

# Protecting theatres for everyone

Ref.: TC/2318

08 January 2020

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**Applications:** 19/02719/FULL

**Site:** 64 New Row Dunfermline Fife KY12 7EF

**Proposals:** Change of use from retail (Class 1) to theatre stage school and cinema (Class 11) with cafe and bar area (*Sui Generis*) and external alterations including installation of new/replacement windows and doors, installation of extraction fans, juliet balconies and gates, re-rendering and formation of pedestrian footpath, access and steps (part retrospect)

## **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:**

This application represents an amended version of previous application reference 17/03260/FULL which was permitted on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2019. The Trust submitted comments in support of the previous application on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2017, noting that it would improve and enhance the opportunities of local people in Dunfermline and surrounding communities to engage in theatre and the arts and contribute to cultural well-being. We also provided feedback for the applicant in order to ensure the optimum operation and ongoing sustainability of the facility.

It was always the case that there would be some ancillary use of the facility as a small-scale studio theatre to complement the core performance function of the Alhambra. This amended application further formalises that by inserting cinema use along with a cafe and bar into the

### **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, Truda Spruyt, Anna Stapleton

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change of use description (a mixed Class 11 and Sui Generis facility) along with more specific external alterations.

The acceptability of the principle of change of use from retail has already been established through the existing permission, and we do not consider the revised use to represent a material alteration in terms of how the facility will be used and any impacts it will generate. Therefore we again support the change of use proposed.

The overall scale of this proposal has reduced because the previously consented extension to the building will not be carried forward at the present time. The applicant has indicated this will occur at a later stage, and we would encourage them to refer to our previous comments and seek our advice and engagement when they are in a position to take the scheme forward. The floorplans submitted show that good use is being made of the space available in terms of providing a theatre space which can function effectively, however without the extension the function of the building is more constrained. For example, it will be challenging for the rehearsal studio to be used independently of the theatre/cinema space as it can only be accessed through the theatre. Furthermore it is to be assumed the studio would be required for backstage functions such as dressing rooms since the only other facilities are the two backstage toilets. As we noted in our previous comments, if the studio is to be used as a dressing room there would need to be a means of creating segregation for safeguarding purposes where young people are present. There also appears to be a shortfall in the provision of audience toilet facilities for the capacity indicated. We accept however that these challenges can perhaps be overcome upon development of a second phase, as the previous iteration contained more toilets and three independent theatre/rehearsal spaces. We welcome that our previous comments regarding noise assessment has been addressed.

From the perspective of activating New Row the provision of a cafe/bar marks an improvement compared to the previous plans because it could potentially be opened irrespective of whether the rest of the facility or the main Alhambra Theatre is in use. This could function as more of an all-day facility which helps bring people into the building and better engages them with the wider Alhambra offer, as well as enhancing the overall viability and sustainability of the Alhambra.

In conclusion we remain supportive of this proposal and **recommend the granting of planning permission.**

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or should you wish to discuss this representation in greater detail.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Clarke".

Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser

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