

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC

16 June 2021

Ben Daines
Planning & Public Protection
Hove Town Hall
Norton Road
Hove
BN3 3BQ

By e-mail: planning.consultation@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Application: BH2021/01845

Site: Brighton College Eastern Road Brighton BN2 0AL

Proposal: Erection of a new Performing Arts Building, incorporating a 400 seat Theatre, 2no Dance/Drama Studios, new 6th Form Centre, multiple new Classrooms and offices, storage areas, a Cafe and associated works. (Amended Description)

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:

Thank you for consulting Theatres Trust regarding this application. We have been notified because the proposal includes construction of a new theatre within a Performing Arts building for Brighton College.

Although predominantly intended for educational and college use, submission documents state the theatre will also be made available for wider community and external use. This will help to further enhance provision of arts and cultural facilities within Brighton and Hove and add to the diversity of spaces available in line with Policy CP5 of the Brighton & Hove City Plan Part 1 (2016) and emerging Policy DM9 of the City Plan Part 2 so is welcomed.

The proposed plans reflect that this is foremost an educational building. The theatre is to the second floor and requires a convoluted journey through the building which would not be ideal for a full public theatre. WCs are to the first floor below. There is a café space to the ground floor, again assumed to be for students but potentially able to open and function for audiences if

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

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Chair Tim Eyles **Director** Jon Morgan

Trustees Richard Baldwin, Paul Cartwright, Paddy Dillon, Annie Hampson, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Jane Spiers, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

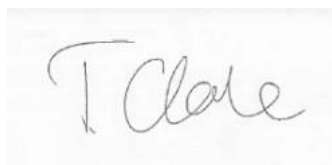
The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund co-operates with the Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697

required. Even if the café is closed it will need to be ensured that users can still pass through the area in order to access the lift to upper levels. We note there is no wheelchair access to the balcony level of the theatre which also makes the tech balconies inaccessible; there should be a choice of wheelchair spaces at different locations as per Part C2 of the Technical Standards for Places of Entertainment (2013, revised 2020) whereas the plans suggest there is only wheelchair access to the rear of the stalls. The stage is accessible, however. There are no obvious dressing rooms but it is assumed the basement studios or adjacent classrooms could be repurposed when required, all of which are accessible.

With the theatre not having independent access it is to be assumed any public use would largely fall outside of core educational hours so as to avoid conflict with educational activities and potentially maintain safeguarding. This would likely limit outside use to evenings, weekends and holidays but we assume this is acceptable to the college and that any resultant constraint on income generation will not undermine the project's viability. Operationally the college will need to ensure classrooms and other spaces are appropriately secured if non-students are to be moving through the building and consider how entry will be controlled to ensure only legitimate visitors and ticket holders come in. With the Performing Arts building being deep into the college site we would advise that appropriate wayfinding is in place.

In conclusion we recognise as a public venue the theatre is very much secondary to the educational needs of the college and on that basis inevitably there will be constraints and compromises on design and function compared to a dedicated public theatre. Nonetheless, as a new-build modern standards of accessibility should be achieved so we would encourage further review of wheelchair access into and around the theatre. Provision of the theatre will both enhance local cultural provision and provide students with the opportunity to develop education and skills in theatre and the performing arts. It is not appropriate for us to comment on the overall principle of development and its scale, design and massing given this is primarily an educational building and site. Nevertheless we support inclusion of the theatre and raise no objections to the granting of planning permission.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or if you would like to discuss these comments further.



Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

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