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Ref.: TC

11 August 2023

James Stanley
Tewkesbury Borough Council

By e-mail: developmentapplications@tewkesbury.gov.uk

Application: 23/00603/FUL

Site: Winchcombe Methodist Church 8A High Street Gloucestershire Winchcombe GL54 5LJ

Proposal: Proposed change of use of the Methodist Church from Class F1 to provide a community performing arts centre (Sui Generis)

Remit:

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 Theatres Trust through press reports because it is seeking change of use of the Winchcombe Methodist Church to an arts centre (Sui Generis) for the proposed Winchcombe Arts and Community Hub.

The church is not statutorily listed, but having been built around 1885 (with later extensions) is a non-designated heritage asset within the Winchcombe Town Centre Conservation Area. It is a designated Asset of Community Value. It occupies a prominent site within the town centre, and therefore efforts for sensitive return to use

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

Telephone 020 7836 8591 **Email** info@theatrestrust.org.uk **Website** theatrestrust.org.uk **Twitter** @TheatresTrust

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Chair Dave Moutrey OBE

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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are to be welcomed. Often the volume and format of church buildings makes them conducive to the needs of venues for live performance, and indeed a number of arts centres, music venues and theatres occupy former churches. Such uses also tend to be reversible. Therefore on heritage grounds there is great merit in the Winchcombe Methodist Church being repurposed as proposed.

There is not currently a venue in Winchcombe for live performance and the arts. Introducing one would have a positive impact on the social and cultural well-being of local people and support the vitality of the town centre. Paragraph 93 of the NPPF (2021) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for the provision of community facilities which includes cultural uses, and to support improvement in social and cultural well-being. Policy SD2.5.i of the Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031 (2017) supports new leisure and cultural facilities which contribute to the vitality and viability of designated centres. With reference to Policy INF4.3, this facility is centrally located and easily accessible.

Theatres Trust is a source of advice for applicants and can provide feedback on plans as well as wider matters such as business planning, fundraising and viability. The engagement with us by the Winchcombe Arts and Community Hub group would be welcomed to help ensure the success of this venture.

For the reasons set out above, we are supportive of this proposal and of 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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