

# Protecting theatres for **everyone**



Ref.: TC/9006164

17 July 2018

Ryan Nolan  
Belfast Planning Service  
Belfast City Council  
Cecil Ward Building  
4-10 Linenhall Street  
Belfast  
BT2 8BP

[planning@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:planning@belfastcity.gov.uk)

**Applications:** LA04/2018/1624/F

**Site:** 12-13 Shaftsbury Square, Belfast, BT2 7EF

**Proposals:** Change of use from bank to theatre (Retrospective)

## **Remit:**

The Theatres Trust is the National Advisory Public Body for Theatres, established by The Theatres Trust Act 1976 '*to promote the better protection of theatres*'. We provide an authoritative and knowledgeable source of expert advice and information on theatre buildings. We are a statutory consultee in England, Wales and Scotland and we deliver statutory planning advice on theatre buildings and theatre use through an agreement with the Northern Ireland Planning Service that Divisional Offices and Development Control Sections will consult The Theatres Trust on '*any proposals affecting theatres*'.

## **Comment:**

The Trust welcomes this retrospective application, which would regularise the use of the site currently operated by the Accidental Theatre.

The Belfast City Centre Conceptual Spatial Framework identifies the site as being within an 'Entertainment Area' and Designation CC013 highlights the area as being mixed-use in nature. It is outside of the Primary Retail Core identified in the Local Development Plan Preferred Options Paper (2017). Therefore a theatre can be considered a compatible landuse which is consistent with policy, activating an otherwise vacant unit and bringing greater diversity to Belfast's overall cultural offer. In turn this will help to enhance the city by increasing opportunities for participation in the arts, improving the cultural wellbeing of local people.

The operator states on their website the theatre is temporary, therefore this would not preclude the potential for the unit to be returned to A2 or other retail/commercial use in the future if

## **Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

**T** 020 7836 8591

**F** 020 7836 3302

**E** [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk)

**W** [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk)

**Chair** Tim Eyles **Director** Jon Morgan

**Trustees** Richard Baldwin, David Blyth, Pam Bone, Paul Cartwright, Paddy Dillon, Ruth Eastwood, David Ian, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Dara Ó Briain, Simon Ricketts, Peter Roberts, Ann Skippers, Anna Stapleton

The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

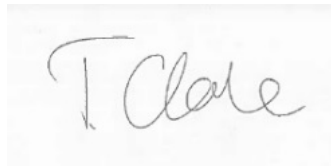
The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund co-operates with Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697

demand for such space exists.

We do have some reservation due to an apparent current lack of wheelchair accessibility for audience and performers, as it appears from plans and the theatre's website that all toilets, the bar and the rehearsal room are on upper levels with no current lift access. Nonetheless, plans show there to be a lift within the building so we suggest that permanent change of use could be conditional upon the building being made fully accessible or at least for a ground floor disabled WC to be installed.

In conclusion we **support** the principle of this application and the endeavours of the Accidental Theatre to diversify Belfast's theatrical offer, although without adequate accessibility we could only recommend the granting of permanent permission for change of use subject to the conditions outlined above. In the meantime, we would recommend a temporary permission which would give the theatre a degree of certainty to allow them to develop their business and invest in this or future premises.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'T Clarke', is written on a light-colored rectangular background.

Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser