

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/7922

22 January 2018

Planning Policy (North Dorset)
South Walks House
South Walks Road
Dorchester
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North Dorset Local Plan Review – Issues & Options Consultation

Thank you for consulting the Theatres Trust on the North Dorset Local Plan Review. Please find our comments outlined below.

We strongly recommend that your new Local Plan explicitly supports arts and culture at all levels to benefit the local economy and ensure that all residents and visitors, and future generations, have access to cultural opportunities. Policies should protect, support and enhance cultural facilities and activities, particularly those which might otherwise be traded in for more commercially lucrative developments, and promote cultural-led development as a catalyst for regeneration in town centres.

North Dorset has a number of theatres/performance spaces (for example the Blandford Corn Exchange and The Exchange at Sturminster Newton) and other cultural facilities (such as public houses - particularly where they provide live music and other entertainment – community spaces, museums, cinemas and libraries).

Culture and cultural activity helps develop a sense of place and makes communities unique and special. It contributes to the vibrancy of town centres, the tourist and night time economy. Cultural and community facilities support the day to day needs of local communities and help promote well-being and improve quality of life. Participation in cultural events can contribute to social cohesion, reduce isolation and loneliness, encourage learning and the development of skills, as well as provide the entertainment and stimulation needed to develop vibrant communities and grow the economy. There is also a growing awareness of the role that the arts and culture play in attracting and retaining residents and a skilled workforce. The NPPF provides clear directions to local planning authorities about the importance of safeguarding and promoting cultural activities and venues in their areas:

- One of the 12 core planning principles (paragraph 17) is the need to plan for culture to support social well-being and sustainable communities.
- Paragraph 23 recognises the important role town centres play in supporting communities and notes that cultural venues make a valuable contribution to the vibrancy and success of these centres.
- Paragraph 70 states that in ‘promoting healthy communities’, planning decisions should ‘plan positively for cultural buildings’ and ‘guard against the loss of cultural facilities and services.’

Theatres Trust



Chair Tim Eyles **Director** Jon Morgan

Trustees Richard Baldwin, David Blyth, Pam Bone, Paul Cartwright, Paddy Dillon, Ruth Eastwood, David Ian, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Dara Ó Briain, Simon Ricketts, Peter Roberts, Ann Skippers, Anna Stapleton

The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund co-operates with Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697

- Paragraph 156 directs local planning authorities to ensure their local plan includes cultural policies that reflect the NPPF.

To meet the NPPF requirements and support cultural well-being, the Trust recommends the inclusion of a specific policy with an example set out below:

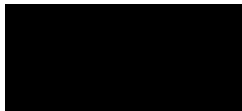
Cultural and Community Facilities

Development of new cultural and community facilities which enhances the well-being of the local community and the vitality and viability of centres will be supported.

- a. Major developments are required to incorporate, where practicable, opportunities for cultural activity to widen public access to art and culture, including through the interpretation of the heritage of the site and area.
- b. The loss or change of use of existing cultural and community facilities will be resisted unless:
 - i. replacement facilities are provided on site or within the vicinity which meet the need of the local population, or necessary services can be delivered from other facilities without leading to, or increasing, any shortfall in provision; or
 - ii. it has been demonstrated that there is no longer a community need for the facility or demand for another community use on site
- c. The temporary and meanwhile use of vacant buildings and sites by creative, cultural and community organisations will also be supported, particularly where they help activate and revitalise town centre locations and the public realm.

For clarity, and so that guidelines are clear and consistent, the accompanying text and the Glossary should contain an explanation for the term 'cultural and community facilities'. We recommend this succinct all-inclusive description which would obviate the need to provide examples: cultural and community facilities provide for the health and well-being, social, educational, spiritual, recreational, leisure and cultural needs of the community.

We look forward to being further consulted on your new Local Plan as it is further developed.



Tom Clarke
National Planning Adviser