

# Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC

23 March 2022

Jas Bansil  
Dartford Borough Council  
Development Control  
Civic Centre  
Home Gardens  
Dartford  
DA1 1DR

By e-mail:

**Application:** 22/00181/FUL

**Site:** The Orchard Theatre Home Gardens Dartford Kent DA1 1ED

**Proposal:** Installation of solar PV panels and inverters. Provision of air source heat pumps including 8 no. external compressor units.

## **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 seeking planning permission at the Orchard Theatre for the installation of PV panels and air source heat pumps. We have not been directly notified despite this falling within our statutory remit outlined above.

The Orchard is an important arts and cultural asset for Dartford. It has a capacity of 956. It has a strong theatrical programme with major touring productions, live music, comedy and talks. It also offers conferences and other events and functions. Paragraph 93 of the NPPF (2021) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities such as this.

We are highly supportive of theatres investing in environmental sustainability initiatives. The cost savings from reduced energy bills are also particularly beneficial to the longer-term financial sustainability and viability of cultural venues.

## **Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL  
T 020 7836 8591 E [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk) W [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk)

**Chair** Dave Moutrey **Director** Jon Morgan

**Trustees** Paul Cartwright, James Dacre, Suba Das, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Lucy Osborne, Jane Spiers, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

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As a relatively modern building the Orchard is not a heritage asset and neither is its wider setting particularly sensitive. These installations are minor in scale adding little to the overall massing of the building whilst delivering public benefits through enhanced environmental sustainability, in turn supporting community, cultural and social function. Paragraph 156 of the NPPF supports initiatives for renewable and low-carbon energy.

Therefore we recommend the granting of planning permission.

Please contact us should you wish to discuss these comments further.

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

Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser

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