

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/2475

06 July 2021

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By e-mail: planning.comments@york.gov.uk

Application: 21/01384/FUL & 21/01385/LBC

Site: Joseph Rowntree Theatre Haxby Road York YO31 8TA

Proposal: Upgrade Auditorium roof (including ventilation dormers) with insulation and integrated solar PV panels to south slope; lead cladding to ventilation dormers; insulated warm metal roof (non-ventilated) to Fly Tower with solar PV panels and smoke vent access hatch; LED lighting to auditorium; &

External alterations including upgrade Auditorium roof (including ventilation dormers) with insulation and integrated solar PV panels to south slope; lead cladding to ventilation dormers; insulated warm metal roof (non-ventilated) to Fly Tower with solar PV panels and smoke vent access hatch; LED lighting to auditorium.

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 these applications for planning permission and listed building consent at Joseph Rowntree Theatre. They are seeking works to the roof including replacement to the fly tower and minor repairs and insulation to the auditorium, along with installation of PV panels and replacement lighting within the auditorium.

The theatre is a Grade II listed heritage asset and an important arts and cultural facility for York. It is run as a charitable trust operated by the community. It has a varied programme and caters to many amateur and community groups. Theatres such as this are particularly important in

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

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supporting the social and cultural well-being of local people, bringing them together and providing opportunities to volunteer and develop skills. This helps reduce isolation. Venues such as this are to be supported; paragraph 92 of the NPPF (2019) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for cultural uses.

Fly tower roof works

The need for this aspect of the proposal is clearly documented. The current flat roof encounters water pooling which in turn through damage has entered the fly tower causing vegetation growth and some corrosion of its metal structure. Clearly the longer-term conservation and upkeep of the building must be prioritised. The proposed solution of a metal roof would protect the building. Such a roof requires there to be a pitch which plans show to be the case, although the angle is such that the alteration to the building's form will be barely noticeable. Therefore we do not consider this would cause harm to the building's historic character. Likewise, the proposed addition of solar PV panels in this location add little in the way of height and plans show them to fall below the line of the existing parapet. Efforts to improve the theatre's environmental sustainability without harming its special character and reduce its costs are to be welcomed. Neither do we have any objections to the new smoke vent access hatch.

Auditorium roof works

Again the need for the repairs and insulation is well documented within the applicant's Design & Access Statement/Heritage Statement. There is currently no insulation to this roof, so its installation will again benefit the theatre's sustainability and reduce its costs. Repairs to the roof for any missing or damaged tiles are stated to use existing stock or matching. Amendments to the ventilation dormers raise no issues. It is also proposed that PV panels are attached to this roof along the southern elevation. As this is a pitched roof the addition of the panels will have greater visual impact than the fly tower examples.

As stated above, we are highly supportive of theatres, including historic theatres, investing in environmental sustainability initiatives and for community venues such as this the cost savings are particularly beneficial to their long-term viability. However such interventions within the historic environment can lead to conflict between sustainability and harm to architectural and historic significance, as is the case here. We therefore take such assessments on a case by case basis taking into account varying factors to weigh the environmental benefits against the level of heritage harm.

In this instance, the negative impact of the panels is somewhat mitigated through much of the southern elevation being masked by the neighbouring buildings to the south and east and the trees to the west obscuring views from that direction. The juxtaposition between the dark panels and lighter tiled roof is mitigated by the use of integrated panels which are reasonably flush to the existing roofline. More generally it must also be considered that PV panels are removable, thus this is a reversible change. In our view the harm is less than substantial.

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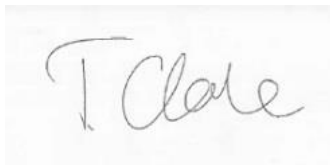
Therefore, on weighing up the balance in terms of NPPF paragraph 196, we consider the environmental and public benefits of this proposal along with the mitigating factors cited outweighs the less than substantial harm caused. As such we support installation of PV panels on the auditorium's southern elevation.

Internal auditorium lighting

We have no objections to this element of the proposal. The replacement LED lighting will be more cost effective and efficient for the theatre. It will be important to ensure the lighting is of an appropriate tone but again improving sustainability is a key balance in the overall judgement.

To conclude, we are supportive of the granting of planning permission and listed building consent. There is clear and compelling need for much of these proposal, and whilst the installation of the PV panels to the southern elevation is more contentious from a heritage perspective we are able to support the theatre's plans for the reasons outlined.

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



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