

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/3811

18 November 2021

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

Application: 585/APP/2021/3906

Site: ST ANDREW'S PARK HILLINGDON ROAD UXBRIDGE

Proposal: Deed of Variation to Section 106 Schedule 8 (Cinema Building) and Schedule 9 (Theatre Site) associated with planning permission ref: 585/APP/2015/848 dated 21-12-2015 (Variation of condition 5 of planning permission ref: 585/APP/2009/2752 dated 18/01/2012 (redevelopment of former RAF Uxbridge site) to amend approved plans and drainage strategy regarding the Town Centre Extension phase of the development) to amend obligations relating to transfer of cinema building and theatre site.

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 on the above application for a deed of variation to remove obligations. This will result in the existing cinema building not being transferred to the Council, and the proposed theatre site also not being transferred with the theatre no longer coming forward and the land being given over to other uses. From discussion we understand that the Council's position is that investment will instead be directed towards the borough's existing theatres.

The proposed theatre was to have had a capacity of around 1,200 with an ambition of attracting larger-scale touring shows. The borough is without large-scale provision and there are limitations on the type of shows that can be received at the Beck, however we had previously expressed reservations as to the suitability of the proposed site both in terms of viability of

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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proposals and whether it would work operationally due to design constraints. The borough's other active theatres are the Compass and Winston Churchill plus seasonal outdoor provision at Barra Hall Park and Southlands. These are valued facilities but are not comparable as they are of much smaller capacities catering to amateur and community groups along with small professional and touring shows.

Potentially there is need for a new larger theatre within the borough or expansion of the Beck Theatre. With the relevant Cabinet report being unavailable due to sensitivity we are unable to ascertain what research and evidence the Council has produced in relation to cultural provision and need. This includes what its alternative plans are for its existing theatres and where investment is being directed; the outlay for a new theatre as originally proposed would have been significant. We would welcome engagement with the Council on its plans.

Although referred to as the cinema site, this building falls within the Trust's remit because it was built not just for films but for live concerts and theatre; it had a stage and proscenium arch along with supporting infrastructure. It is on Historic England's Heritage at Risk register. We would also need to see a positive strategy in place for this asset.

With regards to the specific variation removing transfer to the Council, in principle we have no objection. However, both elements of this variation require robust alternative plans and obligations to be secured to ensure the return to use and conservation of the cinema site as a statutorily listed heritage asset and that the cultural needs of current and future residents are met.

Please contact us if you wish to discuss these comments further. We would in any case welcome further engagement with the relevant Council departments on the matters raised.

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

Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

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