Our Ref.: RF/4211

NPPF Implications for the Core Strategy

Thank you for your email of 3 April consulting The Theatres Trust on the implications for the Core Strategy of the recently published National Planning Policy Framework. We have no comment to make on the ‘Model Policy’ to reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

The Theatres Trust is The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres. The Theatres Trust Act 1976 states that ‘The Theatres Trust exists to promote the better protection of theatres. It currently delivers statutory planning advice on theatre buildings and theatre use through the Town & Country Planning (General Development Procedure) (England) Order 2010 (DMPO), Articles 16 & 17, Schedule 5, para.(w) that requires the Trust to be consulted by local authorities on planning applications which include ‘development involving any land on which there is a theatre.’

We were concerned that the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy has no policies to protect and promote its existing cultural facilities (theatres). The Vision states that ‘All our residents will have the opportunity of a high standard of living, with access to high quality leisure, cultural, health and shopping facilities’, and Objective 6 promotes the provision of high quality leisure, cultural and health facilities.

To deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services that the community needs, the NPPF recommends at item 70 that planning policies and decisions should plan for the use of shared space and guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities. Also to ensure that established facilities and services are retained and able to develop for the benefit of the community.

Although the Vision and Objective 6 aspire to the NPPF recommendation, none of the policies mention the protection and enhancement of cultural facilities (especially in the three town centres, all of which have a theatre) and therefore the Core Strategy is clearly unsound as it does not achieve what the Council intended and thus the policies cannot be the most appropriate for the document.

None of the previous amendments to the Core Strategy included our suggested changes made in January 2011, but that was before the NPPF was published, which has as one of the 12 Core Planning Principles at item 17 - to take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

Rose Freeman
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