

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/2907

28 October 2021

Mr Alan Pepler
Development Management Service
2 Spiersbridge Way
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Glasgow
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By e-mail: planning@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

Application: 2021/0694/TP

Site: Eastwood Recreation Centre 6 Eastwood Park Rouken Glen Road Giffnock East
Renfrewshire G46 7JS

Proposal: Proposed leisure centre, theatre, library, cultural facilities and ancillary spaces with associated parking and landscaping works including demolition of existing leisure centre and theatre building

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:

Thank you for consulting Theatres Trust on this application for planning permission, which seeks redevelopment of the Eastwood Park Leisure centre including a replacement theatre for the Eastwood Park Theatre. We have been engaged by the operator and their design team for this scheme, who have presented this scheme to us. We also submitted high-level comments at pre-application stage, and provided some early advice in 2017 when a new build theatre was being considered.

There is currently a leisure complex within Eastwood Park which includes the theatre, a gallery and sports centre. The existing theatre is valued by local people, hosting many shows by amateur dramatics groups alongside community hires and other events. However we are also aware the programme has potential for expansion of the theatre's comedy, live music and professional offer in particular and this is something this project is looking to address. We also acknowledge and recognise the theatre's limitations in its front and back of house facilities which are common challenges of buildings of this age.

Theatres Trust

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Interim Chair Paddy Dillon Director Jon Morgan

Trustees Richard Baldwin, Paul Cartwright, 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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Nonetheless, demolition and reconstruction is generally not the optimum solution in terms of environmental sustainability compared to re-use and retrofitting existing buildings due to embodied carbon and the emissions created by construction and new materials. We therefore encourage alternative options to be considered before looking to complete redevelopment. In this case we are mindful that this complex is more than just a theatre, and that whilst there are merits in improving theatre provision it is the adjoining sports and leisure centre not meeting modern needs that is a major driver of this project. We also appreciate that there are negative social implications associated with closure of the centre for a prolonged period, and that constructing the new centre on the neighbouring site enables continued operation. From the perspective of theatre this means that existing audiences and shows can be retained which will support the theatre's ongoing viability.

We are supportive of the applicant's vision for the theatre and the nature of shows they are seeking to attract post-completion, which appear to be of realistic and suitable scale for the size of the theatre and its catchment. This should broaden local access to a more diverse range of theatre and live performances which will be beneficial for the social and cultural well-being of local people. There will also be an increase in provision which we welcome because alongside the re-provided main auditorium (which itself will have a slight increase in capacity) there will be a smaller studio. This will help facilitate smaller productions and the works of emerging artists, as well as provide an additional space for rehearsals and hires by the local community.

Upon initial review of the proposed plans for this theatre the Trust had identified a number of potential design and operational challenges which have been discussed with the applicant. For example we had questioned the get-in provision because access seems insufficient for large vehicles, but with use of articulated vehicles being considered unlikely the proposed arrangements would be suitable for smaller vans. We also noted operational challenges associated with bin stores being distant from the theatre and we understand this is an area for further consideration.

We had identified from submitted plans that there was potential for acoustic bleed from the sports centre into the theatre which could disturb performances. We have been assured that the walls are of sufficient build-up to prevent this along with dressing rooms providing a buffer but this is not reflected within plans. We suggest this is properly incorporated into final plans.

In terms of safeguarding, the proposed dressing room plans meet legal standards but do not represent best practice because separate rooms should be provided so different genders of children and young people are not mixed together. As an internal layout matter this would not affect the granting of planning permission but we would urge this to be further reviewed as plans are further refined. We have also noted that the environment of the green room would be improved through provision of natural light given this area is to an external elevation but we understand the design rationale is to enable projections from performances at the outdoor amphitheatre area. If there is opportunity for a different location or approach this should be considered.

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More generally, we would encourage suitable signage and wayfinding around the building particularly in relation to the theatre bar/café which is quite remote from the activity of the main entrance and sports area. With its outlook to the park and external area this could be an attractive facility and all-day offer which contributes to the theatre's viability and helps bring more people into the building and raise awareness of forthcoming events.

Overall we are supportive of this project and of the granting of planning permission. We would note these comments are specifically in relation to the theatre aspect, we make no comment on the design or range of facilities offered by other parts of the building except where they have direct impact on the theatre.

Please contact us if you wish to discuss these comments in further detail and consult us further should plans be refined.

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

Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

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