

**Hertford Theatre: Ref: 3/20/2285/FUL**  
**Response from the Community Steering Group, Bengoe Neighbourhood Area Plan**

1. Although the majority of the Hertford Theatre site falls within Hertford Castle Ward, a section of the west elevation is within Hertford Bengoe Ward and thus within the Bengoe Neighbourhood Area Plan boundary. The draft Plan is currently at the Examination stage.

**Community Facilities**

2. We welcome the proposals to expand, improve and update community facilities for the local and wider community within Hertford Theatre. The Theatre is included on the list of community facilities in the Neighbourhood Plan (Appendix F, page 58) and criterion II, Policy HBC2: Enhanced Community Facilities says: -

*'Proposals to improve or enhance community facilities will be supported when they improve the range, quality, suitability and accessibility of facilities for residents, and when the benefits of development outweigh any disadvantages.'*

3. In addition, criterion I in Neighbourhood Plan Policy HBB1: Local Business Development says: -

*'Sustainable proposals for the development and/or redevelopment of business premises will be supported when they:*

- o *provide enhanced employment opportunities*
- o *demonstrate sustainable options for long-term business use*
- o *provide new or enhanced community facilities that meet an identified need, and economic benefit to the local community'*

4. The additional hire space, including the studio theatre, enhanced cinema provision, and larger dance studio, are welcome. Whilst recognising the need for the theatre to address its current financial deficit, it's important that the new theatre facilities are affordable for residents.

**Cycle Parking**

5. The proposed provision of 31 cycle parking spaces is noted (20 for theatre employees and 11 for visitors). As the theatre is within cycling distance for many Hertford residents, and also for some outside the town, eleven visitor cycle parking spaces may prove to be insufficient. If space permits, the provision of additional cycle parking should be explored. Criterion II in Neighbourhood Plan Policy HBC5: Cultural Facilities says: -

*'Proposals should include strategies to encourage sustainable travel from outside the Plan area and the use of non-motorised travel between venues. These could include the provision of secure, covered, cycle parking for residents and visitors.'*

6. Although the proposed Sheffield hoops enable secure cycle parking, we recommend, as above, the provision of some covered cycle parking. This is also in line with criterion 1c) in Neighbourhood Plan Policy HBH3: Landscape Design which says that landscaping schemes should incorporate: -

*'sufficient secure, covered cycle parking to encourage active travel'*

### **Connectivity with Hertford Castle Gardens**

7. The proposal to improve connectivity between Hertford Theatre, the Motte, the River Lea and Hertford Castle Gardens is very welcome. Parts of Hertford Castle Gardens fall within the Bengoe Neighbourhood Area Plan boundary, including the children's play area. As this improved connectivity will increase footfall into the Castle Gardens, we recommend that the children's play area is simultaneously upgraded and, preferably, relocated within the Castle Gardens. Criterion III in Neighbourhood Plan Policy HBN5: Improving Air Quality says: -

*'Proposals to relocate the Hertford Castle Gardens children's play area to an alternative location within Hertford Castle Gardens will be supported. Relocation away from the A414 boundary will help to reduce the negative impact of poor air quality on play area users.'*

### **Nature Conservation**

8. The proposal to encourage the establishment of a wildflower meadow around the Motte, the river frontage planting and the proposed meadow and shade planting around the theatre, are all very welcome. Criteria I and III in Neighbourhood Plan Policy HBN4: Nature Conservation say: -

*'All development should conserve and enhance biodiversity and seek to deliver net biodiversity gains' and*

*'Proposals to create new natural areas and wildlife habitats, or to expand or enhance existing provision, will be supported.'*

9. If this planning application is approved and construction work commences in 2021, it's vital that work is completed to schedule to ensure residents, and visitors to the town, can access the upgraded theatre facilities without undue delay.

Community Steering Group  
Bengoe Neighbourhood Area Plan