

# Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/140

05 August 2021

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**Application:** DC/21/3438/FUL

**Site:** Spa Pavilion Undercliff Road West Felixstowe Suffolk IP11 2DX

**Proposal:** Alterations and extensions to the Spa Pavilion to form a ground floor extension with first floor balcony to the North Sea-facing elevation and entrance canopy to the primary Theatre entrance.

## **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 for planning permission has come to our attention because it is seeking extension and alterations at the Spa Pavilion. We have not been consulted despite this proposal falling within our statutory remit described above.

The Spa Pavilion is a valued arts and cultural facility for Felixstowe. It is a non-designated heritage asset set amongst the Sea Front Gardens and Promenade within the Felixstowe Conservation Area. The site has been used for live performance and theatre since 1907; originally it was an open-air bandstand with seating for 400 people with a new building known as the Floral Hall following in 1910. This was demolished and replaced by the Spa Pavilion as a dedicated theatre in 1938, although it was badly destroyed by bombing shortly after in 1941. It was again rebuilt after the war and re-opened in 1950 with a lounge with sea-views added ten years later. It closed for a period in 2013 at which point it was on the Trust's priority Theatres at Risk register and was removed in 2015 having been taken it on by new operators. The theatre

## **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

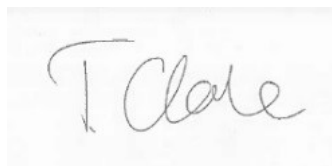
has a varied year-round programme and its prominent seafront position with strong ancillary food and drink offer means it is well-used throughout the day.

Efforts to invest in and further improve the Spa Pavilion are welcomed by the Trust. These plans would see the building extended to infill the current external terrace to the ground floor. This will provide an expanded and upgraded café area which can facilitate functions and small-scale performances. This will improve the venue's flexibility and enhance its potential to generate income to support its wider arts and theatrical function. It will also provide additional WCs which will help enhance the audience experience. A replacement external terrace will be provided to the first floor restaurant above the new extension. We would note the existing terrace provides shelter, but the new upper terrace could be made to be all-weather through use of rain-proof parasols or other such coverings if required. The new terrace would have better views towards the sea

Paragraph 93 of the NPPF (2021) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities of this nature. Policy SCLP12.13 of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (2020) supports activities which promote cultural attractions including cafes and restaurants. Enhancement of the theatre's food and drink offer will contribute towards that objective and support the wider strategic attractiveness of Felixstowe as a visitor destination, as well as improve the function of the building as a social and cultural asset for local people. We consider the design of the extension to complement the building's setting.

Therefore we welcome these proposals and are supportive of the granting of planning permission.

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



Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser

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