

<b>Proposal</b>	Stag Theatre Solar Panels
<b>Applicant</b>	The Stag Community Arts Centre
<b>Ward(s)</b>	Sevenoaks Town and St Johns

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the **£42,600** applied for, as set out in the report, for the erection of solar panels at the Stag Theatre be approved on the following grounds:

- Strong economic and social benefits to the community;
- The proposal helps to achieve the Council's Net Zero ambitions;
- The scheme is identified in an adopted strategy or plan;
- Evidence has been submitted to show that the scheme will be delivered;
- Strong local support for the scheme; and
- Clear public benefit

## Introduction

- 1 The Stag Theatre falls within the ward of Sevenoaks Town It is located in the centre of the District sharing its administrative boundaries with Sevenoaks Kippington, Sevenoaks Northern, Sevenoaks Eastern and Seal and Weald.
- 2 The application for CIL funds was received before the application deadline closed on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2022. This proposal has not been previously considered by the CIL Spending Board.

## Description of Proposal

- 3 The applicant is the Stag Community Arts Centre, who are seeking to erect solar panels on the south facing roof of the Stag Theatre.

- 4 The scheme is expected to yield 55,703 Wh/year of which some will be used by the Stag and exporting some of the yield to the grid. It is expected that CO2 emissions avoided by this scheme could be upto 23,821 KG a year.

### **Funding**

- 5 The Stag Theatre state that the overall project will cost £56,929.15 and they are asking for £42,600 towards the cost of the project.
- 6 The applicant states that the following additional funding sources have been sought:
  - They are in the process of making applications to the National lottery boards and Theatres trust.
  - They have applied to Sevenoaks Town Council for CIL money and are awaiting the outcome.
- 7 Therefore to meet the funding gap for the full cost of the project, the Stag Theatre has applied to the Board for 74.8% of the total project cost.

### **Representations and Support**

- 8 The applicant makes clear that there is no partnership working to deliver this scheme.
- 9 The application is however supported by all the Local Members for this ward who all support the proposal and highlight the fact that it clearly helps us achieve our Net Zero ambitions and also ensures that we retain this community asset.

### **Lead Officers Appraisal of Bid**

#### *Principal Criteria met*

- Strong social and economic benefits to the community
- The proposal helps to achieve the Council's Net Zero ambitions
- The project is identified in an adopted strategy/plan
- Evidence has been submitted to show that the scheme will be delivered
- Strong local support for the scheme.
- Clear public benefit

## Principal Criteria not met:

- There is insufficient information to show strongly that environmental needs had been met.
- Funding does not appear to be maximised from other sources.
- There is insufficient evidence that the applicant has worked in partnership with other organisations.

## Appraisal

### Strong economic and social benefits to the community

- 10 When considering an application for CIL funding from the Board, it must be demonstrated that there are clear economic, social and environmental benefits to the scheme proposed.
- 11 The proposal would bring a clear benefit in helping to retain this community facility, used locally and also has a wider impact. This theatre is a clear community asset to the whole of the District and it is important to ensure that it is retained and able to be used by the public now and in the future.
- 12 In terms of economic needs, the scheme would strengthen the survival of the Stag Theatre which provides entertainment facilities for hundreds of thousands of residents of Sevenoaks District. The survival of the Stag would benefit local businesses and restaurants, as increased footfall encourages people to use local services near to the Theatre. It also draws in a number of residents to the District. So it is important to be retained.
- 13 In terms of social benefits, post pandemic Sevenoaks is striving to recover from its effects and The Stag assists the community with the recovery with the opportunity of socialising, mental stimulation, providing a sense of well being and for residents to get out and about again. This project will ensure these social benefits continue.
- 14 It is therefore considered that sufficient evidence has been submitted to satisfy this criteria that the economic and social benefits are met and that there is a clear public benefit to the scheme.

### There is sufficient evidence to show that the proposal helps to meet the Council's Net Zero Ambitions

- 15 This proposal scores highly against this criteria, it clearly shows that the Stag Theatre will be reducing their carbon emissions by using electricity

generated from the solar panels. In addition to this, it will also contribute low carbon energy to the residents of Sevenoaks. The Council's Infrastructure Funding Statement highlights that one of the main priorities for CIL funding is for projects that contribute to the Council's Net Zero ambitions and this project certainly does.

- 16 Sevenoaks District Council have made their ambitions clear and have committed to working towards achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030. They have committed to actions that seek to improve energy and water efficiency measures in our buildings, engaging with the community, supporting green travel, making the most of green spaces and delivering plans and strategies to align with our commitment. One of our actions includes encouraging and supporting sustainable new buildings and renewable energy generation. This proposal for renewable energy will reduce carbon emissions and will clearly meet one of the main actions identified to help us meet our Net Zero ambitions.
- 17 This proposal therefore closely meets this criteria and scores highly in this regard.

*The project is identified in an adopted strategy/plan.*

- 18 The applicant has identified that Sevenoaks Town Council's Neighbourhood plan 2022 states that they will promote policies that help to deliver net zero. This proposal supports this policy. In addition, this will help deliver an enhanced community asset, which is accordance with the Local Plan policies.
- 19 The enhancement and retention of a community asset will also support growth in the area enabling the increase in population to use this facility. As stated about it also helps to meet the actions set out in our Net Zero Action Plan.
- 20 It is therefore considered that that there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the project is clearly identified in an adopted strategy or plan and will support growth in this area.

*Sufficient evidence has been submitted to show that the scheme will be delivered*

- 21 The Stag Theatre has appointed a competent person to oversee the project and the works will be installed by a Government accredited installer. They have also sought planning permission for the works and it has been confirmed that prior approval is not required. They are also happy to

provide reports as needed. The Theatre have also agreed to cover the maintenance.

- 22 It is therefore clear that the project is well managed and the scheme will be delivered.

Strong community support for the project

- 23 As stated above the bid is supported by all the local members for this area, who all see the benefit of making The Stag sustainable and helping to achieve our Net Zero ambitions. In addition the Stag Theatre have also carried out an electronic survey which was sent to residents the results are not yet ready and will be updated at the CIL Board.
- 24 The applicant has therefore provided sufficient evidence to show that the scheme has local support

Application Considerations - Weakly Performing Criteria

- 25 When carrying out the assessment of this funding application, Officers felt that the application did not perform strongly against the following criteria:

Insufficient evidence has been provided to show that the project would bring strong environmental benefits

- 26 Whilst it is noted that the proposal will provide towards a local environmental need by improving the site, there is not a wider benefit and the proposal therefore does not score as highly against this criteria as other projects.

Insufficient evidence has been provided to show that funding has been maximised

- 27 From the information provided the applicant has made it clear that they are requesting just under 75% of the project is funded through the CIL Board. Due to this large amount, it is considered that the project does not meet the requirements of this criteria. However as the project meets other criteria more closely, namely helping to achieve our net zero ambitions, it was decided that it should be put through to the CIL Spending Board.

There is insufficient evidence that the applicant has worked in partnership with other organisations;

- 28 Whilst it is clear that there is no partnership working, there is strong local support for this scheme and there are clear Net Zero and public benefits so

this scheme was considered appropriate to be put forward in front of the Board.

## **Conclusion**

- 29 The Stag Community Arts Centre has submitted a bid for CIL monies to enable them to erect solar panels on the southern sloping roof of The Stag Theatre. The proposal will clearly help the Council work towards achieving their Net Zero ambitions and will allow this community facility to be maintained and enhanced for the entire community.
- 30 Whilst it is noted that the scheme is asking for a large amount of CIL money compared to the total cost of the project, the need for the scheme has been clearly demonstrated and there are a number of social, economic and public benefits to this proposal.
- 31 After reviewing the application and subsequent supporting evidence, it is recommended by Officers that £42,600 of CIL funding be approved to support the delivery of the project. This should be subject to confirming that all sources of funding are maximised before the money is released.

## **Background Papers**

<b>Appendices</b>	Original bidding proforma and supporting information
<b>Background Papers</b>	None
<b>Contact Officer(s)</b>	Claire Pamberi ex 7221 and Carlyn Kan ex 7264

**Richard Morris**

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