

Protecting theatres
for **everyone**



Ref.: TC

27 April 2023

Development Management
Braintree District Council
Causeway House
Bocking End
Braintree
Essex
CM7 9HB

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

Application: 23/00361/FUL

Site: Witham Public Hall Collingwood Road Witham Essex CM8 2DY

Proposal: Installation of 4No. air-conditioning units on flat roof at side of building

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. It is seeking to install new air conditioning units at Witham Public Hall.

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

Telephone 020 7836 8591 **Email** info@theatrestrust.org.uk **Website** theatrestrust.org.uk **Twitter** @TheatresTrust

Facebook @theatres.trust **Instagram** @TheatresTrust

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

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

Protecting theatres for everyone



The Public Hall is operated by a local charitable trust who took over its running from the Council in 2011. It originally opened in 1894 but was remodelled in the 1930s to add a balcony and orchestra pit. Further works in the 1960s added an extension providing a bar area. The Public Hall can be considered a non-designated heritage asset. It has a mixed theatre and live performance offer including two annual runs of shows by a local amateur group, an annual pantomime, occasional touring theatre productions along with comedy, live music and other events such as an annual beer festival. It is a facility highly valued by local people. Paragraph 93 of the NPPF (2021) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities of this nature.

For the comfort and safety of audiences, performers, staff and other users it is important that venues have sufficient cooling and ventilation. We welcome that the Public Hall's operator is investing in upgrading its facilities in this regard. The proposed units would be installed to the rear of the building's north-west side elevation, broadly adjacent to its stage, and will provide air to the main hall.

The technical data supplied by the applicant suggests that at source the units may exceed background noise levels, and there is some distance from residential properties the neighbouring property as a nursery is also a sensitive receptor. This may require mitigation such as additional enclosure and/or attenuators. If further measures are deemed to be necessary this could be managed through condition.

In principle however, assuming that external sound levels are acceptable or can be made so, we are supportive of the granting of planning permission.

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 "Tom Clarke".

Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Adviser

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