

PLANNING APPEAL – TITCHFIELD FESTIVAL THEATRE LIMITED

In our opinion, this facility is in a totally inappropriate location, and it poses considerable risks and aggravation to residents and drivers alike using St Margaret's Lane. One family was actually driven out two years ago as they found the nuisance generated by the theatre and its rude, aggressive patrons had become intolerable.

We would oppose the concept of Planning Permission being granted with conditions. Based on the applicant's track record of ignoring regulations/conditions and the law, in our opinion, they are not trustworthy. Historically, they promise one thing and do another, flouting any regulation applied to them.

OBJECTIONS ON GROUNDS OF PUBLIC SAFETY, PARTICULARLY CHILDREN'S SAFETY

We consider the issues of safety arising from the siting of the theatre complex in a totally unsuitable location of paramount importance, especially where children are involved.

The parking arrangement negotiated by the Applicant at the Holiday Inn requires patrons to walk down the lane to reach the theatre. In the winter time when it is dark, and often raining, this is extremely dangerous, especially for the children. We have driven many times down the lane in these conditions, and the situation is not improved when patrons wear dark clothes, making them very difficult to see.

Some years ago, we approached Hampshire County Council to request that 'speed bumps' be installed in the lane as it was used as a 'rat run' by local motorists, driving in excess of the speed limit. We were advised by HCC the level of lighting is inadequate for any kind of obstruction to the free flow of traffic in the lane, and thus, in our opinion, this also would relate to obstructions caused by the wild, inconsiderate parking of the theatre patrons.

The alternative arrangement where patrons may park at the nursery opposite is taken advantage of, particularly on Saturdays when patrons fill the nursery car park leaving little or no room for their customers.

Nose to tail parking along the opposite side of the lane to the theatre premises invariably continues round the blind bend leading to the roundabout. Car drivers and residents heading to the A27 have to drive along on the 'wrong side' of the lane around a blind bend taking their lives in their hands, and hope that nothing is coming down the lane from the roundabout towards them. There is the very real potential for a head on collision. There is a speed limit of 30mph in the lane, but in our experience, this is largely ignored by traffic entering from the A27, and the parking melee outside the theatre only comes into view immediately after rounding the bend.

Patrons parking in the lane and over the footpaths, obstruct the passage for pedestrians. Parents have to walk with their children around the parked vehicles into the flow of the traffic in a dimly lit lane, often in inclement weather to reach their destination, and thus are putting their children at great risk from passing vehicles, which by nature of the time of year and weather conditions have restricted visibility.

On the AA website it states, and I quote:-

“Single White Line Parking

In some cases, the single white line is there to indicate that there is no pavement – if this is the case then it is illegal to park there.”

Thus patrons parking across those white lines as well as over pavements in the lane are on our opinion, committing an offence.

Following workshops and performances in the theatre that are attended by children, (the weekly workshops and pantomime being the main cases in point), the children exiting the theatre often do so in a very noisy, excitable and uncontrolled manner, dashing into and crossing the lane, oblivious of any traffic that may be approaching, placing them at great risk of accident or injury.

We have submitted videos to Fareham Borough Council illustrating the dangers posed by the on-going parking problem. They illustrate the situation created both by insufficient parking spaces and the inconsiderate behaviour of the theatre patrons. These videos were recorded during the use of the Acorn and Oak Theatres only, and are not representative of the additional traffic generated by the use of the Arden Theatre. The parking available is clearly inadequate for the operation of the Oak and Acorn Theatres, let alone the addition of the illegally constructed, much larger Arden Theatre, and in our opinion, constitutes a potential safety issue and under frequent circumstances, a potential danger to life.

Most importantly, nowhere in the applicant’s calculations of the parking spaces needed based on the capacity of the theatres, does he take account of those spaces required by the Theatre Company, cast, crew etc. Since they would necessarily arrive on-site before the patrons, it is clear that the spaces adjacent to the theatre and included in the calculation available for use by patrons is both understated and inaccurate.

We totally refute attempts by the theatre company to trivialise the effect of the dangerous parking as stated by their lawyer at recent the Licencing appeal. To assert that West Street, Titchfield, has a similar problem is risible. There is good visibility down the length of West Street. In our experience, motorists and residents routinely give way and display courtesy to other road users and don’t assume any entitlement to abandon their vehicles as and where they choose.

The theatre provides parking guidelines, which has had very little real impact on the problem. Human behaviour being what it is, any effect of such advice will be short lived as patrons revert to their habitual parking as close to the theatre complex as possible.

The site now has two unsightly shipping containers installed, one on top of the other, presumably to accommodate equipment that should be stored in the space at the rear of the complex, now occupied by the Arden Theatre.

NOISE NUISANCE ISSUES

The sound travels unimpeded to our home across the small paddock between us and the theatre complex. We routinely hear loud, disruptive music during performances.(I recall in particular, at the 2019 hearing, stating that we had been subjected to a very loud rendition of '633 Squadron' one Saturday afternoon during a barbeque in our garden with friends).

When 'Able Steel Fabrications' occupied the site, we were subjected to ear-splitting industrial steel production noises. These were measured in our home by Fareham Borough Council's Environmental Health Department in 1997, at 90 decibels, which they explained was the equivalent of standing near a jumbo jet on take-off. They concluded that the level of noise emanating from the buildings wasn't reduced over the short distance between us. This illustrates the vulnerability of our home to unimpeded noise nuisance emanating from the theatre complex area.

Furthermore, we believe that the noise from the theatre complex is being cynically moderated by TFT since they have installed noise monitoring equipment to support their case and to prove that there is no such nuisance. We believe that any improvement during this time will only be of a temporary nature, and will not bring about any lasting improvement.

Patrons often exit the premises in a rowdy fashion, with drunken sounding laughter, raised voices, car door slamming and engine revving noises. They invariably do not leave promptly but hang around talking. If they are being advised to leave quietly and with respect for their neighbours, they are regrettably not listening. This is particularly noticeable during summer months and periods of good, dry weather and impacts our ability to enjoy our garden and property.

We respectfully ask that you take our concerns into consideration when deciding the outcome of this appeal.

