

# Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/3013

30 May 2019

Planning and Regeneration  
Civic Centre  
Burdon Road  
Sunderland  
SR2 7DN

By e-mail: [DC@sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:DC@sunderland.gov.uk)

**Application:** 19/00700/FUL

**Site:** Royalty Theatre 25 The Royalty Sunderland SR4 7PR

**Proposal:** Extension to front and side to accommodate new reception space, enlarged bar area and new facade treatment.

## **Remit:**

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:**

We were not formally consulted on this application despite it falling within our remit as outlined above. Please ensure the Trust is notified on any further application relating to the Royalty Theatre or any other theatre site within the Council's boundary.

This proposal seeks to extend the Royalty to its front and side which will facilitate internal improvements to audience facilities and access.

The Royalty Theatre is an important community asset for Sunderland which is highly valued by local people. It produces its own work in addition to staging outside productions, and facilitates shows by local amateur and youth groups. It has strong membership and hosts regular social functions. Smaller community theatres such as the Royalty provide opportunities for participation and engagement in the arts, help bring people together and reduce isolation. They contribute towards the social and cultural well-being of their communities. It is important that such facilities

## **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, 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

are supported, indeed paragraph 92 of the NPPF (2019) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for community facilities including cultural buildings.

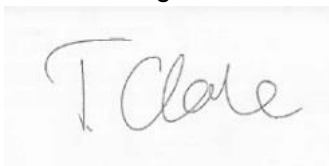
We are generally supportive of efforts by theatre owners and operators to improve their facilities for the benefit of their users, particularly where it would enhance the ongoing sustainability and viability of those buildings. We are also keen to ensure that theatre buildings are accessible and inclusive. We note the Royalty currently has limitations and we would concur with the applicant's appraisal of their constraints and challenges, not least that wheelchair access is currently through the side fire escape and that there is not currently an accessible WC.

Having reviewed the plans, this proposal would appear to meet its objective. The new foyer and reception will create a greater sense of arrival to the theatre, as well as creating additional circulation and bar space which will improve the experience of audiences. This will also help the theatre better use its spaces (especially the bar) outside of performance times, for example through additional private hires and increased use by its members and the general public. There will be additional toilet facilities, most notably through the provision of two accessible WCs.

In terms of the external appearance of the building, currently it is quite residential in character to its elevation along The Royalty and lacks animation when approached from Chester Road. We consider the proposed design and materials will substantially enhance the theatre's prominence and will help improve awareness. In turn this will increase its ongoing sustainability. In particular the bar area will become more visible and welcoming, and if the theatre is able to maximise the potential of that space it will help draw more people into the building particularly outside of performance times and substantially improve viability.

In conclusion we welcome this proposal and **recommend the granting of planning permission.**

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser