

# Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/31

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**Application:** 2019/05185/PA

**Site:** Birmingham Repertory Theatre 6 Centenary Square Broad Street Birmingham B1 2EP

**Proposal:** Provision of new main entrance, new steps, ramps, two free-standing feature structures and external balconies at first floor level and associated landscaping

## **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 was not consulted on this application despite it falling within our remit as a statutory consultee. Please ensure the Trust is contacted regarding any future applications at theatres within Birmingham.

This application has come to the attention of the Trust as it involves development at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, more commonly known as 'Birmingham Rep' or 'The Rep'. The primary element of this proposal is a reconfiguration of the theatre's front of house facilities which will provide an independent main entrance and foyer and allow development and expansion of the ancillary food and beverage offer. Alongside this will be the creation of an outdoor terrace and balcony and more prominent signage with further internal alterations.

The Rep is a major producing theatre and forms a significant part of Birmingham's cultural offer. It provides opportunities for local people including youth groups to engage in the arts and

## **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

develop their skills. It also helps to draw people into the city centre. Therefore we welcome efforts by the theatre to develop their facilities in a way which will enhance its overall sustainability and viability, and we are supportive of this proposal.

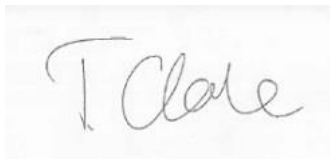
The new main entry along with ramped access and outdoor seating will help improve the theatre's prominence and ensure it better engages with and activates the revamped Centenary Square. We assume this will also benefit the theatre (and library) operationally as they would no longer be required to utilise the current entrance when the library is not in use. Fundamentally, the provision of a separate bar, café and restaurant all of which front onto the square will help make the theatre more inviting as an all-day destination outside of performance times and draw people in. Not only will this enhance the direct income potential which will support the theatre's work but it will also help attract new audiences who may not have previously engaged with it. Significantly it will also provide an additional informal performance space which will help the theatre further diversify its cultural offer. Our only reservation with this part of the scheme is that there is no direct access for wheelchair users to the bar, although we appreciate there are constraints in terms of level changes. This will need careful management to ensure wheelchair users can be appropriately served.

We also welcome the provision of additional accessible WCs and a parent and child WC. There will be additional WCs to the ground floor which is where they will be most needed given the additional activity arising from the bar and café. There will be a slight decrease in overall toilet provision mostly arising from the loss of urinals to the first floor (there will now be gender neutral WCs rather than separate ladies and men's on that level) but there will still be sufficient to meet the recommended number as set out within the 'yellow book' (Technical Standards for Places of Entertainment).

Policy TP25 of the Birmingham Development Plan (2017) supports proposals which reinforce and promote the city's role as a centre for culture, including supporting its cultural facilities and expanding provision where it contributes to the city's continued success. Paragraph 92 of the NPPF (2019) seeks decisions to plan positively for cultural buildings. This proposal will not only enhance the role of the Rep as a social and cultural asset for Birmingham but it will also contribute to and support the placemaking objectives of works to improve and revitalise Centenary Square.

Therefore in conclusion **we recommend the granting of planning permission.**

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance.

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

Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser