

# Protecting theatres for **everyone**



Ref.: TC/1009

19 October 2018

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**Applications:** P/18/761/LIS & P/18/762/BCB

**Site:** Maesteg Town Hall Talbot Street Maesteg CF34 9DA

**Proposal:** Repair, alteration and extension of Maesteg Town Hall to include internal alterations, essential fabric repairs, and the creation of a new-build extension to provide a new foyer and studio theatre alongside the existing performance space and a new community learning space within the existing lower ground floor

## **Remit:**

The Theatres Trust is the National Advisory Body for Theatres and was established by The Theatres Trust Act 1976 'to promote the better protection of theatres'. The Trust is a statutory consultee in the planning system and local planning authorities in Wales are required to consult the Trust on planning applications for '*development involving any land on which there is a theatre*'.

## **Comment:**

The Trust was not directly consulted on this proposal as per our statutory remit outlined above. Please ensure that the Council's systems are updated and that we are contacted regarding any future applications related to this site or any other theatre within the Bridgend boundary.

We welcome this application, which seeks to provide a new studio theatre and community learning space which will further enhance community and cultural provision within Maesteg. This will contribute towards the social and cultural well-being of local people and increase participation in the arts in line with the sixth well-being goal of the Well-being for Future Generations Act. It will also further increase the vibrancy of the designated Maesteg town centre, to which new retail, leisure and commercial developments are directed. Alongside this are other internal alterations within the existing Town Hall Building which seek to improve the building's facilities and accessibility.

In terms of the extension and provision of a new studio theatre and community learning space, we consider this proposal to accord with Policy REG9 of the Deposit Plan (2011) as the site sits

## **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

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within the land marked on the proposals map as a retail and commercial development site for which D1 and D2 uses are favoured. Theatres fall outside of these use classes but are compatible and a recognised town centre use, although in any case the policy states leisure and complementary uses. Strategic Policy SP10 also requires new development within town centres to provide retail, community or commercial development to the ground floor, with Strategic Policy SP13 supporting the enhancement of community buildings and for proposals for new social and community facilities to consider co-location.

The original town hall building is a Grade II listed heritage asset that provides a significant contribution to the townscape and character of the designated town centre. We consider the proposed extension to be sensitively designed, providing a distinctive and active frontage reflecting the area's industrial heritage that corresponds well with the history and character of the existing building and draws people in. Plans show it to be fully accessible and we welcome the provision of a Changing Places WC to the lower ground floor and an accessible dressing room at stage/auditorium level. The flexibility of the studio space allowing it to be utilised for other purposes and functions will further contribute towards the ongoing viability and sustainability of the wider Town Hall complex, and is something the Trust encourages.

Similarly, we support the proposed alterations within the original building. For example, the enhanced WC and catering facilities will help ensure the building meets the needs of its users which in turn boost the facility's ongoing sustainability and viability. We welcome the refurbishment of the balcony within the main hall.

There are however some minor internal design considerations that we suggest are taken into consideration at the next stage of the project's development:

#### *Kitchen*

The kitchen accesses directly to the rear of the auditorium. It is recommended that a sound and light lock be included between the spaces to enable this to be function whilst the theatre is in operation.

#### *Lift*

Likewise, the back of house lift opens directly onto the stage area. Whilst this is lobbied off the new library space within the basement, it is open at stage level which would restrict its use (even for the library) while performances and other functions are taking place. There are also store areas that open directly onto the basement lift area so appropriate measures should be taken to ensure that there is no disruptive acoustic transfer up to stage level.

#### *Dressing rooms*

Rooms F19 and F20 open directly onto stage level and whilst it is appreciated that there is little space to provide a sound and light lock in this location, we would recommend that the doors are fitted with acoustic seals to enhance their performance and reduce any sound transfer from the dressing rooms to the stage. Consideration should be given to the provision of children's dressing rooms and whilst the individual dressing rooms F15 and F16 could provide this facility

consideration should be given to separating off the main dressing room from the WC area.

### *Accessibility*

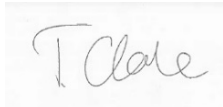
It is suggested that the accessible changing room is fitted with an accessible WC, and that doors between the stage and the accessible changing room are part M compliant.

### *Studio Theatre, sound / light control point.*

Whilst this can be located to the rear of the studio, there could be a resultant loss of seats. Back of house lift access would appear to be via the Back of House (Get-In) lift or through the studio. We suggest that thought is given to rearrangement of the accessible changing room and ramp as it could link to the studio sound and light lock instead of needing to go through the studio.

In conclusion, we support these proposals and **recommend the granting of planning permission and listed building consent**. We would welcome engagement with the applicant/Council as this project progresses.

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



Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser

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