

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/3700

20 February 2023

Waverley Borough Council
Planning Service
The Burys
Godalming
GU7 1HR

By e-mail: planconsult@waverley.gov.uk

Application: WA/2023/00041

Site: BEN TRAVERS THEATRE CHARTERHOUSE HURTMORE ROAD GODALMING GU7 2DU

Proposal: Erection of extensions and alterations to existing theatre building with associated landscaping

Remit:

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 this application for planning permission at the Ben Travers Theatre, which is seeking to alter and extend the building.

Ben Travers Theatre was opened in 1980 as part of the Charterhouse School, but is within its own self-contained building within the site. Whilst it is largely used for educational purposes including hosting school productions it is also open to the wider community and is used by local amateur groups. Paragraph 93 of the NPPF (2021) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities such as this.

These proposals would see the building extended to provide a new studio theatre which will both enhance educational provision as well as provide greater flexibility in terms of the type and scale of performances that can be accommodated and improve the offer for community groups. This is welcomed. Alongside this the foyer will be expanded, and there will be further enhancements.

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL
T 020 7836 8591 E info@theatrestrust.org.uk W 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

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

At lower ground floor level there will be the addition of six female WCs along with prop stores and a covered back of house link. There also appears from the proposed plan to be some rearrangement within the auditorium which would give an extra row of seating including wheelchair places to the front and back rows which again is welcomed, and better aligns with modern standards for accessibility which seek availability of a variety of positions.

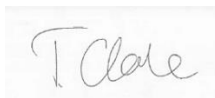
At upper ground level the WC block has been removed, although there is an uplift in provision within the new lower position. An accessible WC has been retained in a new location. The larger foyer with external patio area will both better provide for audiences and help make this a more attractive venue for external hire or for school events. The new studio theatre at this level which will also have wheelchair seating positions. It is stated within the Design & Access Statement this is to be a flexible space which can include a range of seating formats which will allow for different styles of shows. This space would benefit from its own dressing room provision, which would also better enable this and the main auditorium to be used simultaneously. We suggest this is further considered or for the storage and seminar rooms to be made flexible so that they could be used for this purpose if required.

We also note that there does not appear to be an accessible dressing room to serve either performance space, and suggest this might be reviewed. There may be opportunity for such provision within the back of house/green room.

Although we have noted some points for further consideration, this can be addressed operationally or through minor revisions to internal layouts and does not impact our overall recommendation. We welcome this investment into theatre provision and the expansion of facilities at Ben Travers Theatre.

We therefore 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.



Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser