

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/234

29 November 2019

Mr J Beattie
County Hall
Mold, Flintshire
CH7 6NF

By e-mail: planningdc@flintshire.gov.uk

Application: 060598 & 060599

Site: Theatre Clwyd Raikes Lane, Mold, Flintshire, CH7 1YA

Proposal: Extension and refurbishment including Demolition of central staircase at front of building.

Remit:

The Theatres Trust is the National Advisory Body for Theatres and was established by The Theatres Trust Act 1976 'to promote the better protection of theatres'. The Trust is a statutory consultee in the planning system and local planning authorities in Wales are required to consult the Trust on planning applications for '*development involving any land on which there is a theatre*', '*residential development within 50 metres of a theatre*' as well as for proposed theatres. The definition of theatres within the Act defines a theatre as 'any building or part of a building constructed wholly or mainly for the public performance of plays', and therefore applies to theatres, playhouses, arts centres, ciné-varieties or buildings converted for theatre use, old and new, in other uses or disused.

Comment:

This application for planning permission and listed building consent has come to the attention of the Trust as it relates to development at Theatr Clywd. We were not directly notified despite this falling within our remit as a statutory consultee as outlined above. Please ensure the Council notifies us of any further applications at this or any other theatre building within Flintshire. We were however consulted by the applicant and their team as part of the pre-application process and we were supportive of plans shared with us.

Theatr Clywd is a major producing theatre alongside hosting several touring shows and performances by local groups within four theatre spaces. It also has a cinema, gallery and a number of other spaces. It is a significant cultural facility serving not just its more immediate community of Mold but the wider north-east Wales area and parts of England, providing access

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

and opportunities for engagement and participation in the arts. It has a strong reputation and along with the jobs and opportunities it directly provides to local people it brings people into the area which creates wider economic benefits. As well as its role as a cultural and social asset the theatre is also a heritage asset, and became Grade II listed earlier this year for its special architectural interest as one of the leading examples of a post-war civic arts and theatre complex in the UK. Therefore its ongoing role and success should be supported, and in any case we welcome efforts by theatre owners and operators to invest in their buildings to ensure they remain sustainable and valued into the future.

There are several elements of this proposal, which overall is seeking to extend and refurbish Theatr Clywd. This is because operationally parts of the building do not work and in some cases modern standards are not met. Therefore this project is seeking to address current shortcomings such as improving layouts and facilities both front and back of house, providing rehearsal spaces which the current building does not adequately provide, and opening the building up as more of an all-day destination and community facility.

External

We consider the external alterations and extensions proposed to be in keeping with the current materials and appearance, and therefore the character and significance of the building as a Grade II listed heritage asset would not be undermined. In fact part of the special interest behind the building's listing by Cadw was it being an example of improvement of arts provision in the post-war period, therefore these works represent a further evolution of that ethos in order to bring the building up to modern standards and ensure it remains functional and viable into the future. Failure to tackle some of the building's challenges could undermine its operation in the future.

Foyer/Front of house

This part of the proposal represents the biggest visible change for audiences and users. It will provide a new bar and restaurant which is more centrally located to serve the main auditoriums, as well as opening up the foyer, gallery and public areas and provide a new shop and play facilities. There will also be a number of rooms which can be used for flexible purposes including health and wellbeing rooms, family and children's areas as well as an external sensory garden and play area. Accessibility around the building will be improved, for example through the provision of new lifts. The bar/restaurant will provide more natural light and views to the surrounding landscape along with an external terrace which will make the space much more appealing and help to draw people in even if they are not attending a show or other event. This will help improve the theatre's overall viability, as well as develop its role as a community and cultural asset and a space for people to come together and meet. Overall with the building becoming more open movement through the building and legibility should be improved.

There will also be quite an uplift in public WC facilities within rationalised blocks, whereas at present they are more spread around the building in smaller numbers. A number of these will be unisex/gender neutral, and there will also be an increase in accessible WCs, a new Changing Places facility and a family room.

The cinema will be served by its own foyer which provides a clearer space than at present with

its own smaller bar, although this remains more remote from the main foyer and public area and we wonder whether there might have been an opportunity to re-locate it closer to the main activity.

Anthony Hopkins Theatre

This is the largest theatre space within the building, and it will be improved by creating more flexible seating configurations which will improve audience comfort and work better operationally as it will improve audience flow. This will also provide six permanent wheelchair positions which is to be welcomed. The original appearance of the theatre will be restored through the removal of wall coverings to reveal the brickwork. There will also be upgrading of technical facilities and ventilation. These proposals are to be welcomed as they will improve the comfort and function of this space while enhancing its architectural significance.

Emlyn Williams Theatre

A second demountable balcony will be installed to provide further seating in certain configurations to avoid the stage being too distant from the audience. As with the Anthony Hopkins Theatre, there will also be technical and ventilation improvements including bringing facilities up to modern standards which is to be supported.

General facilities/Back of house

There will be provision of new and upgraded rehearsal rooms which the theatre is currently lacking, along with spaces which can be used more flexibly. A new workshop will be created which will enable this function to be carried out on-site rather than split between the theatre and an external warehouse, which will reduce the theatre's costs. Dressing rooms will also be improved including having additional toilets and showers installed. At present the theatres offices and staff accommodation is split into several small rooms and offices whereas this proposal would open up those spaces and create a more open-plan environment. This will improve working conditions for staff as presently there are a number of offices which are internal and do not have access to windows or natural light.

Overall we are supportive of these plans and welcome the investment which will go into Theatr Clywd to secure it as a cultural asset into the future. We consider that the theatre's facilities and function will be significantly improved and will provide a better experience for audiences, performers, staff and visitors while maintaining and enhancing the overall character and significance of the facility as a Grade II listed heritage asset.

Therefore in conclusion **we recommend the granting of planning permission and listed building consent.** We also strongly recommend that we are further consulted should

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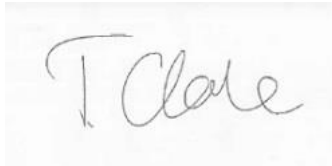
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amendments to this scheme come forward.

Please contact us should you wish to discuss these comments in greater detail.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'T Clarke', is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser