

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/2133

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By e-mail: planning.consultations@bradford.gov.uk

Applications: 18/05130/FUL

Site: Bradford Live Princes Way Bradford West Yorkshire

Proposals: Refurbishment and extension of former cinema to create a live entertainment and event venue with supporting ancillary spaces including bars, ballroom and cabaret bar/restaurant and three-storey extension.

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:

The Trust was not directly consulted on this application despite our statutory remit outlined above and our previous engagement with the Council on this scheme. Please ensure the Council's systems are updated to ensure we are consulted on applications relating to this and other theatre buildings in Bradford.

The Trust is delighted to see the former Odeon, also previously known as the New Victoria, being restored back to active use as a sustainable and viable venue for live performance. The Odeon is a landmark building of historic and cultural significance and is currently on our Theatres at Risk register. It was one of the country's largest and most impressive cinemas occupying a prominent site adjacent to Centenary Square within the City Centre Conservation Area. Its significance arises not just from its built form, setting and heritage, but also from local people's attachment to it as previously the largest venue in the north which hosted many of the biggest names in music and as a venue for dance, cinema and other entertainment which brought the community together.

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

The restoration and revitalisation of the Odeon for live performance will therefore have tremendous benefits for Bradford. It will enhance the environment, setting and townscape of Centenary Square through completion of its encircling with a cluster of neighbouring civic and cultural uses including the Alhambra Theatre, the Science & Media Museum, City Library, City Hall, Bradford Magistrates Court, offices and restaurants. It is likely to be a catalyst for wider improvement within the town centre through attracting people to Bradford which will boost footfall and support other businesses, benefiting the local economy. Fundamentally it will also enhance the cultural wellbeing of the local community. It meets the objectives of Site Allocation B/1.6 within the Bradford City Centre Area Action Plan (2017) by retaining the existing building and delivering a live music venue and associated leisure uses.

The Trust has engaged with the applicant in development of this proposal. We consider it to represent a sensitive restoration of the building. We support removal of later additions which separated the building into separate cinema screens, reinstating its large single auditorium and revealing its special architectural interest and character. We are also delighted that other parts of the building such as its ballroom, restaurant, Cabaret Bar and 'Boiler Room Bar' will also be restored; this affords tremendous potential for the operator to utilise the building's ancillary features even when the main auditorium is not in use to improve its overall viability and bring people into the building at different times of day and night. The ballroom will also provide a secondary venue of considerable size, with capacity for around 800 people standing.

Having reviewed the proposed plans, our only minor comments are that within the ground floor there would appear to be scope for additional wheelchair places towards the middle of the auditorium accessed from the side ramp when in seating mode. Although there are twenty-two permanent wheelchair spaces, for best practice encourages some spread and selection of places. We acknowledge through that a number of performances will be unseated at that level. There is sufficient provision of toilets including disabled facilities and good front-of-house facilities. We would encourage the applicant, and the Council, to continue to engage with the Trust as these plans are taken forward and later phases of restoration are planned.

In conclusion, we welcome and support this exciting proposal for Bradford which will provide tremendous cultural, economic and social benefits for the city. Paragraph 92 of the NPPF (2018) seeks decisions to plan positively for cultural buildings and support the improvement of social and cultural well-being for the community. Paragraph 192 requests that authorities take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation. This proposal meets those objectives, and we **recommend the granting of planning permission.**

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



Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser