

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC

22 January 2020

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Cheshire East Council
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Municipal Buildings
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CW1 9HP

By e-mail: planning@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Applications: 19/5836N

Site: Nantwich Civic Hall, MARKET STREET, NANTWICH, CW5 5DG

Proposals:

Ground floor rear extension

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:

This application has come to our attention because it involves development at Nantwich Civic Hall. The Civic Hall is a multi-purpose community facility which includes provision for theatre and live performance.

There are no plans currently shown on the Council's application portal. However the applicant (Nantwich Town Council) has set out details of the proposal on their website. This shows that the extension will provide an additional dressing room along with a multi-purpose space and a wheelchair accessible WC.

The additional facilities are to be welcomed, as these will improve provision and increase flexibility at the Civic Hall particularly in relation to theatre and live performance. In particular there will be a sizeable increase in dressing room provision and having three separate rooms will

Theatres Trust

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Chair Tim Eyles **Director** Jon Morgan

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help in terms of meeting best practice and safeguarding considerations where performances or other functions include children and young people. The multi-purpose space would also provide further flexibility in this regard.

While the wheelchair accessible WC is welcomed we have some concern that it can only be accessed through the multi-purpose space. This could be disruptive to users/hirers of that space if in use and may not be ideal for wheelchair users. We would suggest that unless it is not possible due to structural issues a better solution might be to access the WC from the corridor leading to/from the kitchen. It also appears this route has wider and better level access with a shorter travel distance from the main hall.

We would concur with the applicant in that the external materials and appearance of the extension reflect the Civic Hall's existing character. On the basis that the details on Nantwich Town Council's website are the same as those which have been submitted we would support this proposal although we would recommend further thought regarding the internal layout as set out above. Paragraph 92 of the NPPF seeks planning decisions to plan positively for community facilities and we consider the extension will help improve the flexibility of the Civic Hall as a community and cultural facility for local people. We would therefore 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".

Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

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