

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/1724

31 March 2023

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Potter Street
Worksop
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By e-mail: planning@bassetlaw.gov.uk

Application: 23/00272/COU

Site: The Regal Centre Carlton Road Worksop Nottinghamshire S80 1PD

Proposals: Change of Use Including External Alterations to form 21 Residential Apartments with Associated Communal and Ancillary Facilities

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 the Trust through press reports. It seeks to convert the vacant Regal (most recently Soundwaves Arts Centre) to residential use. The Regal was built with theatre facilities and was most recently in active theatre use, therefore as described above we should have been directly notified as a statutory consultee.

The Regal opened in 1926 as the Miners Welfare Hall and was re-named the Pavilion in 1929. The following year it was closed for works to build a new stage, fly tower, dressing rooms and install a Western Electric sound system. It reopened as the Regal Cinema in 1933. A café and dance lounge had been added by the end of the decade. In 1972 the auditorium was sub-divided to provide three smaller screens. It became an arts centre called the Regal Centre in the 1990s with theatre in the stalls, cinema at the former balcony level, meeting and rehearsal rooms, a recording studio and a large café/bar. It was run by a charity and provided education and training particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. A further name change came in 2012 to the Soundwave Arts Centre, but this closed in 2013 shortly after the Savoy Cinema multiplex had

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

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opened. We acknowledge the Acorn Theatre opening in 2006 may also have negatively impacted the Regal.

The building has been vacant since that time. The Regal can be considered a non-designated heritage asset, although it has visibly suffered from deterioration externally. Internally the few images included with the application appear to show the building in reasonable condition with little change from those we have available taken prior to its 2013 closure.

Paragraph 93 of the NPPF (2021) seeks planning decisions to guard against the unnecessary loss of facilities. Emerging Policy CS 5.3 of the Bassetlaw Local Plan 2020-2038, which carries significant weight having undergone examination, resists the loss of community facilities unless it is demonstrated they are no longer required in their current use and are not suitable for alternative community uses. Part 4 dictates this should be detailed with robust evidence including marketing over a period of twelve months. Whilst we recognise there is other theatre and cinema provision in Worksop at the Acorn Theatre and Savoy Cinema, the Regal served a wider function and benefits from being equipped with a fly tower and a larger capacity particularly if the original volume were to be re-established. This could provide the town with a different offer if need and operator interest exist, or lend itself to other community/cultural/social functions or more sensitive alternatives than residential use.

The applicant has stated that the Regal struggled to maintain viability, but there is no evidence or marketing information to substantiate this or demonstrate lack of interest. Neither is there any appraisal of alternative uses which might be more compatible with this building's function and built form. Residential conversions are not necessarily optimum uses of deep footprint buildings such as the Regal and this is demonstrated by the number of single-aspect units. Although the appropriateness of living conditions is ultimately a matter for the Council to determine, we do recommend that appropriate marketing evidence and information sought by policy is requested. This would demonstrate to our satisfaction this facility is surplus to requirements for continued cultural or community use. We would otherwise object to the granting of planning permission.

It is possible, based on other similar conversions around that time, that behind the 1970s subdivision original fabric and features may remain concealed. The original plan form would likely also be readable. This should be investigated prior to any internal works being carried out. We in any case urge inclusion of a written and photographic historic recording report should permission be granted. This is so that the interest and significance of the Regal can be documented for the benefit of future generations. Care should also be taken to ensure sensitive treatment of the front façade.

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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