

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/433

16 August 2022

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West Berkshire Council
Development and Planning
West Berkshire Council
Market Street
Newbury
RG14 5LD

By e-mail: planapps@westberks.gov.uk

Applications: 22/01814/FUL

Site: 58 Cheap Street Newbury West Berkshire RG14 5DH

Proposal: Change of use from Class E(b) (food & drink) to Sui Generis (learning/performing arts centre)

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 is proposing a new theatre space for Corn Exchange Newbury.

The Corn Exchange is an arts centre with mixed programme including theatre, comedy, live music, film screenings and other events. It provides an educational and social outreach offer through its current off-site Learning Centre around 50m to the south. It is an important arts, cultural and social facility for the town which helps contribute to the wellbeing of local people, provides opportunities for participation and engagement in the arts and helps develop skills and employability. Paragraph 93 of the NPPF (2021) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities of this nature.

This proposal would provide the Corn Exchange with an additional space to further develop and enhance provision for local people and, according to their Design & Access Statement, will provide a permanent home for the Learning Centre. Plans show that the unit will deliver a small

Theatres Trust

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Chair Dave Moutrey **Director** Jon Morgan

Trustees Paul Cartwright, James Dacre, Suba Das, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Lucy Osborne, Jane Spiers, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

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

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studio theatre to the ground floor which would have a capacity of around 120 people. This will enable additional shows and events and increase the diversity programming, better facilitating smaller productions and new works and artists. This will be served by four WCs one of which is accessible with a bar and foyer to the front. To the first floor will be a workshop with office space and a further WC. This level will have lift access which is welcomed. Whilst there is an accessible WC within the building to the ground floor it should be endeavoured for best practice to be provide at the upper level too if this is possible. There may be an opportunity to facilitate this by altering the location of the store and layout of the office.

The unit subject to this application was previously a restaurant (Class E(b)). It is an undesignated heritage asset which is included on the Council's local list, having originally been built as a library in the early part of the twentieth century. It is located within the Newbury Town Centre conservation area around 200m from the Corn Exchange and is towards the edge of the designated Newbury Town Centre Commercial Area. This part of the town centre is already mixed use in character and in a broader sense change of use will help contribute to the overall diversity and vitality of the town centre reflecting the aspiration of Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy DPD (2021). The unit is retained within retail and leisure use in line with the requirements of Saved Policy SHOP.3 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan (2007) and will contribute towards business development as described in Policy Econ.5. It is beneficial for the function and attractiveness of the town centre that vacancy is minimised and this non-designated heritage asset is brought back into active and positive use.

In conclusion we welcome this proposal and support 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.

Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

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