

A bigger, brighter Broadway

Patrick McDonnell looks at the £1m expansion of Letchworth's last remaining cinema

The Broadway Cinema in Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire, has undergone a £1m refurbishment that includes the addition of a new fourth screen with a 50-seat auditorium. The completion of the works was marked last month with a premiere screening of *The Duchess*.

The independently run venue Broadway Cinema Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation. It is Letchworth's only remaining cinema, following the closure of The Palace cinema in 1977.

The Art Deco cinema opened as a single-screen venue in 1936 to a design by architects Bennett and Bidwell. In 1996 it underwent an extensive £2m four-month refurbishment designed by McFarlane Latter Architects. This project included restoring and developing of the Broadway into a three-screen facility, with Screen One having 460 seats, Screen Two with 166 seats and Screen Three 164 seats.

Stuart Kenny, chairman of the Broadway Cinema, says: "It was an exciting project for both the cinema and the town. While the refurbishment of 12 years ago has lasted well, it was time to ensure the cinema was ready for the next decade and beyond."

For the new works, McFarlane Latter was re-appointed as architect and project manager. The new Screen 4 is fitted with a 5-metre wide screen supplied by Cinema Screens and installed by Sound Associates, who also fitted the 35mm Cinemeccanica Victoria 8 projectors and the auditorium's Dolby digital sound system featuring a CP650D processor.



The new Screen 4

The auditorium's 50 seats are from the Roma range supplied and installed by Euro Seating UK. "The auditorium walls are lined with deep red fabric panels coordinated with plum coloured seating and dark carpet," says architect David Latter. "Despite the omission of drapes from this auditorium, the halo-lit screen and overall appearance provides a feeling of warmth and luxury."

Screen One also has new seats, carpets and has been redecorated.

In addition to adding the new screen and improvements to the fabric of the building, such as a new roof and exterior redecoration, McFarlane Latter was responsible for improving disabled access to all areas of the venue.

"Disabled access has been provided via a lift from the entrance foyer to the new screen and the previously inaccessible cinema 1," says David Latter. "A

podium accessed from the crossover at the rear of the front seating provides excellent sight lines to the 10-metre screen without compromising other seat positions." Latter adds: "The circle foyer was replanned to accommodate the new lift and an additional concessions counter which manager Geoff Bartram intends to open at peak times."

Stuart Kenny says: "The immediate benefits of this refurbishment include providing an even more comfortable experience for its customers, with four screens, a wider choice of films on offer each week, the opportunity to show more films on release date and being able to hold on to films for longer."

The management will be looking at hiring out the new auditorium for private showings, meetings, conferences, or for training events during screen downtime. Screen

Four has a third projection port to allow conferencing.

The next phase of works will concentrate on updating the main concessions area in the original octagonal entrance foyer.

The Broadway refit team

Client: Broadway Cinema Ltd
Architects and Project Managers: McFarlane Latter Architects

Quantity Surveyors: Francis Graves

Structural Engineer: Furness Partnership

Sound and Projection: Sound Associates

Principal Contractor: GF Holding

Mechanical Contractor: Wilden Services

Electrical Contractor: Dicks Electrical



The foyer now features a lift for disabled access



The additional kiosk