

Protecting theatres for **everyone**



Ref.: TC/9006195

14 August 2018

Mr. J. Dolman
Planning, Policy & Development Control Team
Staffordshire County Council
2 Staffordshire Place
Stafford
ST16 2DH

By e-mail: planning@staffordbc.gov.uk

Applications: 18/28342/FUL & 18/28344/LBC

Site: Chetwynd Centre 10 Newport Road Stafford Staffordshire ST16 2HE

Proposals: Proposed change of use of former school to residential use and to a Performing Arts Centre with associated uses along with ten new build houses in a terrace

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 been brought to the attention of the Trust as it involves the creation of a performing arts centre.

We welcome the arts centre element of this proposal. The site is located within the designated boundary of Stafford Town Centre. Policy Stafford 1 – Stafford Town, Stafford Town Centre part v. of the Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 (2014) supports “an enhanced range and diversity” of cultural and community services and facilities within the town centre. Policy E8 builds on this, supporting the enhancement of the function, vitality and viability of the town centre through measures including promoting a diversity of uses including the “provision of entertainment and cultural activities”. The Key Objectives for Stafford outlined in the Plan also include making Stafford “a significant sub-regional centre for retailing, leisure and cultural attractions”. Therefore a performing arts centre in this location can be considered an acceptable landuse and would contribute towards achieving the Plan's objectives.

We make no comment on the appropriateness of residential use at this site in general terms as

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Chair Tim Eyles **Director** Jon Morgan

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The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

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it is outside of our remit, although we would highlight that noise-generating community and cultural uses and residential use in close proximity isn't necessarily compatible. To manage potential conflict with neighbouring properties, in particular the new residential unit directly to the south of the arts centre, we would recommend that both the arts centre and the new units are appropriately soundproofed. It may also be appropriate to require a covenant on the new residential units preventing noise-complaints arising from new residents which could undermine the future use and viability of the arts centre. On a similar note, within the arts centre there seem to be no sound and light locks which will be important for preventing bleed to or from the foyer and other areas.

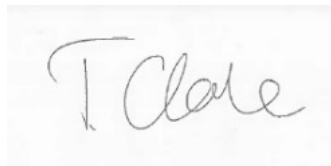
In terms of the design and layout of the arts centre, we have some further suggestions that the applicant may wish to consider in order to maximise the future sustainability of the facility. Such matters can be managed through subsequent amendments to the scheme and do not impact on the recommendation arising from our comments.

The plans show just one dressing room, but we would encourage the implementation of a further one to meet requirements if the centre is to be used by children. This could be achieved through reducing the current backstage toilet provision, with the indicative female toilet space becoming a second changing room. Consideration might be given to replacing the male toilets with one or two unisex toilets alongside the toilet for those with disabilities, and installing a shower which would be beneficial to the attractiveness of the space for hires. We note there is a bathroom at level 2, but there is no lift access to that floor.

There is also no space shown for storage, which will be important for keeping props, scenery, outfits and any other equipment required for the flexible use of the space. The existing floorplan show a store in the proposed location of the backstage lift and dressing room; given the constraints of utilising an existing building it may be of greater benefit to have appropriate storage rather than a backstage lift.

Overall, notwithstanding the residential element of this proposal, we support the proposed performing arts centre and **recommend the granting of planning permission and listed building consent.**

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or if you wish to discuss these comments.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'T Clarke', on a light-colored rectangular background.

Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser