

# Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC

17 February 2020

Fiona Knighton  
Development Management Section  
Communities, Housing & Planning Services  
4th Floor  
Renfrewshire House  
Cotton Street  
Paisley  
PA1 1JD

By e-mail: [dc@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:dc@renfrewshire.gov.uk)

**Application:** 20/0025/PP

**Site:** New Templar Hall, 13 Old Sneddon Street, Paisley, PA3 2AG

**Proposal:** Change of Use from Discotheque (Class 11) to Theatre (Sui Generis) including refurbishment, disabled access, external canopies and installation of rooftop plant.

## 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 has come to the attention of the Trust because it would result in provision of a new theatre.

The Trust is supportive of this proposal, which would provide a permanent home for the PACE Youth Theatre incorporating a 300-seat theatre, smaller 'black box' studio theatre, a further multi-purpose auditorium along with a cafe and workshop. Furthermore it would return the former New Templar Hall, which is an unlisted heritage asset on the Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland, back to active use.

New Templar Hall has been vacant for around twelve years since the closure of the previous occupant, Mannequins II nightclub. It is a prominent site within Paisley's town centre with good transport accessibility, immediately adjacent to Gilmour Street Station and with public car parking to the rear. We consider the change of use from Class 11 to theatre (Sui Generis) to be

### Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

T 020 7836 8591 E [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk) W [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk)

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

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

## Protecting theatres for everyone



appropriate at this location; it will add further diversity to the mix of uses within the town centre and correspond with recent investment into culture in the town. It will help draw more people into the town centre which will have a positive impact on other businesses. As a youth theatre it will also complement the existing theatre offer within the town offered by the Arts Centre and Town Hall. Paragraph 2.17 of the NPF3 recognises Scotland's towns and cities as cultural hubs; the document also references the utilisation of Paisley's historic buildings to create a 21<sup>st</sup> Century town centre. The Renfrewshire Local Development Plan cites Paisley as the main cultural and civic hub within Renfrewshire.

In terms of the proposed layout of the building, we welcome that there will be good accessibility providing wheelchair access throughout, including lift access to all floors, a new wheelchair accessible entrance and ramp and accessible shower and WC to the dressing rooms. There are no wheelchair places for audience members indicated within the studio theatre or lower auditorium, however we assume this is removable seating and that places can be made available as required.

While the cafe will potentially be a great asset for the theatre in terms of enabling an 'all-day' offer which can bring people into the building, the indicative plans suggest there may be some congestion at peak periods during intervals when the larger theatre is in use and all audience members would have to travel down to the ground floor. The WCs are also all at ground floor level with the exception of an accessible WC. Bar takings are an important aspect of theatre viability as is ensuring a positive audience experience, so we would suggest some thought is given to perhaps utilising the black box theatre as a 'pop-up' bar space to minimise congestion and serve audiences more quickly.

Externally the plans and sections show the prominent signage which will help improve visibility and awareness of the theatre. The applicant might consider improving awareness of the cafe offer, assuming they are intending to open it to the wider public.

Overall we welcome this proposal. It will help develop the PACE Youth Theatre and the positive role the organisation plays in supporting and developing young people in Paisley and its surrounding areas. It will bring a vacant heritage asset back to active use while helping enhance the social and cultural wellbeing of local people. This project will positively contribute to the wider investment programme into arts and culture in Paisley to help revitalise the town centre and bring more people into the town. We **recommend the granting of planning permission** and look forward to the project progressing.

Please contact us should you wish to discuss these comments in greater detail.

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

Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser

**Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

T 020 7836 8591 E [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk) W [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk)

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

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