

Ref.: TC

28 November 2024

Aleema Aziz
City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Britannia House
Hall Ings
Bradford
BD1 1HX

By e-mail: planning.consultations@bradford.gov.uk

Application: 24/04067/FUL

Site: 21 Dale Street Bradford West Yorkshire BD1 4HR

Proposal: Change of use from warehouse facility to performance spaces (sui generis) and associated facilities to include: Exhibition/Art Gallery; Artist Studios/Workshops; Offices and canopy over and temporary food and beverage offer in external courtyard

Remit:

The 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@theatrestrust.org.uk **Website** theatrestrust.org.uk **Twitter** @TheatresTrust

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Chair Dave Moutrey OBE

Director Jon Morgan

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

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Comment:

This application has come to the attention of Theatres Trust through press reports because it is proposing a new theatre/performance space as part of an arts/cultural complex within a large vacant retail unit to open for Bradford 2025 UK City of Culture. It will have a multi-purpose events space at basement level with an anticipated capacity of 250 people, a 200-seat theatre, and gallery, office and studio spaces at upper levels. There will be the possibility of external pop-up stands and events.

We welcome the principle of further enhancing and expanding Bradford's theatre and cultural offer, as well as bringing a prominent vacant town centre property back to active use. Paragraph 97 of the NPPF (2023) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities of this nature. Strategic objective 7 of the Bradford Council Core Strategy DPD (2017) seeks to develop the city centre as a regionally significant cultural area, and objective 10 aims to improve access to cultural facilities. This proposal is in line with those aspirations.

Nonetheless, care should be taken to ensure this new venue is programmed both during 2025 and into the future to complement rather than compete with Bradford's existing theatre offer, as its capacity is equal to that of The Studio next to the Alhambra and only slightly less than that of the Bradford Playhouse. It is stated this will be a permanent venue to create a legacy so it must be ensured it does not undermine important and valued existing venues around the city.

In terms of function, it appears the theatre format can be flexible as there is seat storage space indicated to the rear. The seating plan shows only fixed seating, it must be ensured there are wheelchair and companion places made available. There is however an accessible WC.

WC provision more generally should be reviewed. There currently appears to be insufficient WCs shown on the plan to meet minimum standards for the theatre as set out in the Technical Standards for Places of Entertainment ('yellow book'), even without the wider functions of the building. Shortage would be exacerbated if multiple parts of the building are in use simultaneously. There should also be at least an accessible WC on each floor to meet best practice.

There is no dressing room provision, it will need to be considered how these could be provided and how safeguarding matters can be managed should performances include children and young people. Whilst it appears that access to the stage for the delivery/removal of sets and props may be adequate as there is a route straight

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Theatres fit for the **future**

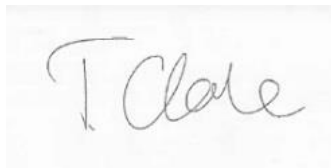
through from the external ramp to the stage area, there appears to be little space for storage so this may limit the type of product the theatre can receive.

The Design & Access Statement does not mention acoustics, it will need to be ensured there is sufficient protection and separation to avoid performances within the theatre being disrupted by other activities in the building, or vice versa.

The matters we have raised for further consideration apply to internal design and function, and are intended to ensure this proposed venue is fit-for-purpose, viable and sustainable into the future. As such they sit outside of the specific remit of this application, which covers change of use specifically.

We welcome the prospect of additional theatre and cultural provision within Bradford, and can support the granting of planning permission.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or if you wish to discuss these comments in greater detail.



Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

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