

# Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC

11 July 2019

Hilary Sperring  
County Hall  
Durham  
County Durham  
DH1 5UL

By e-mail: [planning@durham.gov.uk](mailto:planning@durham.gov.uk)

**Applications:** DM/19/01958/LB

**Site:** Bishop Auckland Town Hall Market Place Bishop Auckland DL14 7NP

**Proposal:** Internal refurbishment and alterations to modernise library, gallery, theatre facilities and café

## 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:

We welcome this application, which seeks to improve the Town Hall's facilities and in particular from our perspective its theatre thus enhancing community and cultural provision within Bishop Auckland for the benefit of local people and surrounding communities.

The Town Hall is a Grade II\* listed heritage asset which provides a significant contribution to the townscape and character of the Bishop Auckland Conservation Area and the wider designated town centre.

In terms of revisions to the main hall and theatre space, we are supportive of proposals which will see the existing projector and control room stripped out and rebuilt to contain updated projector equipment. The control room is a more recent addition for which alteration will not harm the Town Hall's historic character or significance. Likewise, the existing retractable tiered seating will be replaced with an automatic system. Overall these interventions will help improve the Town Hall's function. We assume that if the new seating system results in a drop in capacity this has been accounted for within the overall business plan.

## 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

The primary area of alteration within the Town Hall will be within the ground floor where the void above the current basement gallery will be infilled. This will facilitate a new café/bar alongside the gallery (formerly in the basement) and a smaller library space. A shop will replace the current box office; it appears ticket sales will become automated although potentially support will be available from the bar. This would seem to be a more effective use of space and the café/bar should help make the Town Hall more of an all-day destination. This will help draw people into the space which will benefit all its functions and support the overall viability and sustainability of the facility.

In conclusion, we support these proposals and **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 in greater detail.

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

Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser