

# Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/271

11 November 2018

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**Application:** 036709 & 036735

**Site:** Gala Bingo,(Ritz Cinema) Abbey Street, Nuneaton, CV11 5BX

**Proposal:** Change of use to a mixed use to include a community facility with restaurant and residential apartment. To include works and renovation to a Listed Building; and

Listed Building Consent for works and renovation

## **Remit:**

The Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. We were established through the Theatres Trust Act 1978 'to promote the better protection of theatres' and provide statutory planning advice on theatre buildings and theatre use in Scotland through The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulation 2013, 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:**

Thank you for consulting Theatres Trust regarding this application and listed building consent which seeks change of use with some alterations to the Grade II listed former Ritz. We were previously engaged at pre-application stage.

We are supportive of efforts which would bring this cultural and heritage asset back to positive public use. In our pre-application comments we cautioned against taking forward any proposal which would degrade the Ritz's well-preserved character and appearance, and requested that justification be provided in line with local and national policy should the building's role as a cultural and social facility cease. We therefore welcome that the primary focus of this project is to bring forward a multi-purpose community facility, which will include cinema, theatre and other live performance. We also consider the use of the foyer as a bar and restaurant is a compatible

## **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, Ann Skippers, Anna Stapleton

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

use for this space which will help bring people into the building and activate this edge-of-centre site.

In terms of accessibility, the plans show a new stage including new stair accesses but it is not clear whether there is the capability for wheelchair users to access the stage. We would strongly encourage the applicant to provide a means of access. In turn there does not appear to be any level access from the main auditorium into the backstage area. There is also no wheelchair access to the upper levels, and suggest that opportunities to install lift access are explored subject to protecting areas of decorative, historic and architectural significance.

The bar is to serve both the restaurant and the auditorium; it will need to be ensured there is sufficient acoustic insulation so as to prevent activities within the auditorium being disturbed by background noise from bar/restaurant users and similarly from the WCs.

It is stated the residential apartment is to be utilised by visiting speakers and teachers, we recommend that non-permanent residence and use only by persons connected to activities within the Ritz is conditioned. In particular this will help prevent future conflict between occupants and the core function of the Ritz in line with the Agent of Change principle set out in paragraph 182 of the NPPF (2019) and to ensure appropriate living conditions.

Proposals within the upper levels will require alterations such as the raising/levelling of floor levels. We assume the lightweight timber construction of floors will be reversible, nonetheless it should be ensured that the building's historic fabric and decorative features are protected and should there be any loss or harm this is robustly justified and recorded for the benefit of future generations.

In conclusion, we welcome this proposal and subject to our points above being taken into account **we recommend the granting of planning permission and listed building consent.**

Please contact us should you wish to discuss this representation in greater detail.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large 'T' and 'C'.

Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser