

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/3782

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Application: 20/02867/FUL & 21/04680/ADV

Site: Theatrebarn at Bretforton Grange Main Street Bretforton Evesham WR11 7JH

Proposal: Construction of a single storey extension to provide additional sanitary facilities and wheelchair-accessible WC. Installation of a new platform lift to facilitate disabled user access into the main auditorium. Alterations to provide a fully accessible main entrance complete with new external glazed canopy. Refurbishment of existing toilet accommodation

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 Theatrebarn, which are seeking internal alterations, refurbishment and construction of an extension to provide additional WC facilities.

Theatrebarn is within a complex of Grade II* listed agricultural barns at Bretforton Grange. Theatre was first introduced in 1979 following the conversion of the Grange's long gallery which was named Theatreroom and equipped with 100 seats. Over ten years later the barns came into the ownership of the theatre with the largest of these converted into a 180-seat proscenium arch theatre. The adjoining barns are utilised as a foyer, restaurant and back of house facilities including dressing rooms, showers and a green room. The courtyard and grassed area outside of the foyer is also utilised as front of house before shows and during intervals. Theatrebarn was briefly on our national priority Theatres at Risk register for 2013 after its operation and setting

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

was threatened by a potential neighbouring development but was taken off a year later with immediate threat having receded.

Theatrebarn is a unique and valued arts and cultural asset. Paragraph 93 of the NPPF (2021) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities such as this with paragraph 84.d supporting the development of services and facilities within rural areas. We welcome efforts to invest in the theatre and its facilities and particularly that it will facilitate improved accessibility. Therefore we are supportive of these proposals.

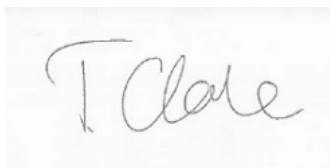
The internal alterations will improve the theatre's function and enhance the experience of audiences. The existing female and male WC block will be consolidated to provide just female WCs with double the number of cubicles. Replacement male and a new accessible WC will be provided immediately beyond this area in the new extension along with a changing facility. The uplift in provision will reduce queueing and congestion at peak periods. Installation of a platform lift will provide wheelchair access to the auditorium above with wheelchair positions being made available. Making the theatre inclusive is a significant public benefit which justifies alterations to this heritage asset, although we would concur with the applicant that the interventions will have minimal impact.

Similarly we are supportive of the new entrance and canopy which will also help improve access into the theatre.

We would note that operationally the theatre will need to consider evacuation procedure for wheelchair users from the auditorium and ensure it can be managed by staff in place. The Disability Access Audit identifies similar considerations.

In conclusion we welcome these improvements to the theatre and its facilities and would recommend the granting of planning permission and listed building consent.

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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