

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC

16 August 2019

Local Planning Office
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
Bridgewater House
23a Castlewellan Road
Banbridge
BT32 4AX

planning@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk

Applications: LA08/2019/1003/F

Site: Armagh Theatre Group Abbey Lane Armagh BT61 7DW

Proposals: Internal alterations and extension to provide lobby area within premises.

Remit:

The Theatres Trust is the National Advisory Public Body for Theatres, established by The Theatres Trust Act 1976 *'to promote the better protection of theatres'*. We provide an authoritative and knowledgeable source of expert advice and information on theatre buildings. We are a statutory consultee in England, Wales and Scotland and we deliver statutory planning advice on theatre buildings and theatre use through an agreement with the Northern Ireland Planning Service that Divisional Offices and Development Control Sections will consult The Theatres Trust on *'any proposals affecting theatres'*.

Comment:

The Trust welcomes this application which would enhance and expand the facilities at Abbey Lane Theatre. The theatre is a valued cultural facility run by its members serving Armagh and surrounding communities. It provides opportunities for local people to participate and engage in the arts. Local community-based theatres such as Abbey Lane Theatre (and the Armagh Theatre Group which runs it) help bring people together, improve cultural well-being and reduce loneliness and isolation.

These plans will provide additional facilities and flexibility for the theatre. Most prominently this includes a front extension which will significantly increase the theatre's floorspace for front-of-house provision; it will provide a dedicated foyer/lobby area along with a larger kitchenette and a unisex and accessible WC. Those facilities were previously within the auditorium/theatre room, therefore removing them from that space should result in less disturbance to performances,

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

T 020 7836 8591 E info@theatrestrust.org.uk W 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

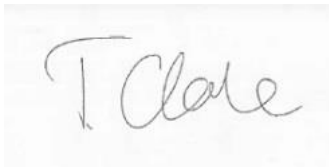
rehearsals and other activities along with giving greater operational flexibility. Within the existing footprint will be an additional third WC, which we assume will be for performers. The location of the original WCs/kitchenette will be used for additional seating and an externally-accessed boiler/storage room.

To the mezzanine there will be an extended DJ/lighting booth and to the first floor a larger storage area.

The Social Objectives of the emerging Local Development Plan (Preferred Options Paper, 2018) include a Strategic Objective to facilitate the development of community and cultural facilities. Meeting the community and cultural needs of the Borough also formed Key Issue SOC6. National core planning principles within the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (2015) include the improvement of health and wellbeing which includes the promotion of community and cultural infrastructure. Regional Strategic Objectives for town centres seek to protect and enhance diversity of uses including leisure, cultural and community. This proposal would contribute towards meeting those objectives within Armagh.

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

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser