

# Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC

19 October 2020

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By e-mail: [planning@derbyshiredales.gov.uk](mailto:planning@derbyshiredales.gov.uk)

**Application:** 20/00943/FUL

**Site:** Elite Centre Market Place Ashbourne Derbyshire

**Proposals:** Change of use from a community hall (F.2 Use) to a cinema and theatre (Sui Generis Use)

## **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 for change of use has come to the attention of the Trust as it proposes to revert the site back to cinema and theatre use.

The Elite Cinema originally opened in 1929 and externally is believed to be little altered in that time. The cinema closed in 1976 after which the main auditorium was sub-divided with a shopping arcade at the lower stalls level and a nightclub above. The former nightclub area is now vacant. Some of the original cinema remains, notably the upper portion of the proscenium, ceiling decorations and the projection room.

We welcome efforts to return and restore cultural and performance use at the Elite. Ashbourne is currently without cinema or theatre, therefore this proposal would provide local people with more immediate access to cultural provision. This would help improve social and cultural well-being. Additionally it would contribute towards the continued success and vitality of the designated Principal Town Centre and enhance the town's tourist offer. As such it would help achieve the aims of parts a. and d. of Policy S8, Policy EC6 and Policy EC8 of the Derbyshire Dales District Council Local Plan 2013-2033.

## **Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

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**Chair** Tim Eyles **Director** Jon Morgan

**Trustees** Richard Baldwin, David Blyth, Pam Bone, Paul Cartwright, Paddy Dillon, Annie Hampson, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Simon Ricketts, Jane Spiers, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

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## Protecting theatres for **everyone**



In terms of design and layout we welcome the installation of a lift and accessible WC which will make the venue fully accessible for audiences. There would also be level access to the bar. Although theatre facilities are modest with a small dressing room either side of the stage this is probably acceptable for the scale of the venue although some thought should be given to the storage and transport of any stage props and equipment. However as internal alterations these matters are largely outside the scope of this application.

In conclusion we are supportive of this proposal. Although a formal change of use is required local-scale cinema and theatre provision of this nature can be considered to remain a community use. Further to the proposal's compliance with relevant Local Plan policy, Paragraph 92 of the NPPF (2019) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities such as this. Therefore we recommend the granting of planning permission.

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

Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser

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