

# Protecting theatres for **everyone**



Ref.: TC/9006174

24 July 2018

Mr Jason Burgess  
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By e-mail: [development.management@ipswich.gov.uk](mailto:development.management@ipswich.gov.uk)

**Application:** 17/00997/FUL

**Site:** The Velsheda Site, Regatta Quay, Key Street, Ipswich, Suffolk

**Proposal:** Change of use of permitted ground floor theatre (Sui Generis) to retail (Class A1) with associated landscaping and parking.

## **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, requiring the Trust to be consulted by local authorities on planning applications which include 'development involving any land on which there is a theatre'.

## **Comment:**

This application has come to the Trust's attention, which although submitted some time ago does not appear to have been determined. We were not consulted on the original proposal, and in 2009 a letter was sent to the Council reminding of the Trust's statutory role and requesting to be notified of future proposals. It is disappointing that Ipswich Borough Council has continually failed to consult with us despite receiving a number of theatre-related applications since that time. A letter of complaint to the Council's Head of Planning will be submitted under separate cover.

Work commenced on this proposed theatre but ceased around 2009, following which the intended operator (Red Rose Chain) constructed a new theatre at an alternative location. In the meantime the nearby St Peter's by the Waterfront was converted into an arts centre.

On the basis of information provided by the applicant we would recommend that a more thorough assessment is required to robustly demonstrate that the theatre is not needed and

## **Theatres Trust**

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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

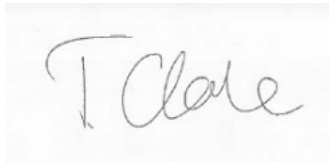
The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

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

cannot be viable. For example, the accompanying Planning Statement states “the theatre use is not viable” without giving any justification or substance behind that position. We would ordinarily expect submission of information such as demonstration of attempts to let or sell the unit at a realistic value through reasonable channels, as a minimum. The applicant has stated that demand for theatres has been satisfied because other theatres are present in the local area. That is a weak argument and cannot in itself be an indicator of need or viability because the four theatres referenced are of different scales and serve different functions. It is also problematic from the applicant’s perspective to cite changing demand since 2006 because since that time demand for leisure uses has increased and we have seen proposals for new theatres and restoration of old theatres come forward. Indeed the Local Plan’s (2017) Vision and Objectives for Ipswich promote improved cultural opportunities, as well as retaining them.

In conclusion we suggest that further information is requested from the applicant which would enable our support for this application by satisfying us that the permitted and partially completed theatre is no longer required.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "T Clarke", on a light blue rectangular background.

Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser