

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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## Let's be grown up about theatre arguments

**CLLR ALAN CONNETT, Leader of Teignbridge Council, writes:**

With new shops opening in the town centre, we are hopefully seeing new confidence in Newton Abbot.

We certainly need to draw more people into town as we recover from the pandemic.

The town's 'offer' has perhaps not been seen as compelling in recent years and shoppers have voted with their feet or with their keyboards as they went elsewhere or ordered 'online'.

The Future High Street Fund, therefore, is a lifeline to kickstart the centre of Newton Abbot and help it become Devon's Premier Market Town.

The town has a marvellous asset in its historic Market building, which will be restored to its original form as a single entity and become a destination in its own right.

I've heard the detractors, Newton Says No to Everything, the handful of people who want the town to remain a sepia-toned picture of their yesteryear memory.

I don't agree with them.

I don't agree with them because I believe we can and should be much, much more ambitious for Newton Abbot.

The £9 million or so being pumped into Newton Abbot from the Future High Street Fund will help build a brand new multi-plex cinema.

Are people who like going to the cinema not to be allowed that?

The new cinema will enable the Market Hall to be used much more flexibly than is possible now.

If traditionalists believe theatre can only be performed in a 'traditional theatre' then pardon me for enjoying Shakespeare in the Park in Rougemont Gardens at Exeter, or ballet in a circus big top in an early Exeter Festival, or stunning concerts in the grounds of Powderham Castle. Excuse me for being a young lad who saw his first live performance in a community hall - its was an amateur production pantomime that I went to with the Cubs... and I remember it all these years later.

And let's not forget the marvellous performances of the Royal Shakespeare Company in Dawlish Leisure Centre - yes, a leisure centre.

No-one has ever said to me it was less of a performance for being in a sports hall.

I do agree with Andrew Malcolm, who chairs Friends of the Alex, that this is far too important for childish games. It requires adults to work together. That was exactly the intention when I reached out and invited Mr Malcolm and colleagues to meet and see if we can work through the issues that concern us both and hopefully arrive at some consensus. So far, that does not appear to have been possible.

Surely we all want a busy, bustling town with people coming into the town centre for all sorts of things, a great Market, independent shops, eateries and entertainment, whether it is one of the great films on at the new cinema, or a show or performance or an event

I and my Teignbridge colleagues have set out a vision for Newton Abbot town centre to build its economy, support jobs and provide a range of attractions for ALL residents.