

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/3848

20 January 2023

Claire Attaway
Mid Kent Planning Support
Maidstone House
King Street
Maidstone
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By e-mail: planningcomments@midkent.gov.uk

Application: 22/505784/FULL

Site: Arden Theatre Leslie Smith Drive Faversham Kent ME13 8PW

Proposal: Erection of side extension to provide two dressing rooms with storage above including installation of solar panels on the roof.

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 after having been contacted by the applicant. We have not been directly notified despite this falling within our statutory remit as described above. Please ensure the Trust is contacted regarding at further applications at the Arden or any other theatre within the Maidstone or Swale areas.

The Arden is a small community-orientated theatre which hosts both professional and amateur productions. It is an important facility for local people, bringing them together and providing opportunities for participation in the arts. Paragraph 93 of the NPPF (2021) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for community buildings and local services which includes cultural buildings such as theatres.

This proposal seeks to construct an extension to the northern end of the theatre's west elevation to provide much-needed additional space. It will be a flexible area to provide two larger dressing rooms but with a movable partition which will allow it to become a single space for rehearsals. There will also be an additional back of house WC. This will make the theatre more attractive to

Theatres Trust

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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

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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outside hirers which will both enhance its arts and cultural offer and value as well as improve its financial sustainability. It will also be beneficial to have internal storage capacity which will be within the upper roof space.

The extension is identical to a previous application in 2018 which was supported by the Trust, but for which permission has now lapsed. A fresh permission is therefore sought which will give the Arden certainty whilst it continues to fundraise. In addition to the previous scheme this proposal would also add PV panels to the roof to help improve environmental sustainability and reduce running costs which is particularly beneficial given its charitable ownership and operation for the community. The extension is relatively modest in scale but would significantly improve the theatre's back of house infrastructure. The development will help contribute towards the Swale Borough Local Plan (2017) vision and place-based objective of sustaining Faversham's role as a thriving market town, along with meeting Core Objective 10 which seeks to develop culture to support communities.

We therefore welcome this proposal and support the granting of planning permission.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or if you would like 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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