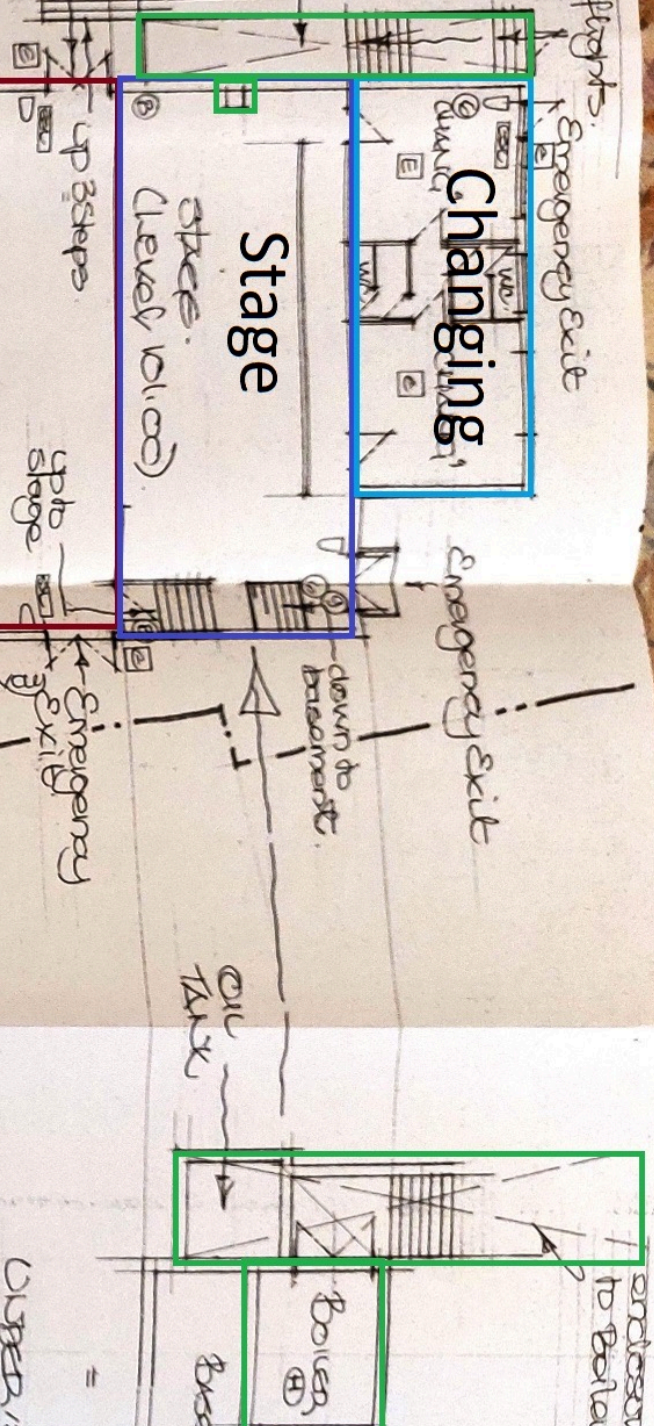
Foyer  
Kitchen  
Male  
Female  
Bar  
Office  
Meeting Room  
Lobby

Cossham  
Hall

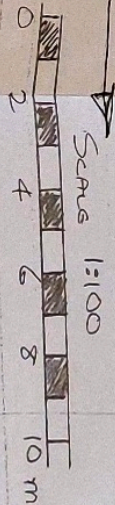
Cossham  
Hall

Disused  
(over)

Hand  
to sh



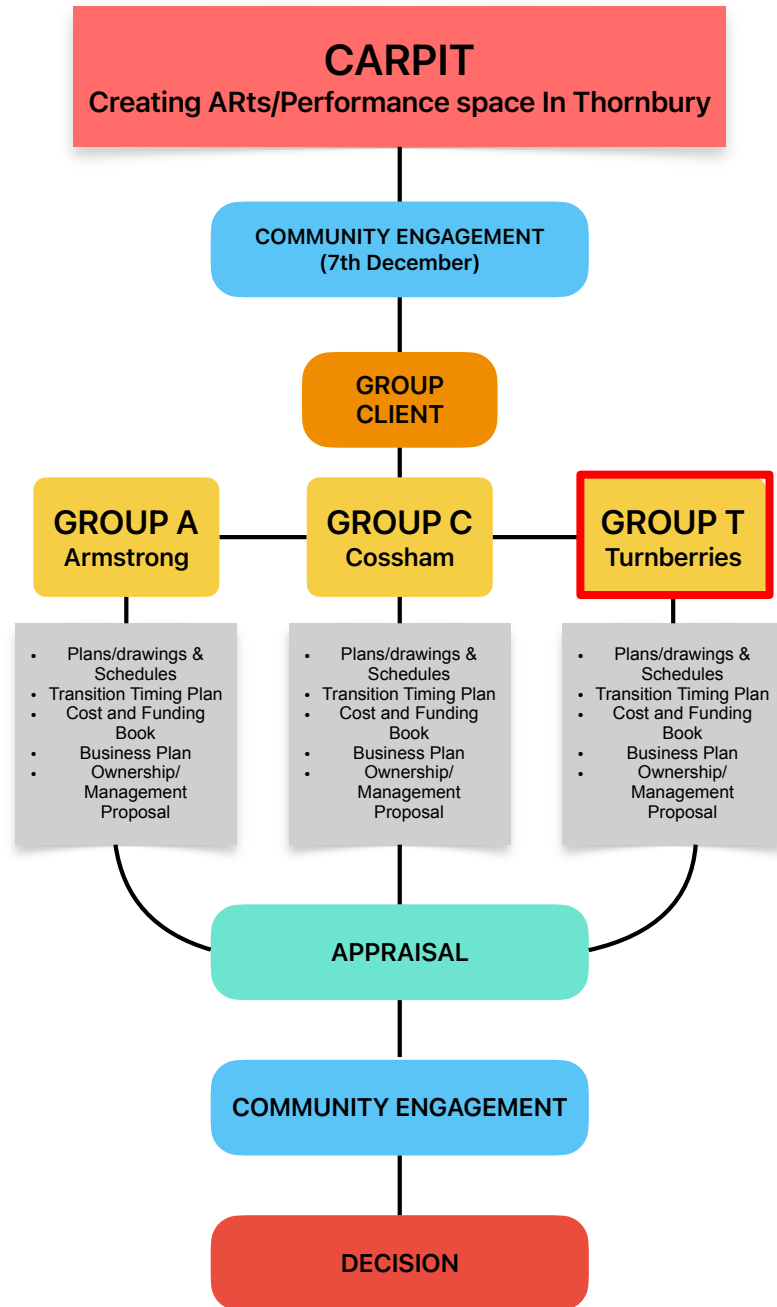
GROUND FLOOR PLAN



curved street

- The site benefits from having two physically separate halls. This means that a noisy activity can take place at the same time as a quiet one without interference.
- The Cossham Hall provides not only good acoustics, suitable for smaller musical events, performances, presentations and film showings, but also a historic space enjoyed by art groups and lending itself to art exhibitions and museum displays. It is likely that it can be opened relatively quickly, since the old building is essentially sound in structure, and we will see if it is feasible to do so from early on.
- The bigger Armstrong Hall, purpose built in the 1970s, facilitates large meetings, parties and performances of all descriptions. It may need further structural investigation and will need a lot more work, so this hall is likely to take longer to reopen. When it does, our larger groups can perform and meet there again, and professional acts can be invited in to entertain us.
- There is a further, substantial area of less recognised potential: the Foyer. Its position between the two halls has always provided a central service area, with toilets, a bar/meeting room, kitchen, office and a further meeting room. This big space is crying out for redesign, to increase possibilities for activity and to improve public comfort and safety.
- Option C Group will ultimately indicate the timing and interrelation of the opening of these separate but well-integrated facilities, with the aim of creating an excellent venue for the inhabitants of the town, the surrounding area and visitors from further afield.
- However, at the heart of the reason for the closure of the Complex in 2021 was the outdated and weak business model for its operation. We will be researching the most successful similar venues, which continue to thrive despite the dearth of public funds; and will also engage with user groups, local businesses and the entire community in the local area to develop a solid business plan that will work here in Thornbury. We will be supporting the Client Group's work into seeking funding for capital development, but establishing income streams will be an ongoing activity for a new not-for-profit, community enterprise. As restoration work is being planned, flexibility of use must be addressed, so that the centre can meet the changing needs of local hirers, yet also enable commercial enterprises to hire facilities and furnish further income.
- In current times, survival will demand energy, agility and commitment, accompanied by a sound grasp of the many aspects of operating a centre of this nature. One absolutely vital requirement will be the involvement of a large number of community-minded individuals, each doing a lot or a little, to fit in with and enrich their lives. In addition, professionals in marketing and technical management will undoubtedly need to be recruited to guide operations; and behind the scenes will be a body of Trustees who care about the preservation of community, the arts and culture locally.
- So, Option C Group has a lot of variables to investigate and plenty to do, but we look forward to working with the other Option Groups to ensure an optimal long-term outcome for all stakeholders.

## Option C



# GROUP T

## TURNBERRIES extension

Introduce members.

Update from lead –

Fiona Deas

- This group has been tasked with the feasibility of building a hall with the capacity of the Armstrong hall, by the side of the Turnberries building.
- As a Group, we have looked more on the costing and professional running of a public building, rather than just a list of 'wants'.
- At present, Thornbury has more halls than you could reasonably expect in a town of this size. There are 5 church halls, the leisure centre, the golf club, Turnberries, The Chantry, and not forgetting Tytherington village hall close by.
- All of them are busy, and, to successfully re-open The Armstrong Hall Site would obviously mean attracting the users of these halls to a refurbished hall and reducing the users in the other halls. This would make NO net gain for the town while increasing heating and administration costs. It would bring into question the sustainability of all the current halls not to mention the Armstrong Hall Site if the users did not return. Therefore all we are missing is a multi use space with a total seating of around 350, and flexible ancillary space i.e. changing rooms, kitchen, toilets, showers, a cafe or bar. This would bring entertainment, and larger community space, to the town.
- There is enough room on the piece of land at the side of Turnberries to fit a hall of that size and It would be connected by a foyer to Turnberries in order to make use of the already existing facilities, such as toilets, showers, bar and cafe area.
- Turnberries was built with the future in mind and is already a flexible space. It is light, airy and welcoming and built to the highest standards, with excellent disabled access. It already has rooms to take over 100 seated and 200 standing. There is a trained salaried management team in place, who feel that they are now in need of more marketing and fundraising personnel, in order to use the building to its full potential.
- We have met with some trustees from Turnberries who would welcome further interest and are happy to discuss a new trust that would be formed. They have generously provided figures of their income streams, and costs and hopefully these figures will be taken into account to build up the business plans for our options. They are the latest up to date costs in running a public building in this area at required standards.
- A business plan is not just about the costs of running a building and it will be used in order to raise funds for the future and must include the desire and potential use of the site from the Town. This of course is easier if the site is already running. For this purpose we have been joined in this process by a gentleman with knowledge in this area and also knowledge of the history of the Armstrong Hall and Thornbury.
- Discussions are moving along with SGC and these include the lease of the land and the use of the Turnberries building. We are looking at least 50 years but hoping for 125. At present we are collating the realistic building costs.
- Part of the cost of building the new hall would include the money from the sale of the land, that is the Armstrong Hall site. We know that this is difficult for some people in the town, and many people who had associations and fond memories. Many people have said it is the heart of the town, but buildings should serve people, not the other way round.

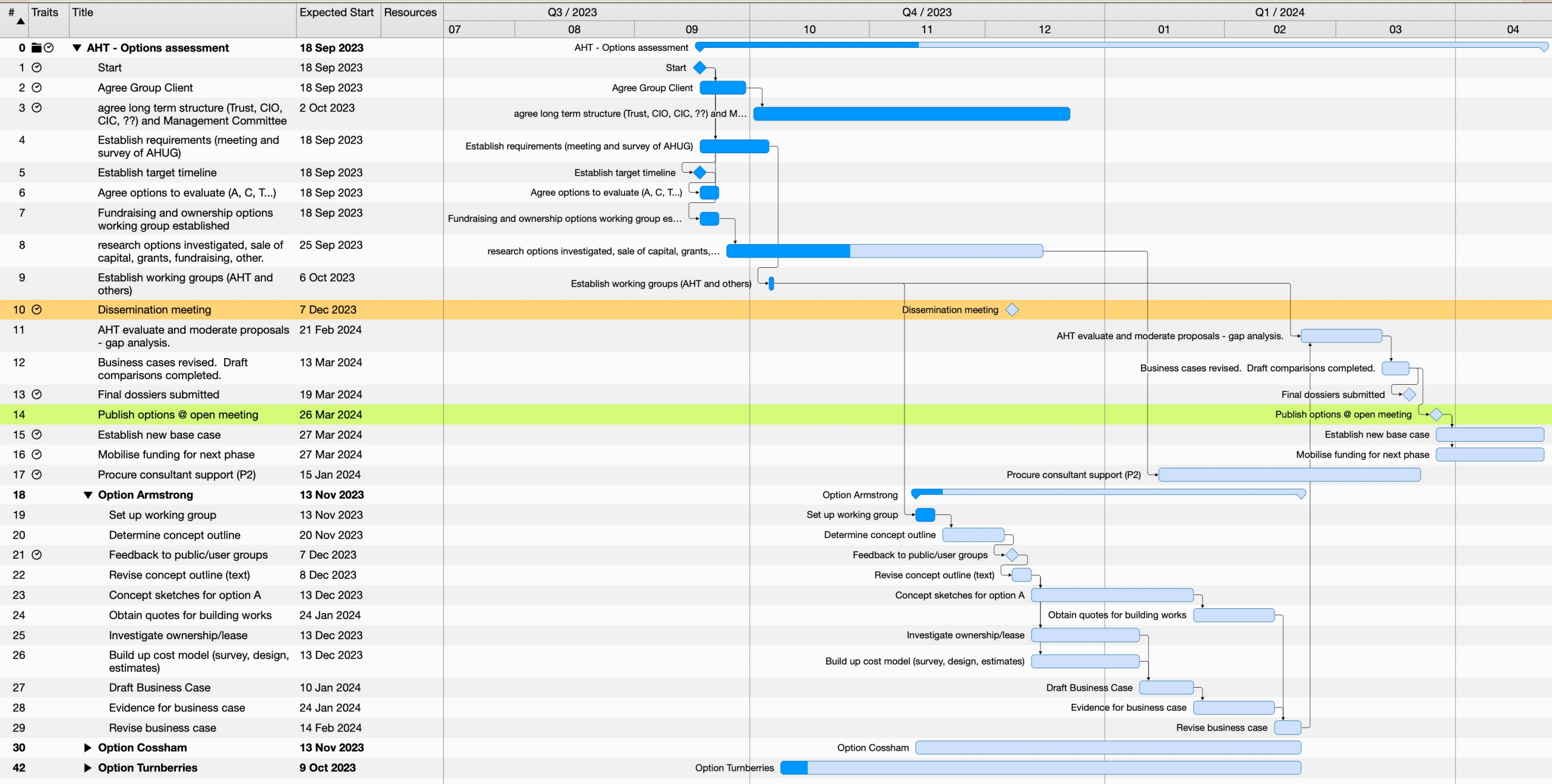
## Option T



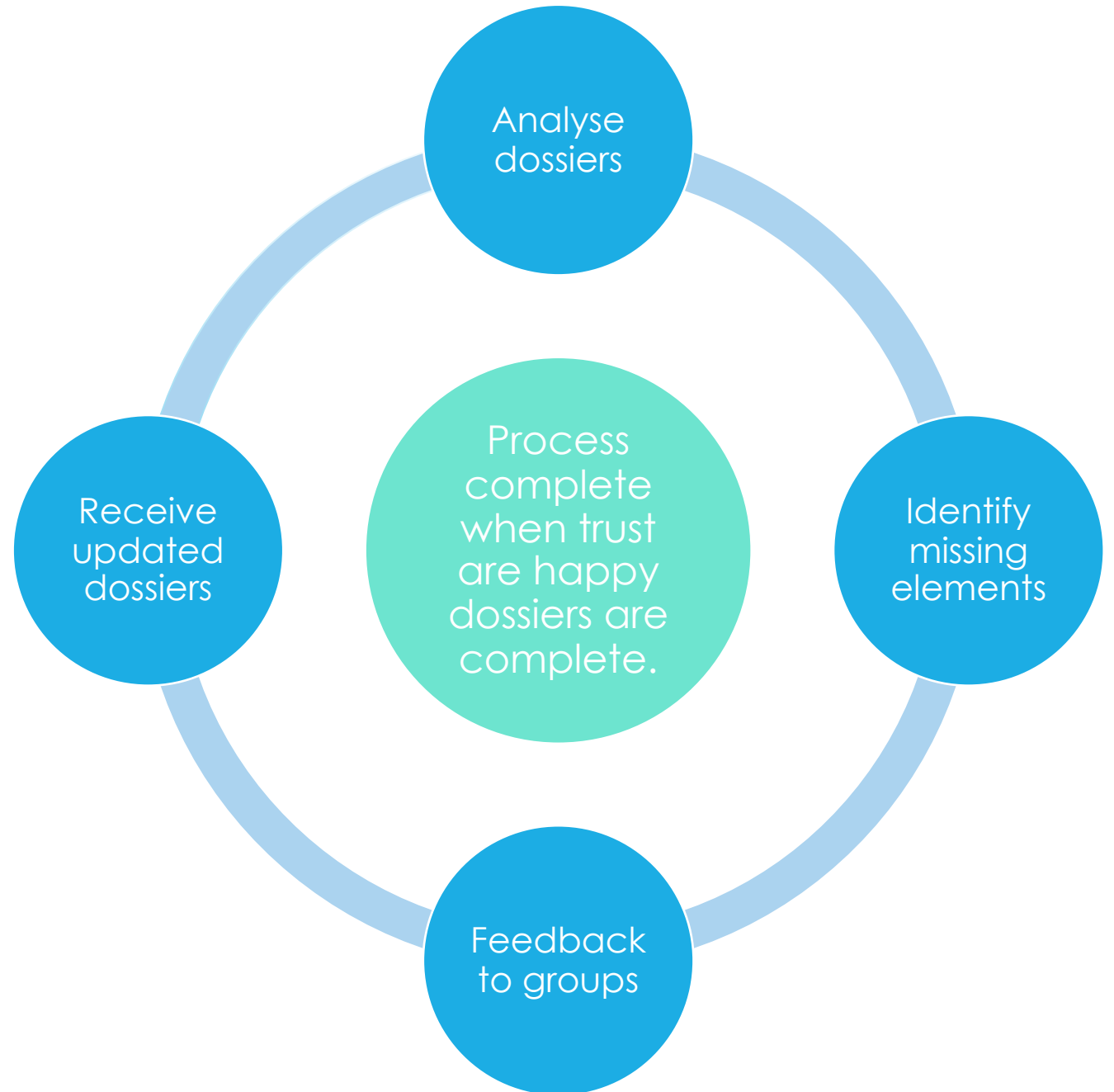
# Turnberries

- Artists impression

# The CARPIT Gantt chart



# APPRAISAL PHASE





# 2nd Community Engagement

(Scheduled for late March)

email

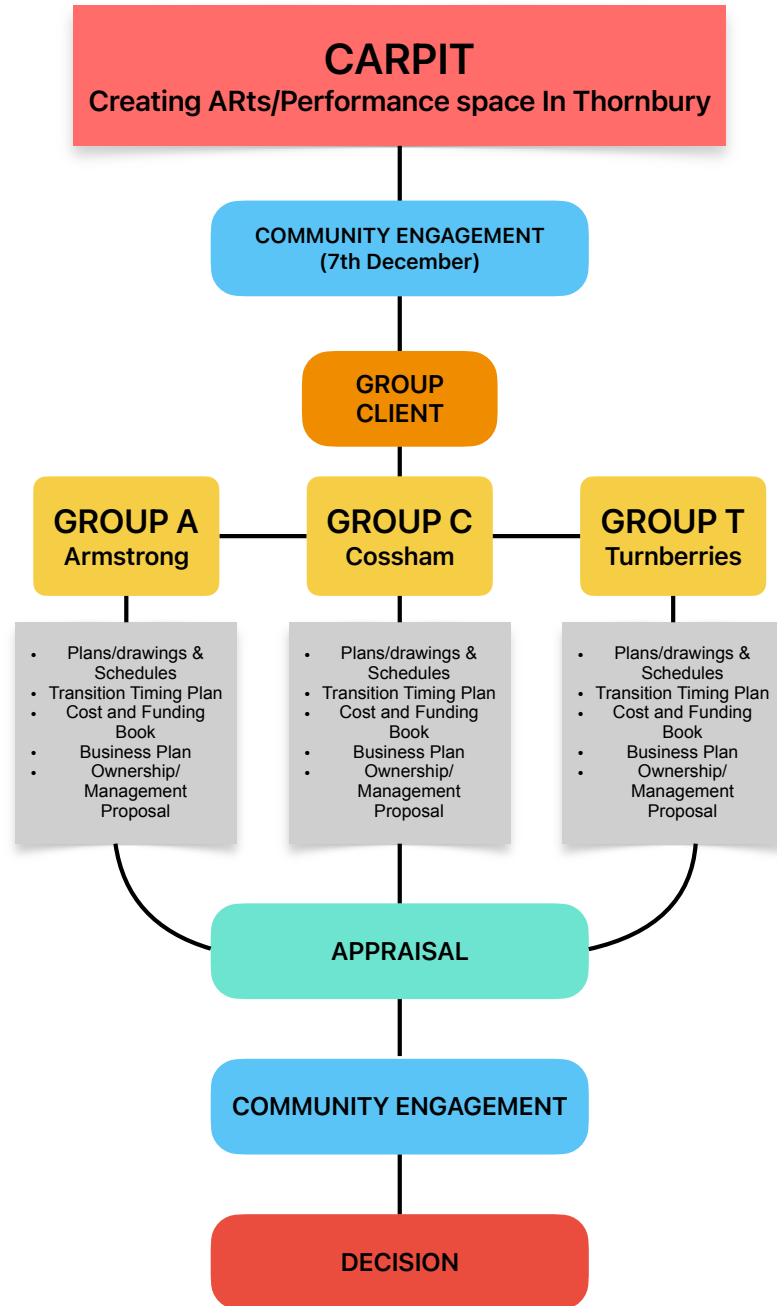
Dossiers with appendices to user groups & general public (mailing list collected today)

in person

Engage with Thornbury community on dossier content

in meeting

Feedback comments and reflection to group members



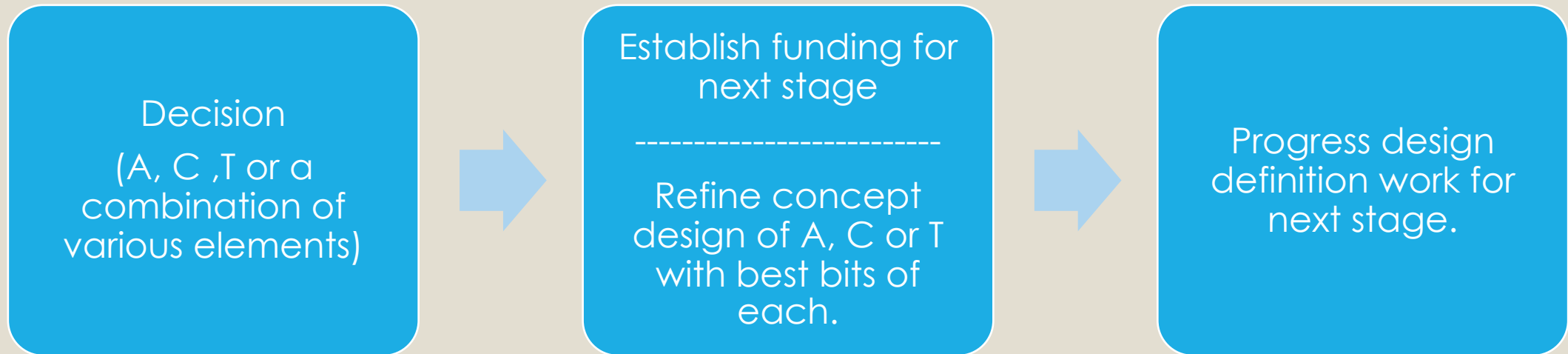
# DECISION

Trust to make decision.

Rationale for decision and outline of next steps to be presented to the user groups & general public.

Hard work begins!

# What happens from there....





# OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMENTS & INPUT

Questions & comments from the floor



# Thank you & goodnight

For any future questions or input please  
use;

[armstronghalltrust@gmail.com](mailto:armstronghalltrust@gmail.com)

or visit

[www.armstronghalltrust.co.uk](http://www.armstronghalltrust.co.uk)