SOUND DIPLOMACY

CHICHESTER

UPDATED SUPPLY ANALYSIS FOR A MULTI-PURPOSE ARTS AND LIVE MUSIC VENUE IN CHICHESTER CITY CENTRE

Chichester District Council

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SOUND DIPLOMACY HOLDINGS LTD London • Barcelona • Berlin • Delaware
info@sounddiplomacy.com **www.sounddiplomacy.com**

Introduction

A resilient music ecosystem is composed of a variety of assets encompassing those dedicated to music creation such as rehearsal spaces, as well as those dedicated to music exhibition such as venues and spaces for live performances and audience engagement. These assets serve as essential platforms for artists to create, perform, and connect with their audiences.

To understand the existing market conditions in Chichester and the changes since the previous market analysis in January 2025, we identified some of the most relevant parts of the music ecosystem, including the following:

- Music venues, nightclubs and theatres
- Events spaces with a significant music programme
- Pubs and restaurants with a significant music programme
- Rehearsal spaces

A database and map were created to visualise the current points of interest.

A comprehensive understanding of the local music scene helps:

- Determine what music and cultural scene already exists
- Understanding where competition is
- Identification of potential partners
- Identification of gaps in the market, including programming, size and provision

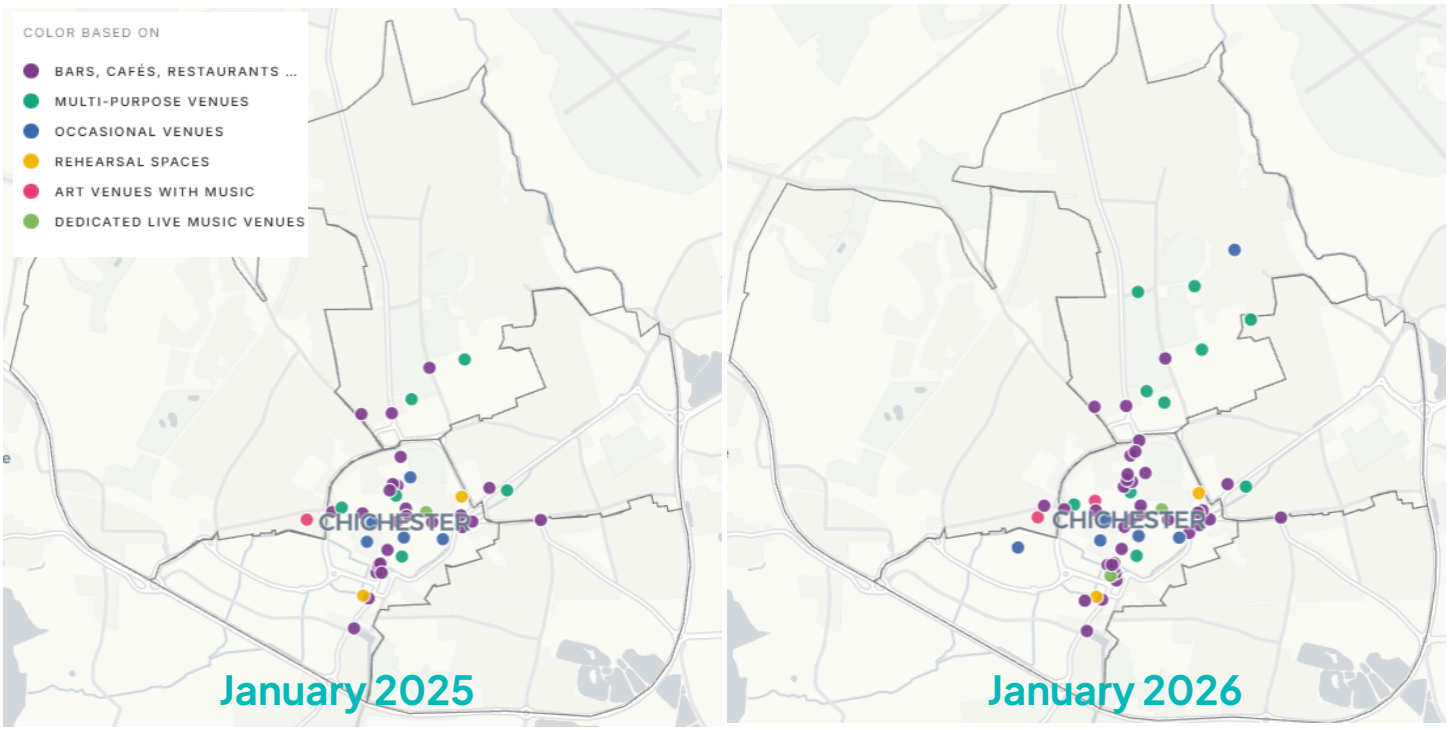
Overview of the music ecosystem assets

The total number of music spaces identified in Chichester is 67, including:[1]

- 40 bars, cafés, restaurants with music (60%)
- 13 multi-purpose venues (19%)
- 7 occasional venues (10%)
- 3 rehearsal spaces (4%)
- 2 dedicated live music venues (3%)
- 2 art venues with music (3%)
- 0 arenas
- 0 nightclubs

This represents an increase of 23 assets since the previous analysis in January 2025. This expansion is driven largely by diversification of the local hospitality sector, as 13 bars, cafés, and restaurants have integrated regular live music programming into their business models. Additionally, 7 multi-purpose venues have newly transitioned into hosting live performances.

Figure 1. Live Music Assets in Chichester Per Category, 2025 & 2026



[1] Please note that due to rounding, proportions may not sum to 100%.

Spaces Analysis

Exhibition

While various live music venues could be found, there are only two assets that are classified as dedicated live music venues, both based in the city centre: The Havana, an intimate grassroots venue with a 150–person capacity,[2] and Room 12 (formerly The Vestry), a versatile 320–capacity performance space hosting a curated mix of live bands, comedy, and DJ sets.[3] The latter is a particularly vital addition to Chichester's cultural landscape; having only opened in 2025, it successfully occupies a previously vacant niche for a professional, mid-sized performance venue, though the current programming has a heavy focus on open mics and karaoke nights (amongst broader programming) - both of which can be important for local talent development, but shows there's still a gap in terms of live music programming that will attract external acts and audiences.

The city hosts thirteen multi-purpose spaces with live music, including performing arts theatres, venues for hire, district council infrastructure, and community centres. These range in capacity from 80 to 1,300. The seven occasional venues encompass chapels and the Chichester Cathedral (around 500 seated capacity),[4] a park, university grounds, and a community club. Pubs, cafés and restaurants with music continue to host the majority of live music programming (60% of assets). In particular, the Foundry (a central pub), and the University of Chichester's Students' Union Bar (Zee Bar) host regular live music programming, with capacities of around 500 and 700 respectively.[5]

Chichester's live music ecosystem heavily relies on informal exhibition spaces, which lack adequate infrastructure such as dedicated staging, professional lighting, and high-fidelity sound systems. While having a range of informal spaces for live music offer benefits such as accessibility for artists of all levels, diverse audiences, and opportunities for connection, it simultaneously creates a 'glass ceiling' for local talent. The absence of dedicated live music venues can restrict career progression, often resulting in inconsistent bookings and lower compensation compared to professional circuits.

However, progress was made last year with the opening of Room 12. By providing the infrastructure that the wider ecosystem lacks (e.g. stage setups, load-in/load-out facilities, specialised acoustics, etc), this venue acts as a vital bridge between grassroots experimentation and the professional touring circuit. Yet, despite this advancement, the city's reliance on a single mid-sized asset highlights a remaining

[2] The Havana, "Homepage", accessed February 26, 2026, https://thehavana.co.uk/
[3] Room 12, "About Us", accessed February 26, 2026, https://www.room12.co.uk/aboutus
[4] Chichester Cathedral, "Homepage", accessed February 26, 2026, https://www.chichestercathedral.org.uk/
[5] Zee Bar, "About Us", accessed February 26, 2026, https://www.ucsu.org/aboutus/hire/

structural fragility. While Room 12 has begun to alleviate the instability that hinders the professional development of local artists, a wider network of similar dedicated venues is still required to continue to attract and retain high-calibre talent and establish Chichester as a consistent stop for national touring acts.

Industry Support

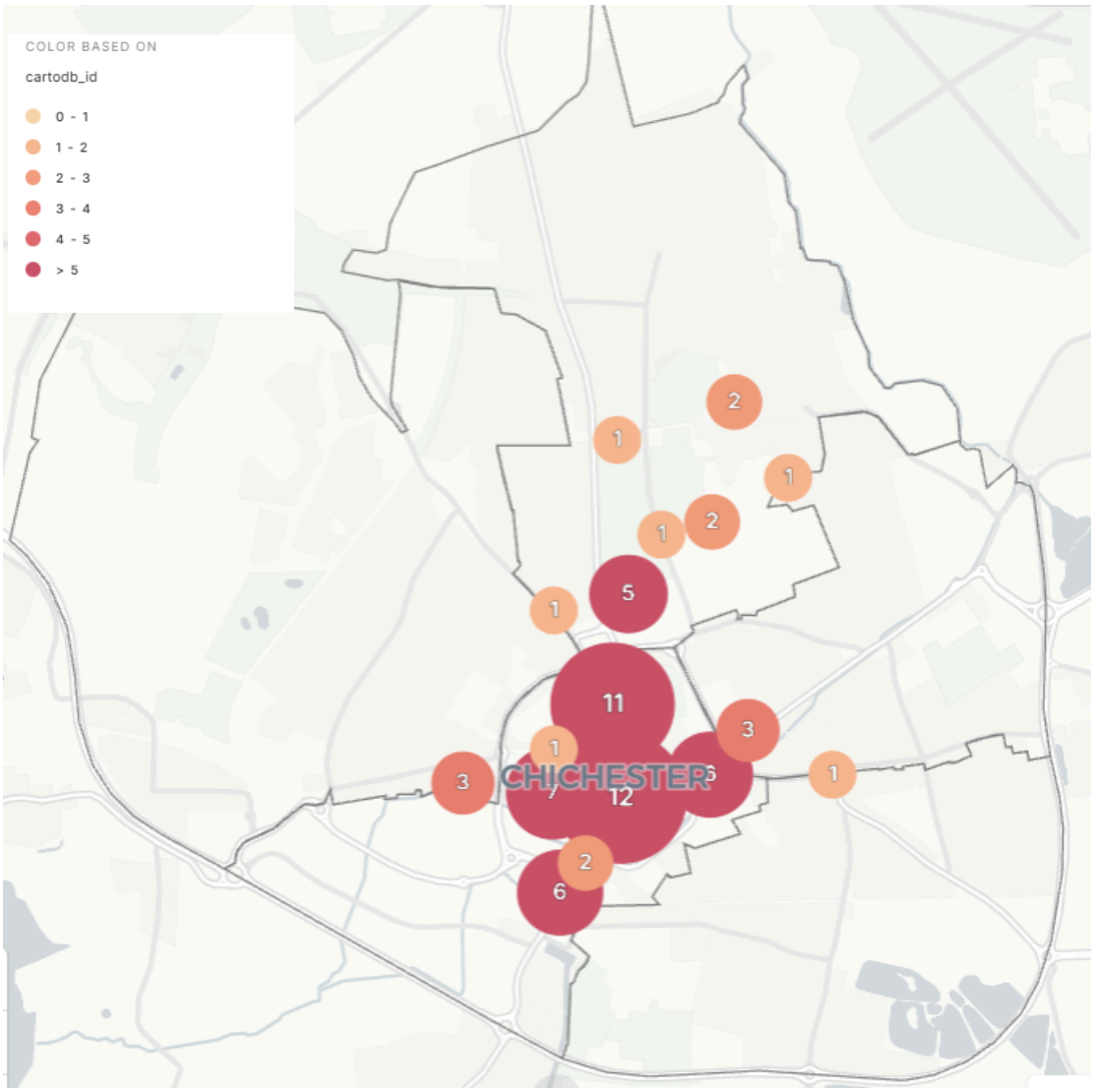
Chichester continues to host three rehearsal spaces. Two of these have professional music studios and recording facilities:

- The Chichester Music Academy hosts four good sized studios, including a dedicated drum room, and two larger rooms plus a rehearsal space. All these are fully equipped.[6]
- New Park Centre offers music classes and rooms to hire that can be used for rehearsal.[7]
- Whilst outside of the city centre, Airtight Studios[8] is a multi-room rehearsal facility and recording studio with live and multitrack capabilities. Their staff can engineer, produce, mix and master or help with advice, contacts, support and development. The studio's full band rehearsal rooms are available from 10am – 11pm everyday, and can offer backline as well as live recordings of rehearsals.[9]

[6] Chichester Music Academy, "Our Facilities", accessed February 26, 2026, https://chichestermusicacademy.com/our-facilities/
[7] New Park Centre, "What's On", accessed February 26, 2026, https://www.newparkcentre.org.uk/WHATSON
[8] Due to its location, Airtight Studios does not feature on the map
[9] Airtight Studios, "Homepage", accessed February 26, 2026, https://airtightstudios.wordpress.com/

Spatial Concentration

Figure 2. Spatial Concentration of Live Music Assets in Chichester, 2026



Chichester's live music scene is heavily centralised within the historic city walls. The majority of the city's live music assets, characterised by a dominant central hub of 12 venues surrounded by secondary clusters of 11, 7, and 6, are concentrated around the high streets and the Cross. This epicentre is composed largely of hospitality-based performance spaces complemented by the city's two dedicated live music venues.

This dense central core is supported by a smaller secondary cluster of 6 venues just to the south, spanning the area toward the train station and Southgate, and another cluster of 5 venues north of the city centre, concentrated around the Festival Theatre complex.

Beyond the city centre, the distribution becomes more sparse, with smaller outliers of 1 to 3 venues appearing to the north and east, aligning with residential hubs and institutional sites such as the University of Chichester.

Conclusion

The updated supply analysis for Chichester reveals a developing, yet still fundamentally fragile, live music ecosystem. Significant progress has been made since January 2025, notably with the diversification of the hospitality sector into regular music programming and the crucial opening of Room 12, a dedicated, mid-sized performance space - actions that demonstrate the recognition of programming live music as a valuable business model. This new venue has begun to address the "glass ceiling" for local talent by providing necessary professional infrastructure, acting as a vital platform for grassroots experimentation, yet the city is still missing a space for regular touring acts.

The analysis highlights a persistent and critical structural gap: the severe lack of formal, dedicated, and high-quality live music spaces capable of attracting sustained investment and national touring acts. Despite the increase in overall assets, the ecosystem overwhelmingly relies on informal venues (pubs, cafés, and restaurants) which lack the specialised infrastructure required for professional operation.

There is still a distinct and unfulfilled market niche for a significantly larger, dedicated venue - a high-capacity, purpose-built asset that can host up to 600 audience members - that is commercially robust enough to host music events every day of the week.

In summary, while recent improvements are encouraging, the future resilience and growth of Chichester's music scene are contingent upon filling this void for a larger, dedicated, and professionally managed performance venue.