

Theatres fit for the **future**

Theatres
Trust

Ref.: TC/321

6 February 2026

Maya Cullen
Ribble Valley Borough Council
Council Offices
Church Walk
Clitheroe
BB7 2RA

By e-mail: planning@ribblevalley.gov.uk

Application: 3/2025/0612

Site: The Palace Market Place Longridge PR3 3RR

Proposal: Proposed change of use from vacant cinema (*sui generis*) to children's role play centre (use class E(d)) with ancillary cafe (use class E (b)). External alterations to the building to include alterations to fenestration and insertion of new first floor window.

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'.

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

Telephone 020 7836 8591 **Email** info@theatretrust.org.uk **Website** theatretrust.org.uk

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Chair Dave Moutrey OBE **CEO** Joshua McTaggart

Trustees Vicky Browning OBE, Anna Collins, James Dacre, Liam Evans-Ford, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson OBE, Tracy Ann Oberman, Lucy Osborne, Saratha Rajeswaran, Truda Spruyt, Michèle Taylor MBE, Katie Town

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Comment:

Thank you for consulting Theatres Trust on this application for planning permission. It seeks change of use of the Palace Cinema along with associated alterations to the building.

The Palace first opened in the late 1800s when a weaving shed was converted into a music hall with an audience capacity of around 800. It is constructed in local stone with facings. The stage had flying capability and there were dressing rooms beneath the stage. These are understood to remain today, as do original emergency gas light fittings, although the original interior within the auditorium has been lost. Its name was extended to the Palace & Picturedrome in the early 1900s following the arrival of cinema, for which it is one of the earliest in the north-west of England to survive. Most recently the cinema offer was a 'traditional' heritage experience with the national anthem played before screenings, Wurlitzer organ music, a red velvet curtain across the screen and tea and ice cream served. There was a refurbishment in 2018.

The Palace opened only briefly after Covid-19 restrictions were lifted in summer 2021, being put up for sale as its owner retired. There was interest in a community purchase, but this was not successful. The building has been vacant since that time.

The Palace is within the Longridge Conservation Area and can be considered a non-designated heritage asset.

Paragraph 98 of the NPPF (2024) seeks to meet the social, recreational and cultural needs of local communities, including planning positively for provision of community facilities including cultural buildings and guarding against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities. Key Statement EC2 of the Core Strategy (2014) supports development that supports and enhances the vibrancy, choice, vitality and unique character of centres including Longridge. It also only permits as an exception proposals which would have an adverse impact on existing community facilities, where new development brings defined and demonstrable benefits.

This building was most recently in cinema use (*Sui Generis*) which constitutes a social and cultural use. In line with both national and local policy it should be evidenced that this facility is surplus to requirements before alternative uses should be considered, particularly as there has been community interest in retention in the recent past. No such information, for example evidence of appropriate marketing and

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efforts to reinstate cinema use, has been provided within this application and we suggest this is addressed before change of use is deemed acceptable.

If it is established there is no reasonable prospect of cinema use continuing, and with reference to paragraph 216 of the NPPF, the proposed use appears to constitute a sensitive re-use of this building. If as suggested by the submitted floorplans there is limited intervention this would not preclude future reversibility.

In conclusion we would conditionally support this application dependent on receipt of evidence as set out above.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or should you wish to discuss this further.

Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Manager

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