

Protecting theatres for **everyone**



Our Ref.: RA/60

7 December 2017

Ruth Dovey
Planning Services
Waverley Borough Council
Godalming Surrey GU9 0HG

planconsult@waverley.gov.uk

Dear Ms Dovey,

Redgrave Theatre and Brightwell House, East Street, Farnham

Application: WA/2017/2028

I write regarding the above listed building application to renew consent for alterations to Brightwell House and the demolition of Farnham's Redgrave Theatre. The Theatres Trust **objects** to the application. Please see our detailed advice below.

Remit: The Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. 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 in England through The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (DMPO), requiring the Trust to be consulted by local authorities on planning applications which include 'development involving any land on which there is a theatre'.

Advice/comment: The Theatres Trust objects to this application because it includes the demolition of the Redgrave Theatre without a replacement cultural facility or a financial contribution set aside to support an existing cultural facility. The theatre, though a later addition to the main Brightwells House, is part of the listed asset.

The Trust recognises the importance of investment and regeneration within town centres and takes a pro-active role in encouraging local authorities and the private sector to rejuvenate and reuse existing theatre buildings as a catalyst for regeneration. However, it is the Trust's policy that where there is a proposal to demolish a theatre as part of a redevelopment, it will seek to establish an equivalent and improved replacement to address the loss of the amenity and enhancement of the local planning authority's cultural and heritage infrastructure. There is no such commitment contained within this application, nor has adequate evidence been submitted to suggest that there is no longer a community need or desire to reopen the Redgrave Theatre.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) includes extensive directions and guidance on the importance of cultural assets. One of the Core Planning principles in Paragraph 17 notes that for cultural well being, planning decisions should 'deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and

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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

The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund co-operates with Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697

services to meet local needs'. Further, paragraph 70 states that in 'promoting healthy communities', planning decisions should 'plan positively for cultural buildings' and 'guard against the loss of cultural facilities and services'. The loss of a theatre that could potentially be reused by the community as a cultural facility, and it is clear there is local demand to save and reopen the theatre, is contrary to the Framework.

In terms of listed building consent, this is the third time since 2011 that an application has been submitted for this element of the wider East Street redevelopment scheme, effectively extending the timeframe to implement it each time. This delay puts the viability of the scheme in doubt, and Council should require a comprehensive review of the entire scheme and the submission of a revised viability assessment.

Paragraph 133 of the NPPF states 'Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss'. There is clearly an issue with the applicant's ability to deliver this scheme and as it now appears to be unviable, it is unlikely that they will deliver any of the public benefits needed to justify a renewal of this consent for the unnecessary loss of the Grade II listed theatre and the associated harm to Brightwells House.

The Trust therefore continues object to the loss of the Redgrave Theatre without a replacement cultural facility or a financial contribution set aside to develop an existing cultural facility. The Council must be satisfied that the building is surplus to the cultural and community requirements for the local community and that it does not conflict with the advice given within the National Planning Policy Framework.

The Trust recommends the entire scheme be comprehensively reviewed and that a new viability study and community needs assessment is prepared by the applicant to determine the community and cultural facilities that need to be retained or replaced as part of the wider redevelopment.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance.

Regards

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

Ross Anthony
Planning Consultant