

Protecting theatres  
for **everyone**



Ref.: TC

21 February 2020

Carla Livingstone  
Development Management  
Kirkbank House  
English Street  
Dumfries  
DG1 2HS

By e-mail: [planningrepresentations@dumgal.gov.uk](mailto:planningrepresentations@dumgal.gov.uk)

**Application:** 20/0130/FUL

**Site:** Former St Peter's Primary School Maxwell Street Dalbeattie DG5 4AG

**Proposal:** ALTERATIONS, EXTENSION AND CHANGE OF USE OF FORMER PRIMARY SCHOOL TO FORM THEATRE AND FORMATION OF ASSOCIATED PARKING

**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 would result in provision of a new theatre and community space for Dalbeattie and its surrounding communities.

The Trust is supportive of this proposal, which would provide an enlarged theatre and upgraded facilities for the Birchvale Players to replace their existing Birchvale Theatre. It includes a 98-seat theatre along with flexible community space. It would also return a former primary school which has been vacant since 2016 back to active use. The Birchvale Theatre is a valued community and cultural asset for Dalbeattie, providing access to live theatre and cinema as well as opportunities for participation in theatre and the arts.

St Peter's Primary School has been vacant for around four years. It is a relatively large site in a more central location within Dalbeattie than the existing theatre thus it can be considered to improve accessibility to the theatre. The provision of new community space will also be of benefit to the wellbeing of the local community. We consider the change of use from a school (Class 10) to a theatre (Sui Generis) to be appropriate given both are considered community

**Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

T 020 7836 8591 E [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk) W [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://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

The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund co-operates with the Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697

## Protecting theatres for everyone



facilities. In any case the proposal can be considered to accord with Policy CF1.b of the Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan 2 (reuse of community facilities) because of the nature of the exercise necessary to have closed the school due to lack of need, demonstrating it is surplus to requirements.

In terms of the proposed layout of the building, we welcome that there appears to be good accessibility for wheelchair access throughout. There are however no wheelchair places for audience members indicated within the auditorium, it should be ensured that at least some seats are removable so that places can be made available as required. Ideally there should be a backstage accessible WC for performers, we would suggest there might be an opportunity to provide one within the storage space off the workshop.

There is no specific bar indicated, although we assume the Green Room will serve that purpose as it is accessible from the public foyer and contains a servery. Bar takings are an important aspect of theatre viability and a welcoming environment helps create a positive audience experience so we encourage such provision is given thought.

We consider the extension and external design of the building to be appropriate.

Overall we welcome this proposal and the positive role the theatre and community space will play in supporting the social and cultural wellbeing of local people in Dalbeattie and the surrounding areas. It will bring a vacant site back to active use. Therefore we **recommend the granting of planning permission** and look forward to the project progressing.

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

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

Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser

### Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

T 020 7836 8591 E [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk) W [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://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

The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund co-operates with the Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697