

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/583

08 November 2019

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

Application: 7-2019-5577-F & 7-2019-5577-G

Site: Former Grand Cinema, 40 Poole Road, Bournemouth, BH4 9DW

Proposal: Introduction of Class B1(a) workspace together with continued Class D2 use as gymnasium with ancillary café; and

Listed Building Consent for internal alterations associated with use as B1(a) workspace with gym and ancillary café; including insertion of double height mezzanine, changing rooms underneath balcony, stair core behind screen area, rooflights and levelling of the floor

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 attention of the Trust because it would result in change of use and alteration to the former Grand Cinema Theatre in Westbourne. The Grand opened as both a theatre and cinema, and had an orchestra pit; the orchestra that played there became famous for broadcasts. It is Grade II listed, most recently used as a bingo hall until its closure in early 2018.

The building has very few alterations and is in good condition with a number of decorative features intact, this is shown within the Heritage Statement. While we are keen to see this heritage asset returned to use, we are concerned about the alterations proposed as these would

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The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres


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

subdivide the auditorium space with the insertion of a mezzanine and cause the removal of fabric such as for the insertion of rooflights. While most original features will remain, a number will be obstructed which overall will undermine the building's character and significance.

Furthermore no evidence is provided to demonstrate that the building cannot continue to be used for bingo or another compatible community, cultural or social use. It is therefore in conflict with Policy CS29 of the Bournemouth Local Plan: Core Strategy (2012) which resists the loss of such sites unless it can be demonstrated the use is not viable, there is no prospect of it continuing and it has been actively marketed at an appropriate value for a period of twelve months. This is further supported by Policy U8 of the Bournemouth Local Plan: Town Centre Area Action Plan (2013). Neither does it accord with paragraph 92 of the NPPF (2019) which seeks decisions to plan positively for the provision of community facilities including cultural buildings and to guard against unnecessary loss. Such evidence would also be important in demonstrating the proposal is in fact the optimum viable use for the building which would cause least harm to its significance in line with Government guidance on the Historic Environment (updated July 2019).

Therefore at this stage we are unable to support this application and **recommend the refusal of planning permission and listed building consent** on the basis of lack of evidence to justify the site's loss as a social and cultural facility and harm to the significance of a heritage asset.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you wish to discuss these comments in greater detail.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "T Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser