

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC

04 June 2021

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Planning Services
Norwich City Council
City Hall
Norwich
NR2 1NH

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

Applications: 21/00413/F

Site: 49 Elm Hill Norwich NR3 1HG

Proposal: Change of use from F1 (Dance School) to creative space including studio theatre and co-working space. Café/Bar with outside seating area in south-facing garden. Installation of Air Source Heat Pump and greenhouse.

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 the change of use will result in the creation of a new studio theatre within the Grade I listed St Simon and St Jude Church.

The applicant and operator of the site is curious directive, a local theatre company who produce science-based shows. They have a strong reputation and tour both nationally and internationally. They are an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. Within their building they currently operate a co-working space and a rehearsal and meeting space. They make a positive contribution to Norwich's diverse arts and cultural offer and are to be supported.

As stated within the Heritage Impact Statement, curious directive sought feedback on early proposals from the Trust and advice was given. It appears from our records that access was raised as a challenge, and note that a stair lift appears to have been installed following a previous listed building consent. The Trust was not consulted and did not comment on that application as it does not appear that theatre use was specifically included. Those works also

Theatres Trust

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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

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included installation of features such as lighting rigs which supported rehearsals but also facilitate theatre use.

The change of use aspect of this application would regularise theatre use for public performances, which following existing works could already be handled but to date have not been held. The change of use would also reflect the broader community and cultural offer of the facility. The applicant has indicated they are not looking to host outside productions, but irrespective of this (or should the site change hands in future) the small capacity adds further diversity to Norwich's theatre offer. Therefore it would complement rather than compete with other spaces, falling between the capacity of 110 at The Garage and the 50 seats of the Puppet Theatre's studio space. Paragraph 92 of the NPPF (2019) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities of this nature. Policy DM22 of the Development Management Policies Plan (2014) permits and encourages new and enhanced facilities, with DM23 seeking to enhance the vibrancy of the city centre. This change of use would contribute to those aims.

There are further works and alterations associated with this application to install air source heat pumps with associated services and pipes along with a greenhouse within the garden area. We have no objections to those works, similarly for the café and bar which would bring people into the site and further raise awareness of the theatre company's work.

In conclusion we would be supportive of the granting of planning permission.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or should you wish to discuss this representation 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

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