

Supporting Statement to Theatres Trust, Re: Proposed Change of Use

We respectfully submit this statement in support of the proposed change of use of the former single-screen cinema, which has remained closed for the past four years due to a demonstrable lack of commercial viability in its previous form.

While the loss of a cinema venue is always regrettable, it is important to recognise that the building has not functioned as an active cultural asset for a significant period. The proposed redevelopment into a children's role play and development centre represents not a loss, but a meaningful and sustainable continuation of the site's cultural and community purpose.

The new use is firmly rooted in the principles of creativity, performance, and artistic engagement. It will provide immersive, arts-based experiences for children through structured and imaginative play. Dedicated areas will support role play (including costume and dress-up), live performance (via a mini stage), and arts and crafts activities. These elements directly align with the spirit of theatrical expression and audience engagement, fostering early appreciation and participation in the arts.

A key feature of the centre will be the inclusion of live character performances, where trained performers will interact with children in role. This not only enhances the visitor experience but also creates new employment opportunities for individuals within the theatrical profession, including actors, performers, and creative practitioners. In this way, the proposal actively supports and sustains the performing arts sector, rather than diminishing it.

Importantly, the centre will also prioritise inclusivity and accessibility. Sensory play facilities will be incorporated to support children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and those who may benefit from adapted environments. This ensures that the venue serves a broad and diverse section of the community, fulfilling a vital social as well as cultural function.

In contrast to the previous use, which is no longer economically viable, the proposed development offers a sustainable, engaging, and socially valuable alternative. It will reanimate a currently dormant building, increase footfall, and provide a vibrant hub for families, children, and the wider community.

In conclusion, this proposal should be viewed as an evolution rather than a departure from the building's cultural purpose. It preserves the essence of performance and creativity, broadens access to the arts for younger audiences, and delivers clear community benefit. We therefore strongly urge Theatres Trust to support this application as a positive and forward-looking use of the site.

With the kindest of regards,

Jonathan and Laura Harrison.