

**The Theatres Trust**  
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Our Ref.: MP/120  
Please contact: Ms Bridget Pereira

17 February 2010

For the attention of Ms Rachel Burningham

Mr R.W. Evans  
Director of Planning  
Tandridge District Council  
Council Offices  
Station Road East  
Oxted  
Surrey RH8 0BT

Dear Mr Evans,

**Charters Towers, Felcourt Road, Baldwins Hill, East Grinstead RH19 2JG**  
**Application Ref.: 2010/19**

Thank you for consulting The Theatres Trust on the above planning application for the redevelopment of Charters Towers as a Continuing Care Retirement Community which includes the former *Adeline Genee Dance Academy Theatre* (aka Bush Davies School). The Trust **supports** the application in principle. Please see our detailed advice and **suggested conditions** below.

**Remit:** The Theatres Trust is The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres. The Town & Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995, Article 10, Para (v) requires the Trust to be consulted on planning applications which include '*development involving any land on which there is a theatre.*' It was established by The Theatres Trust Act 1976 '*to promote the better protection of theatres.*' This applies to all theatre buildings. Our main objective is to safeguard theatre use, or the potential for such use but we also provide expert advice on design, conservation, property and planning matters to theatre operators, local authorities and official bodies.

**Advice/comment:** The Trust supports the application for the redevelopment of Charters Towers as a Continuing Care Retirement Community. However, where demolition is proposed for a former theatre and community building of this type, we would always recommend that the Council should be satisfied that it is surplus for cultural, community, townscape or regeneration requirements before granting demolition. Furthermore, it is the Trust's policy that where there is an agreement to demolish a theatre for redevelopment of the land, it will seek to establish a planning obligation or condition that provides a financial contribution or replacement facility from the developer to address the loss of amenity and enhancement of the local planning authorities theatre infrastructure. It will also seek a recording condition for the building.

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## Protecting theatres for everyone

**Director** Mhora Samuel **Chairman** Rob Dickins CBE  
**Trustees** Jason Barnes, Phil Clark, Marilyn Cutts, Venu Dhupa, Tim Foster, Penelope Keith CBE DL,  
Dr Pauleen Lane CBE, Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall, Chris Shepley CBE, Sam Shrouder,  
Dr Phyllis Starkey MP, Pat Thomas OBE, Ben Twist

The theatrical use of the *Adeline Genee Dance Academy Theatre* appears to have been extensive during the time in which it served as a performance venue for one of the foremost performing arts school in the UK. Built in 1967 by W Kemp of W B Starr architects, the building has a rectilinear exterior in concrete and brick, with a plainly finished auditorium in a single rake with a wide proscenium, stage and dressing room facilities. Although it is not one of best post-war theatres of significant special architectural or historic interest, it has been well maintained, and still well suited to its original purpose. The theatre ceased to operate in 1989 when the dance school closed. At the time, East Grinstead Council was outbid in its attempt to purchase the building, but funds set aside for this purpose were put towards the development of a new theatre in East Grinstead, the *Chequer Mead*. The *Adeline Genee Dance Academy Theatre* was ultimately purchased by the security firm *Sabrewatch* and has remained in their ownership to date.

At this stage, returning the building to its former theatre use is unlikely to be viable option, particularly given the proximity of the *Chequer Mead* which is a theatre equal in size to the *Adeline Genee Dance Theatre*. It is therefore necessary for the Council to be satisfied that it is surplus for cultural, community, townscape or regeneration requirements before granting permission for demolition.

The Trust understands that the new Retirement Community scheme will have an entertainment space as part of the development. However, it was difficult to identify this on the submitted plans and we wish to ensure that it is fitted out to high specification. As stated above, where there is an agreement to demolish a theatre for redevelopment of the land, The Theatres Trust will seek to establish a planning obligation that provides a financial contribution or replacement facility from the developer to address the loss of amenity and enhancement of the local planning authorities theatre infrastructure. We therefore recommend that the Council conditions this element on a more detailed plan together with a schedule of works. The Trust would of course be happy to advise further on the reserved matters.

Lastly, there should certainly be a condition imposed to record the former *Adeline Genee Dance Theatre* prior to the commencement of the works. Theatrical buildings, particularly those adapted for cultural uses, are an unusual subject matter and often researched by the general public. The Theatres Trust has a substantial collection of material (photographs, slides and plans) relating to theatre buildings, and we are currently developing our theatre database to enable public access via our website. We would be happy to advise on the content of a recording report and would like to receive a copy for our archives.

We would therefore be grateful if you could attach the following condition to the application:

Condition

No demolition within the site shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a full photographic internal record (including later technical installations) of the *Adeline Genee Dance Theatre* in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (English Heritage Level Three<sup>1</sup>) which shall be submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the local authority in consultation with The Theatres Trust.

Reason

To ensure that a proper record is made of the building prior to its demolition and that the information is made available to the appropriate statutory bodies.

I would be grateful to know if you intend to add these suggested conditions. I have also copied this letter to Guy Flintoft of BartonWillmore, the agents for the application, to make him aware of our suggestions and advice.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MJP', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark J Price MRTPI, IHBC  
Planning and Heritage Adviser

cc Guy Flintoft, Director, BartonWillmore

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<sup>i</sup> Understanding Historic Buildings, *A guide to good recording practice*, English Heritage, February 2006