

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/3178

24 September 2018

Ben Williscroft

By e-mail: planningdmsw@shropshire.gov.uk

Applications: 18/03817/LBC

Site: The Assembly Rooms Mill Street Ludlow SY8 1AZ

Proposal: Amendments to the consented scheme (15/01959/LBC) including removal of internal balcony structure.

Remit:

The Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. We were established through the Theatres Trust Act 1976 'to promote the better protection of theatres' and provide statutory planning advice on theatre buildings and theatre use in England through The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, requiring the Trust to be consulted by local authorities on planning applications which include 'development involving any land on which there is a theatre'.

Comment:

The Trust welcomes efforts by theatre owners and operators to invest in their buildings and to make more effective use of them, thus helping to ensure their ongoing sustainability and viability as valued cultural assets for their local communities. The three pillars of sustainable development outlined in the NPPF (2018) include a social objective of supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, providing accessible services which help support social and cultural wellbeing. Paragraph 92 seeks planning decisions to plan positively for community buildings and local services which includes cultural buildings such as theatres, and to support delivery of improved cultural well-being.

In this instance, we note from the statement accompanying the application that management of the Assembly Rooms was to have been transferred from the Council to its Trustees. The statement outlines the immense value of the Assembly Rooms to local people including those within the town's rural hinterland, and why the proposal was justified. We appear to have not been consulted on the original proposals despite the application falling within our remit as a statutory consultee, nonetheless we would have supported the principle of the development and are similarly supportive of the amendments put forward in this application.

The proposed amendments are:

- Retention and refurbishment of the doors to Castle Square rather than replacement
- Wider opening to the café to improve flow through the building

Theatres Trust

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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

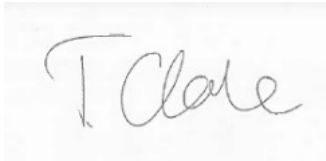
- Widened stairway to improve access
- Removal of the balcony
- Location of the upper level toilets and meeting room to be swapped
- New location for the riser duct

We support the amendments at the lower levels, which are required to meet Building Regulations and to improve accessibility and flow throughout the building. Similarly, we support the alteration of the toilets and meeting room at floor 4/5 which enables the riser duct to be located adjacent to the rear wall where it would have less impact.

With regards to the balcony, we understand this is not an original feature although it is a decorative feature of the auditorium, acknowledged by the accompanying information which states they will be salvaged for re-use. While the necessity of removing the balcony is understood as it facilitates raked seating in the stalls necessary for the installation of ducting/grilles for low-level displacement ventilation which is a condition of the grant awarded, it will result in the loss of the seating capacity offered at that level. The implications of this should therefore be reflected within the operator's business plan.

Although the proposed works will alter some of the Assembly Hall's historic character, on balance the need to maintain and secure the facility for the benefit of Ludlow must be prioritised so we **recommend the granting of listed building consent.**

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or if you wish to discuss these comments.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large 'T' and 'C'.

Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser