

Protecting theatres for **everyone**



Ref.: TC/3017

03 January 2020

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By e-mail: eplanning@highland.gov.uk

Application: 19/05295/FUL & 19/05294/LBC

Site: Foundry Millbank Road Thurso

Proposal: Extensive refurbishment of former mechanics garage for theatre storage and set construction workshop and installation of air source heat pump; &

Alterations, remedial works, refurbishment and installation of air source heat pump.

Remit:

The Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. We were established through the Theatres Trust Act 1978 'to promote the better protection of theatres' and provide statutory planning advice on theatre buildings and theatre use in Scotland through The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulation 2013, 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:

This application has come to the attention of the Trust because it involves development adjacent to the Mill Theatre which will be utilised to provide additional facilities for the theatre.

The Mill Theatre is a valued community and cultural facility serving Thurso and its surrounding communities. It is operated by the Thurso Players group, which is a charitable organisation run by its members. Theatres of this nature are important in bringing people together and supporting the well-being of local people, providing opportunities for engagement and participation in the arts and related functions. This is especially the case in more remote and rural parts of the country. The ongoing development and success of the theatre should therefore be supported through the planning system.

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, Truda Spruyt, Anna Stapleton

The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

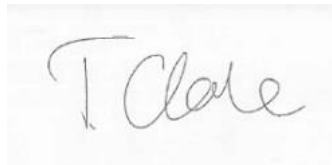
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The specific proposal seeks to restore the neighbouring building, which is the last remaining part of a former foundry, and bring it back to active use to expand the theatre's facilities. It would provide the theatre with much-needed storage space along with a workshop, rehearsal space, new accessible WC and a kitchenette/rest area. This would improve the flexibility and efficiency of the theatre, eliminating the need and cost to move and store sets and equipment off-site.

At present the building is in a poor state of repair, being structurally sound but without a roof or first floor which have collapsed. Other parts of the foundry have already been demolished. It is however a Category C listed heritage asset, therefore its restoration is to be welcomed. Although elements of the design and materials deviate from what would have been in place originally, we consider the approach to be appropriate. Furthermore it can be considered to contribute towards the outcomes of safeguarding built heritage and valued assets and of promoting and enhancing the built heritage of Thurso as set out within the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (2018).

Therefore in conclusion **we recommend the granting of planning permission and listed building consent.**

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



Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

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