

# Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/2305

08 May 2019

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**Applications:** 19/00507/L

**Site:** Norwich Arts Centre St Swithins Church Hall St Benedicts Street Norwich NR2 4PG

**Proposals:** Removal of existing lighting rig in nave, installation of new lighting rig, sound system, alterations to access, refurbishment of ground and first floor toilet areas with new bar in mission hall.

## **Remit:**

The Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. We were established through the Theatres Trust Act 1978 'to promote the better protection of theatres' and provide statutory planning advice on theatre buildings and theatre use in Scotland through The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulation 2013, 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:**

This site is a statutorily listed building (Grade I), reflecting its exceptional interest as the former Church of St Swithin partially dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Century. It has been operating as Norwich Arts Centre since 1980, and is an important and valued small venue for live music, theatre, comedy and other arts.

We are supportive of efforts by owners and operators which seek to improve facilities within theatres and other such performance venues. This proposal seeks a number of alterations, including the enhancement of accessibility and DDA-compliance such as the installation of induction loops within the Hall, Box Office and bar, the provision of lowered access to the bar as part of refurbishment of the bar area and the replacement of the existing ramp in order to reduce the gradient. Significantly, a stage lift will be installed for performers with disabilities.

## **Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

**T** 020 7836 8591 **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, Ann Skippers, Anna Stapleton

The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

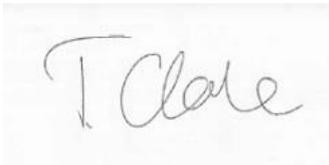
The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund co-operates with the Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697

To the ground floor there will be an extension to the existing accessible toilet, and the addition of two additional toilets which will be gender neutral within a former store. On the first floor the toilets will be refurbished, although it appears from the plans that one cubicle will be lost. We would query whether this reduction is necessary, as the overall floorspace and footprint of these toilets appear unchanged.

The removal and replacement of the existing lighting rig to facilitate new equipment is also welcomed, as this will improve the Arts Centre's efficiency. Works will better reveal decorative feature, enhancing the appearance of this significant heritage asset.

In conclusion we consider these works to positively support the Arts Centre's ongoing role as a cultural asset for Norwich and its wider catchment. Paragraph 92 of the NPPF (2019) seeks decisions to plan positively for community facilities which includes cultural buildings. We also consider that these interventions will help enhance the sustainability and viability of the Arts Centre, helping conserve the building in a compatible use which is reflective of NPPF paragraph 192. We therefore **recommend the granting of listed building consent.**

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or should you wish to discuss this representation in greater detail.

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

Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser