

Our Ref.:3081

16 November 2017

James Knightley  
Planning Services  
North West Leicestershire Council  
Whitwick Road  
Coalville LE67 3FJ

Dear Mr Knightley,

**Snibston Discovery Park and Century Theatre, Ashby Road, Coalville LE67 3LN**

Application Ref: 17/01424/FULM

I write regarding the above application for development at Snibston Discovery Park. Please note our comments only relate to the aspects of the application that affect the Century Theatre, and that the Theatres Trust was not formally consulted, as per our statutory remit.

**Remit:** The Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. We champion the past, present and future of live theatre, by protecting the buildings and what goes on inside. We were established through the Theatres Trust Act 1976 'to promote the better protection of theatres' and provide statutory planning advice on theatre buildings and theatre use through The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, requiring the Trust to be consulted by local authorities on planning applications which include 'development involving any land on which there is a theatre'.

**Background and significance:** The Century Theatre is thought to be the only structured and fully equipped mobile theatre in the world, having been conceived in 1948 and finally taking to the road in 1952. It was a fully self-contained unit that allowed the cast to perform in different locations, but within the same theatre. The theatre, which includes stage, dressing rooms, auditorium with fixed seating and entrances, was composed of four large ex-RAF tractors, each pulling a 30ft trailer with a 10ft trailer hitched on behind. The rest of the convoy consisted of support services comprising six living quarter trailers, a dining car, kitchen, scenery van, booking office, double decker bus, an office and bathroom and a conventional caravan and jeep.

The Century Theatre toured for 23 years before becoming a permanent fixture in Keswick until 1996. One of the impacts of it touring was to raise interest in theatre and 18 of the towns visited then built permanent theatres of their own. Keswick received such impetus from this extraordinary venue that the local community eventually undertook fundraising to build the permanent 'Theatre by the Lake'. The Century made its final journey as a mobile structure in

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**Chair** Tim Eyles **Director** Jon Morgan

**Trustees** Richard Baldwin, David Blyth, Pam Bone, Paul Cartwright, Paddy Dillon, Ruth Eastwood, David Ian, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Dara Ó Briain, Simon Ricketts, Peter Roberts, Ann Skippers, Anna Stapleton

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December 1996 to its Leicestershire, its county of origin, and has continued to operate since then as a live theatre in Coalville. A new two storey front of house addition was added in 2011 providing a mezzanine lounge bar, toilet facilities and better access.

**Advice:** The Theatres Trust has no objections to this application, as the proposal appears to support and promote the ongoing operation of the Century Theatre.

We welcome the new access road from Ashby Road through to the carpark, and are pleased it does not connect through to the residential area, which will restrict and minimise vehicle movements and noise in the historic precinct around the theatre and mine buildings. The carpark is likely to be used in an efficient manner, with visitors to the park during the day, and theatre audiences in the evening. The improved and new pedestrian and cycle routes are also supported. These connections, together with the landscaping in front of the theatre, greatly improve access and visibility of the theatre to the public, and the new links bring the theatre closer to the town centre and wider community, increasing the potential to attract new audiences and support the viability of the theatre.

Due to the theatre's construction from former RAF vehicles, the theatre has limited acoustic insulation. While there are closer existing residences, we welcome the distance between the theatre and the proposed new residences, which should avoid conflicts between the two uses.

We note Historic England have raised concerns with the access road and some other elements of the application. Should a revised scheme be prepared, the Trust strongly urges the retention of good vehicle and pedestrian connections towards the town centre.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ross Anthony', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ross Anthony  
Planning Consultant