

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/2139

25 August 2021

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

Application: DC/21/3737/FUL

Site: The Theatre 10B Church Street Framlingham IP13 9BH

Proposal: Change of use from antiques shop to sui generis use including for theatre, studio, event room and facilities. Alterations to residential flat and a new external stair and platform lift access to flat. Internal walls to form new mezzanine studio/office at west end. Single storey extension of the flat into enclosed yard at east end.

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 has come to the attention of the Trust because it is a building that was formerly used for theatre and for which return to a mix of uses including theatre is sought.

The site was formerly the Conservative Club and included an assembly room which opened around 1914. Potentially this was a replacement for a much earlier theatre (late eighteenth or early nineteenth century) located in a barn to the rear of 20 Fore Street. There are, or were, playbills in Framlingham Castle from the 1830s. We have internal and external colour photos of the old theatre on record with an unknown date. It appears to have been demolished subsequently, possibly in the mid-late 1980s prior to construction of the predecessor to Mills Meadow Care Home as there is no reference to it in the application for the latter. During its life the current hall served as a multi-use venue, more like an arts centre, with a mix of theatre, cinema, live music, dances and meetings. The hall was in retail use by the early 1990s and a residential flat was added in 2015 within the former stage and backstage.

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

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This application seeks to reduce the footprint of the existing flat in order to revert the hall back to its original function, re-introducing theatre and live performance provision to the town. This is something we support. Its size and capacity would make it conducive to supporting local amateur groups and small-scale touring productions. The hall, whilst not listed, is a non-designated heritage asset so we welcome a use compatible with its ongoing preservation being brought forward.

The stage would be reinstated with its separating partition removed. The plans suggest the flat could be used flexibly as a holiday let rather than as permanent living accommodation. We would suggest that its use as permanent living accommodation would not be appropriate given the likelihood of noise and disturbance from the hall. The applicant may wish to consider the overall flexibility of the living space and how or whether it could practically be used as backstage/dressing room provision as suggested in the Design & Access Statement. The venue otherwise appears to lack back of house space although the mezzanine could also be used for that purpose for those without additional access needs. For reasons of safeguarding some further thought is also required as to whether it is possible to segregate and screen different areas for changing if youth productions, rehearsals or classes are held. The plans suggest the venue will be accessible with installation of a platform lift to the stage which is welcomed, although with the mezzanine level not being accessible ground floor provision for wheelchair users should be considered. It appears one of the WCs will be accessible although the plans do not confirm this.

In conclusion we welcome the proposed change of use of this hall and would support the granting of planning permission.

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "T Clarke".

Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

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