

Agenda Item 8.

Development Management Ref No	No weeks on day of committee	Parish	Ward	Listed by:
163372	26/13	Wokingham Town	Norreys	Major
Applicant	Wokingham Theatre Board			
Location	Wokingham Theatre, Twyford Road, Wokingham			Postcode RG40 5TU
Proposal	Full application for the proposed internal/external alterations to theatre to provide additional backstage space, rehearsal space, new studio, public circulation areas and new storage barn.			
Type	Full			
PS Category	006 All Other Developments			
Officer	Katie Herrington			
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on 14 th June 2017			
REPORT PREPARED BY	Head of Development Management and Regulatory Services			

SUMMARY

Wokingham Theatre is an amateur repertory group who have been located in Cantley Park since 1986 and are noted as a successful amateur theatre group.

However, the space within the theatre is under intense use and the lack of such space constrains the activities within the theatre. Aside from the stage area, there is a lack of rehearsal space, with the bar/ foyer area being used which is not ideal. Numerous shows operate at one time, creating issues with scheduling and the need to use space off site.

The proposal seeks to extend the theatre and its storage capacity in order to provide and enhance its facilities.

The site is located outside of the settlement limits and in the countryside. In terms of planning policy (CP11 and the NPPF), theatres are town centre uses and should be located within the settlement limits.

This statement sets out an on balance decision that whilst the proposal would result in the significant expansion of the theatre in the countryside, amongst other material considerations, the agreement to extend the community's use of the facility would override the harm otherwise caused by the proposal to the countryside.

PLANNING STATUS

- Countryside
- SPA 7KM
- Aerodrome Safeguarding for Wind

RECOMMENDATION

That the committee authorise the GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following:

A. Conditions and informatives:

Conditions:

Timescale

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In pursuance of s.91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by s.51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

Approved plans

2. This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings numbered:

- 3261/201 K
- 3261-202 K
- 3261-213F
- 3261-214C received on the 25th May 2017, and plan 3261/212 A received on the 30th November 2016.

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

Materials

3. Before the development hereby permitted is commenced, samples and details of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the extensions and storage unit shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the so-approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the building is satisfactory.

Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3

Statement of community use

4. Six months from the commencement of the development hereby approved, a community use Management Plan relating to the use of the facilities by the local community should be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The document shall include details of how the theatre and its facilities are being used by the community, details of how the community are informed of the ability to use the theatre, hours of use, access by the community, management responsibilities and a mechanism for review, which the Local Planning Authority considers necessary in order to secure the effective community use of the facilities.

Reason: To enable the development to provide facilities for the wider community, and enable control of such community use in the interest of residential amenity and highway safety

Parking

5. No part of any building(s) hereby permitted shall be occupied or used until the vehicle parking space has been provided in accordance with the approved plans. The vehicle parking space shall be permanently maintained and remain available

for the parking of vehicles at all times.

Reason: To ensure adequate on-site parking provision in the interests of highway safety, convenience and amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.

Landscaping

6. Prior to the commencement of the development, full details of both hard and soft landscape proposals shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details shall include, as appropriate, car parking layouts, other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas, hard surfacing materials and minor artefacts and structure (e.g. furniture, play equipment, refuse or other storage units, signs, lighting, external services, etc). Soft landscaping details shall include planting plan, specification (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment), schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate, and implementation timetable.

All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a timetable approved in writing by the local planning authority. Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years after planting, are removed, die or become seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of species, size and number as originally approved and permanently retained.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21 (and TB06 for garden development)

Tree protection

- 7.
- a) No development or other operation shall commence on site until an Arboricultural Method Statement and Scheme of Works which provides for the retention and protection of trees, shrubs and hedges growing on or adjacent to the site in accordance with BS5837: 2012 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. No development or other operations shall take place except in complete accordance with the details as so-approved (hereinafter referred to as the Approved Scheme).
 - b) No operations shall commence on site in connection with development hereby approved (including any tree felling, tree pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction and or widening or any other operation involving use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery) until the tree protection works required by the Approved Scheme are in place on site.
 - c) No excavations for services, storage of materials or machinery, parking of vehicles, deposit or excavation of soil or rubble, lighting of fires or disposal of liquids shall take place within an area designated as being fenced off or otherwise protected in the Approved Scheme.
 - d) The fencing or other works which are part of the Approved Scheme shall not be moved or removed, temporarily or otherwise, until all works including external works have been completed and all equipment, machinery and surplus

materials removed from the site, unless the prior approval in writing of the local planning authority has first been sought and obtained.

Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that the development is being carried out of trees shrubs or hedges growing within or adjacent to the site which are of amenity value to the area, and to allow for verification by the local planning authority that the necessary measures are in place before development and other works commence Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB2 1

Drainage

8. No development shall take place until full details of the drainage system for the site have been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The details shall include:
 - a) Results of intrusive ground investigation demonstrating seasonal high groundwater levels for the site and infiltration rates in accordance with BRE365.
 - b) Demonstration that the base of SuDS features are at least 1m above seasonal groundwater level.
 - c) Full calculations demonstrating the performance of soakaways or capacity of attenuation features to cater for 1 in 100 year flood event with a 40% allowance for climate change
 - d) Runoff controlled at existing rates, or better.
 - e) A detailed drainage strategy plan for the proposed development.
 - f) A maintenance arrangement for the SuDS features throughout the lifetime of the development.

BREEAM Carbon Reduction

9. Prior to the commencement of development, a scheme for generating 10% of the predicted energy requirement of the development from renewable energy or low carbon technology (as defined in the glossary of Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change (December 2007) or any subsequent version) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall also achieve the BREEAM requirement and meet or exceed statutory requirements for water resource management. The approved scheme shall be implemented before the development is first occupied and shall remain operational for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To ensure developments contribute to sustainable development. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 10 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), Core Strategy policy CP1, Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC05 & the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document.

Informatives

1. *Bat Informative*

Should any bats or evidence of bats be found prior to or during the development, all works must stop immediately and an ecological consultant contacted for further advice before works can proceed. All contractors working on site should be made aware of the advice and provided with the contact details of a relevant ecological consultant.

2. *Positive and proactive decision-making*

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received. This planning application has been the subject of positive and proactive discussions with the applicant in terms of:

- addressing the planning policy context;
- addressing concerns relating to highway safety;

The recommendation to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF is considered to be a positive outcome of these discussions.

PLANNING HISTORY

Numerous applications. The most relevant are:

- EXT/2012/1127. Application to extend implementation date of planning consent. F/2009/0172 for a further 3 years for the erection of a single storey rear extension to theatre 13.8.2012
- F/2009/1272. Proposed erection of single storey rear extension to provide rehearsal space with ancillary dressing/sewing room increase to workshop area plus new wc and lobby. Amendment to consent F/2008/1693.
- F/2008/1693: Proposed erection of a single storey rear extension to provide rehearsal space with ancillary dressing/sewing room and small increase to workshop area. Approved. 09/09/2008.
- F/1999/69164. Single storey front and two storey side extensions. Approved.
- 22160. New theatre. Approved.
- 14961. New Theatre. Approved.

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Site Area	1.60 hectares
Existing volume	4104m ³
Proposed volume	8820m ³
Percentage increase in volume	115%
Existing parking spaces	0 within the site (informal parking only)
Proposed parking spaces	17 within the site
Existing number of seats	144
Proposed number of seats	185 (+ 41)

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

WBC Building Control	No comments received.
WBC Parks, Open Space and Green Infrastructure	No comments received.
WBC Property Services	No comments received.
WBC Waste Services Management	No comments received.
WBC Community Infrastructure	No comments received.
WBC Biodiversity	No objection subject to informative 1.
WBC Drainage	No objection subject to condition 8.
WBC Environmental Health	No comments received
WBC Highways	No objection subject to condition 5.
WBC Tree & Landscape	No objection subject to conditions 6 and 7.
The Theatres Trust	No comments received.
Southern Gas Networks	No comments received.

REPRESENTATIONS

Wokingham Town Council: No objections.

Local Members: No comments received.

Neighbours: 1 objection

- Loss of public parking spaces. **Officer comment:** *The removal of parking bays (which were also outside of the application site) does not now form part of the proposal.*
- Theatre complains about parking stress. See **paragraphs 30, 32.**
- Feld adjacent is indicated as over overspill parking but this is not the case as it is an event field only. Demand for that car park will increase. See **paragraph 30, 31 32.**
- Parking is already an issue. See **paragraph 30, 31, 32.**

APPLICANTS POINTS

- Wokingham Theatre is a thriving amateur repertory group presenting 8 major productions a year alongside Youth Theatre productions, short runs of less well known plays, evenings of new writing, and a wide range of theatrical skills training. We also make our auditorium available to other productions or for work as varied as hair-dressing training and Brass Band performance.
- Founded in 1947, the group is a registered charity and their purpose has always been to promote the enjoyment of theatre in the community in Wokingham.
- The existing spaces within the Theatre are under intense use. Other than the stage the only 'rehearsal' space is the Bar/Foyer (also used by the Youth Theatre). With three shows routinely in rehearsal at any one time this creates real scheduling difficulties and often requires the use of other spaces off-site.
- Whilst most rehearsals are in the evening the theatre building is also in regular use during the day time with a substantial body of members involved in set construction, costume making, other production activities as well as others who are involved in the routine administration and maintenance of the Theatre and its fabric.

- Wokingham Theatre has agreed to work with the council to increase the community use of the premises. The new building will enable the Theatre to broaden its own offer as well as providing opportunity for use by other community groups.

PLANNING POLICY			
National Policy	NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework	
Adopted Core Strategy DPD 2010	CP1	Sustainable Development	
	CP2	Inclusive Communities	
	CP3	General Principles for Development	
	CP4	Infrastructure Requirements	
	CP6	Managing Travel Demand	
	CP7	Biodiversity	
	CP9	Scale and Location of Development Proposals	
	CP11	Proposals Outside Development Limits	
	Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014	CC01	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
		CC02	Development Limits
		CC03	Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
CC04		Sustainable Design and Construction	
CC05		Renewable energy and decentralised energy networks	
CC06		Noise	
CC07		Parking	
CC09		Development and Flood Risk	
CC10		Sustainable Drainage	
TB12		Employment Skills Plan	
TB21		Landscape Character	
TB23		Biodiversity and Development	
Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)	BDG	Borough Design Guide – Section 4	
	WPSS	Wokingham Parking Standards Study Report October 2011	

PLANNING ISSUES

Description of Development:

1. The proposal consists of single storey and two storey modular extensions to the building. With reference to orientation these comprise of;
 - East - Two storey side extension to the western elevation that staggers in its depth, measuring a depth of 13.5m – 10m and between 6-7metres high (to the ridge).

- North – new gabled two storey entrance foyer (ridge is 9m, 6m with the two story projections from the east and west elevations and alternations to fenestration.
- South –part upper floor extension/ two storey side extension with a ridge height of between 6 and 7 metres to the ridge and alternations to fenestration.
- West – demolition of part of the existing building, and part two storey part upper floor side extension between 6 and 7 metres in height and alternations to fenestration.
- Two storey outbuilding measuring – 10x 18.8 metres and 5.1 metres to the ridge.
- Relocation of the entrance to face to the West
- Provision of 17 car parking spaces within the site

Principle of Development:

2. The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD) Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
3. The site is located outside of development limits, where Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy applies. Policy CP11 not does not permit development outside development limits unless they conform to certain criteria, namely:
 - a) It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside; **and**
 - b) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; **and**
 - c) It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement; **or**
 - d) Essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of an existing building.
4. With regard to point 1 of CP11, the proposal would not promote recreation in and enjoyment of the countryside and is not a rural enterprise. However the theatre is a registered charity enterprise within the countryside and this can be afforded some weight in consideration of the application. Wokingham Theatre was founded in 1947 and was located in Norreys Avenue which was within the Settlement Limits and since 1986 has been at the Cantley Site.
5. With regard to point 2 of policy CP11, the proposal would result in the significant expansion of the building and development across the site. The original theatre has a volume of 4104m³ and a footprint of 662m². The proposed development would result in a volume of 8820m³, an increase in volume of 115% from the original dwelling, and a footprint of 1340m², an increase of 102% from the original building.
6. The proposal would also include an outbuilding that would measure 10 metres x 18.8 metres, 3.5 metres to the eaves and 5.1 metres to the ridge. An, area of around 1137 Cm³.

7. The proposed extensions and storage unit would be visible from much of the park area and its countryside setting, and would alter its character.
8. As addressed in more detail below, the proposal extensions would result in a well-designed and attractive theatre building. However, in the context of the application site the proposed development it is considered to be at the limits of what can be accommodated on the site without appearing harmfully cramped. The front atrium is located to boundary of the site, with the entrance doors set back to the side. The proposed 17 parking bays are spread across the side and rear of the site, and the storage unit is located close to the rear boundary, with parking and access area between it and the theatre.
9. However, whilst tight in its own plot, the theatre is not located immediately adjacent to the surrounding buildings and given the relatively small plot would not significantly spread development further into the park and hence the countryside. Therefore its impact upon the open character of the countryside would be limited. Whilst located in the countryside, the site is also located between the settlement limits to the south (around 200 metres away) and the North Wokingham SDL to the north and west (the SDL boundary around 50 metres away to the north, and proposed housing some 91 metres to the west). Whilst this application must be considered in the context of its current location within the countryside, the sites location within an area surrounded by existing and consented development i.e. within an area which will have a more urban/suburban character in the future, is a material consideration.
10. A statement has been submitted to justify the need for the storage barn and extensions. 'Theatre Projects' an international theatre consultancy company provided input into the design process. They assisted in the design of the proposal. Currently the theatre lacks technical and support facilities and backstage area. The increased size of the theatre includes the need for a larger workshop, increased wardrobe space, areas for scene construction work which are important to the development and success of the theatre. The storage barn would provide safe storage for sets, furniture, and a wardrobe storage area. The storage unit would help to avoid the need to dispose of or store bulky items off site and to access and store easily on the site. The parking provision on the site is necessary as it goes some way to resolving concerns regarding parking.
11. Therefore on balance, given that the building is of good design, that the spread of development is limited to the relatively small area of the site, and that the extensions and outbuilding are necessary, it is considered that the harm the proposal would cause to the open character of the countryside would not be so adverse as to warrant refusal of the application.
12. The proposal does not relate to the replacement or conversion of buildings (Point 3 of Policy CP11) but point 6 is relevant. Policy CP11 not does not permit development outside development limits unless essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of an existing building.
13. Point. 4.17 of the Core Strategy includes '*...play and leisure or culture ...*' within the definition of a community use. Theatres would fall within the definition of leisure or culture with regard to the production, presentation and public viewing of shows.

14. However, Theatres are defined by the NPPF as a main town centre use.

Main town centre uses: ‘...culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities)’. (NPPF : Appendix 2: Glossary)

15. Policy TB16: Development for Town Centre Uses of the Managing Development Document requires that a sequential test is required for a proposal to locate a town centre leisure use of (including extensions) 500 sqm or above outside of the town centre. As such, the proposal would be expected to undertake a sequential test to demonstrate how it could not be accommodated in a sequentially preferable site – the Town Centre.

16. There are two main issues arising. The first is to justify the location of a town centre use outside of the town centre and the theatre outside the development limits, and secondly to justify the essentialness of the community facility.

The sequential test and justifying the theatre outside of the development limits.

17. With regard to justifying the location of a town centre use outside of the town centre and the theatre outside the development limits, in this instance, it is acknowledged that the existing site is in a purpose built theatre and has been located in Cantley Park, outside of the town centre and within the countryside since 1986. It is also recognised that that there are no suitable sites within the town centre that could reasonably accommodate the needs of the theatre and be available to the theatre.

18. Whilst located in the countryside, the site is also located between the settlement limits to the south and the North Wokingham SDL to the north and west. The sites future location surrounded by development is a material consideration.

19. The proposal site is also likely to become more sustainable with the development of the north Wokingham SDL. The proposal has social and economic benefits through the enhancement of a community cultural and leisure resource but also a charity enterprise, but in terms of environmental actors, the proposal would enhance the energy efficiency of the building (see para 35), and development of the SDL is likely to result in the improved sustainable forms of transport to the site (bike and bus).

20. There are also a number of mitigating factors, including the community use agreement which weighs in favour of allowing the extended facility to remain in this location. Therefore, on balance, the existing site, whilst outside of the town centre and outside the development limits, is considered to be an appropriate location for the extended theatre.

Whether an essential community facility

21. Whilst Wokingham Theatre is a membership organisation, it is recognised that the theatre has some engagement with the community presently. Non-members can book to watch performances and their auditorium can be made available to other productions or for work such as hair-dressing training and Brass Band performance.

They provide fund-raising opportunities for other local charities, , and charity band concerts and provided a base for events such as the Cantley fireworks and the Wokingham half marathon.

22. The proposal would involve increasing the contribution the theatre has as a community facility. The proposal would provide increased rehearsal space for groups using the theatre along with storage facilities. Such facilities are essential for the operation of a theatre with multiple shows/ activities. Such enhancements along with increased accessibility for the community would result in the provision of an essential cultural and leisure resource for communities in both using the facilities and observing shows. This has been secured as part of the new lease to Wokingham Theatre, which included the agreement that Wokingham Theatre works with Wokingham Council to increase community use of the premises to groups nominated by the landlord. This can be monitored by way of planning **condition 4**.
23. On balance, whilst the proposal is located in the countryside, the proposal would provide an important and essential cultural and leisure resource for the community, that the proposal would not adversely harm the character of the countryside and as such would not conflict with the principles of point 6 of policy CP11.

Summary

24. Taking points 1, 2 and 6 of Policy CP11 and Policy TB16 together, on balance, whilst the proposal would result in a town centre use located outside of the town centre and a theatre within the countryside, the existence of the theatre in that location, the absence of more suitably located site, its proximity to the SDL, along with benefit of the increased community access to use the proposed cultural and leisure facilities, that the benefits of the proposal would outweigh the harm to the extent that the proposal would not conflict with the principles of point 6 of policy CP11 of the Core Strategy and policy TB16 of the Managing Development Delivery Document and as such it would be unreasonable to refuse it on those grounds.

Character of the Area:

25. The proposal would result in the significant increase in the scale and massing of the building. These would be visible from around Cantley Park and therefore would have an impact upon the character of Cantley Park.
26. The proposed building is well designed and positively contributes to the character of Cantley Park. However, in the context of the application site the proposed development is at the limits of what can be accommodated on the site. The front atrium is located to boundary of the site directly adjacent to car parking spaces, with the entrance doors set back to the side. The proposed 17 parking bays are spread across the side and rear of the site, and the storage unit is located close to the rear boundary. The proposals spread across the site would necessitate the loss of trees to the front of the site and much of its grassed areas.
27. However, it is not unusual for theatres to occupy much of their site. A scheme of landscaping and the protection of trees and hedges where possible along the boundaries would help soften the impact of the proposal upon the otherwise open character of Cantley Park (**Condition 6 and 7**). Samples of materials have also been conditioned for both the extensions and storage unit in order to limit the visual impact of the proposal (**Condition 3**).

28. On balance, whilst the proposal is considered to be at the limit of what could be accommodated on the site, the proposed building is well designed and the otherwise cramped nature of the site, subject to tree protection, landscaping and control of materials, would not adversely harm the character of Cantley Park. As such, the proposal would accord with policy CP3 of the Core Strategy and the Borough Design Guide.

Residential Amenities:

29. The closest residential properties to the theatre are located some 41 metres away. The proposal would result in an additional 41 seats in its auditorium and would result in an increase in the use of the theatre by community and other groups. The theatre is an existing use and given its distance from these properties, it is considered that the proposal would not result in harm to residential amenity by way of noise pollution.

Access and Movement:

30. Concerns were raised that the proposal would result in parking stress within Cantley Park. The proposed plans originally showed the removal of 7 of the parking bays to the front of the building to accommodate an entrance. However this element has been removed from the proposal. The current proposal does not include the removal of any existing parking provision from Cantley Park.

31. The council's parking standards require 1 bay per 5 additional auditorium seats. The proposal would result in an increase of 41 seats requiring 8 parking bays. The existing site does not have a formal on site provision of parking. The proposal would result in 17 on site bays which would exceed the parking standard for the extension and would have the benefit of providing additional on site parking. This can be secured by way of **condition 5**. The theatre's use of the existing car parks within Cantley park is an existing situation and the proposed provision of parking within the site would accommodate the parking demand as a result of the extended theatre and associated community use.

32. The atrium of the proposed extensions would be located to the boundary with the line of car parking bays of Cantley Park. The proposal has been revised to relocate the entrance doors away from this parking area in order to avoid pedestrian and vehicle conflicts and such associated highway safety issues. The paths leading to the entrance doors allow suitable circulation space and the proposed landscaping provides a barrier between the walkway and the parking bays. The landscaping scheme is subject to **condition 6**. As such, the proposal would not result in issues of highway safety or result in additional parking stress, in accordance with policy CP6 of the Core Strategy.

Flooding and Drainage:

33. The council's flooding and drainage engineer has no objections to the proposal subject to condition (**Condition 8**).

Ecology:

34. The council's ecologist is satisfied that the proposal would not result in adverse harm to the local bat population.

Sustainable Design/Construction:

35. Policy CC04 of the MDD requires proposal of more than 100m² gross non-residential floor space should achieve the mandatory BREEAM level, and policy CC05 of the MDD requires proposals of more than 1000m² to deliver a minimum 10% reduction in carbon emissions through renewable energy or low carbon technology
36. The proposed extensions would result in an additional floor area that would exceed 1000m². This can be addressed by way of **condition 9**.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

37. As the proposal is not for new residential or retail floor space, it would not be a CIL liable development.

CONCLUSION

The proposal seeks to extend the theatre and its storage capacity in order to provide and enhance its facilities. The proposal is located outside of the settlement limits and in the countryside. In terms of planning policy (CP11 and the NPPF), theatres are town centre uses and should be located within the settlement limits. The proposal is also at the limits of what can be accommodated on the site.

On balance the proposal is an existing enterprise in this countryside location, the harm the proposal would cause to the open character of the countryside would not be adverse, its importance as a cultural and leisure resource, that the benefits of the proposal would outweigh the demonstrated harm to the extent that the proposal would not conflict with the principles of point 6 of policy CP11 and as such it would be unreasonable to refuse it on those grounds. Whilst at the limits of what could be accommodated on the site, the proposed building is of good design and landscaping and choice of materials would soften its impact. The proposal has been revised to remove reference to the removal of car parking spaces within Cantley Park and the access doors and circulation space has been revised to avoid vehicular pedestrian conflict. The proposal would provide on site parking that would comply with the councils standards.

As such, on balance, although there is some conflict with development plan policy, there are material considerations including the community use of the building that mean that on balance the application is recommended for approval.

CONTACT DETAILS

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