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Ref.: TC/2384

13 April 2023

Mr Daniel Metcalfe
North Yorkshire Council
Planning Community Development
PO Box 787
Harrogate
HG1 9RW

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

Application: ZF23/00404/RG3

Site: Open Air Theatre Northstead Manor Gardens Scarborough North Yorkshire YO12 7UZ

Proposal: Erection of bar buildings, removal of decking and infilling of a section of lake, widening of footpath and extension to concrete base to rear of the stage

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:

This application for planning permission has come to the attention of the Trust because it is seeking to undertake works at Scarborough Open Air Theatre. We have

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

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Chair Dave Moutrey OBE

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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not been directly notified despite this application falling within our statutory remit as outlined above.

The Open Air Theatre was built in 1932 to take advantage of contours which created a natural amphitheatre and was the largest open air theatre in Europe, using a mixture of fixed seating and deckchairs. It held large-scale musicals as well as live recordings of popular show BBC gameshow 'It's a Knockout'. The theatre closed in 1986 and became derelict until a restoration project commenced in 2008 and it reopened in 2010. Since then it has re-established a programme of high-profile events, which in 2023 will feature a run of the musical Mamma Mia! and a range of gigs including Blondie, Olly Murs, Pulp, Sting and The Cult. The Open Air Theatre provides further diversity to Scarborough's cultural offer, and plays an important role in generating additional visitors which boosts other businesses and the local economy.

The existing bar and hospitality provision appears insufficient for the capacities the theatre can handle. Currently to the northern end of the theatre is a relatively small bar kiosk with another two bar kiosks on a decked area over part of the lake reached by a ramp. To the southern end of the site is a further small kiosk. It is proposed that this will be increased through addition of a substantially larger modular structure to the south. Similarly at the northern end the small kiosk will also be replaced with a larger modular structure formed of two units which will additionally include a roof terrace serving as a VIP area. The bars behind will be retained, but the area of lake in front of them will be infilled.

These proposals will enhance the theatre's function and audience experience through improving and expanding bar capacity. The addition of a VIP area will also help generate additional income which can support the viability and operation of the theatre, helping to secure it as a cultural asset.

The infilling of the lake will generate negative impact on biodiversity. Paragraph 174 of the NPPF (2021) seeks to minimise impacts on biodiversity. In order to accord with paragraph 180 we urge the mitigations outlined in paragraph 9.3.3.1 of the applicant's Ecological Survey to be followed.

A further element of this application is the enlarging of concrete hardstanding behind the stage and we have no objections to this work.

In conclusion, subject to the condition outlined above, we are supportive of the granting of planning permission.

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Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or should you wish to discuss this representation in greater detail.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered within a light grey rectangular box.

Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

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