

Protecting theatres for **everyone**



Ref.: TC/3545

12 May 2020

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EX1 1JN

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

Application: 20/0489/FUL

Site: 162-163 Fore Street St Davids Exeter Devon EX4 3AT

Proposal: Change of use of premises from theatre and bar to public bar (Use Class A4).

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 the change of use of a theatre to a drinking establishment (A4). We were not directly consulted despite the proposal falling within our statutory remit described above.

This site was previously the Bike Shed Theatre, a small fifty seat theatre which closed in 2018. It was a well-regarded theatre which supported new work and helped add to the diversity of cultural provision in Exeter.

Paragraph 92 of the NPPF (2019) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for cultural facilities and to guard against unnecessary loss. The Vision within the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2012) aims to maintain a viable mix of uses in the City Centre to enhance Exeter's position as a cultural destination. Objective 4 seeks to provide and enhance cultural facilities with Objective 6 meeting needs for cultural facilities. Policy CP10 states facilities which meet the city's cultural needs will be protected. We believe the Bike Shed is the only theatre of its scale in

Theatres Trust

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Chair Tim Eyles **Director** Jon Morgan

Trustees Richard Baldwin, David Blyth, Pam Bone, Paul Cartwright, Paddy Dillon, David Ian, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Simon Ricketts, Truda Spruyt

The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

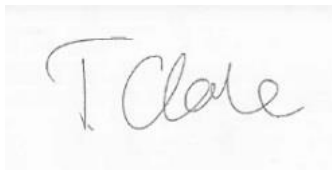
The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund co-operates with the Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697

Exeter and therefore it is particularly important it is satisfactorily demonstrated it is surplus to requirements. This is to satisfy policy and ensure Exeter's cultural provision is not undermined.

The Planning Statement accompanying the application states the site has been marketed for a variety of uses but this does not appear to include continued theatre use; the advertisement from the letting agent (Haarer Goss) is still available to view online and describes the site as "an exciting and unique retail opportunity". We do not consider this constitutes sufficient effort to identify interest for continued theatre use before looking to other uses.

On that basis we object to the loss of this site as a theatre space and recommend the refusal of planning permission. Whilst we appreciate the plans of the proposed occupant would bring a new offer to Exeter's evening and night time economy, it is also important to ensure the cultural needs of Exeter are met and that the overall diversity of uses within the City Centre is not undermined. We recommend a further marketing exercise is undertaken through appropriate channels (ensuring an appropriate rent for existing use), and for it to be robustly demonstrated there is no longer a need for a theatre at this site.

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

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