

Protecting theatres
for **everyone**



Ref.: TC/3007

25 August 2023

Abbie Greenwood
Southend-on-Sea City Council
Civic Centre
Victoria Avenue
Southend-on-Sea
Essex
SS2 6ER

By e-mail: council@southend.gov.uk

Application: 23/01216/BC4

Site: Cliffs Pavilion Station Road Westcliff-on-sea Essex SS0 7RA

Proposal: Erect two storey extension and layout new external landscaped area to east elevation, layout new cycle stores and additional refuse stores in the undercroft area and alter elevations

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'.

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

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

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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

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

Comment:

Thank you for consulting Theatres Trust on this application for planning permission at Cliffs Pavilion. It seeks an extension to the building along with various internal alterations focussed on front-of-house areas.

Cliffs Pavilion has a capacity of over 1,600 and is an important regional venue receiving a number of touring productions including West End transfers, comedians, live music and other events. Construction originally began in the 1930s but it was halted by World War II and eventually abandoned, with the current venue opening in 1964 on a slightly different plot. It was designed to reflect the architecture of the Festival of Britain mixed with pre-war seaside architecture featuring steel windows, cantilevered canopies and mosaic cladding. Internally it was well detailed with influences from London's Royal Festival Hall. A previous project in 1992 enlarged the auditorium to its current capacity and expanded front of house facilities. It has a restaurant and cafe which is popular as an all-day venue.

This proposal will further expand and enhance the venue's front of house provision. There is little change at basement level, but provision of a Changing Places facility in place of a store is welcomed as is the addition of cycle spaces for staff and visitors. At ground floor, the proposed extension will facilitate relocation of the main entrance to the side. This will see audiences and visitors enter into a large double-height space with clear sight-lines through to the foyer bar and auditorium which will make orientation easier and provide generally better circulation, particularly at the end of shows as audiences will no longer funnel through the current corridor. Potentially this layout could also encourage audiences to dwell at the end of performances, enhancing the potential for income generation to help sustain the venue and its cultural offer for the city. It allows for operational benefits too, because the removal of the large ticket office enables a new back of house corridor providing better access between front and back of house.

To the first floor there will be some additional dining space for the restaurant and a clearer bar/servery, but also additional WCs which are always welcomed.

We would encourage consideration of further amendment to these plans as we believe there is great potential in enabling the curved foyer bar at ground floor to be opened up during warmer weather and for seating to spill outside. This would make it even more attractive as an all-day venue. The canopy around this area might also be extended further to help provide further shade and shelter and minimise over-heating in bright conditions. Whilst we are aware that plans for a second restaurant within the

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external space planned within the original application in 2020 has been dropped, we suggest that external points could be installed to enable occasional outside food and drink stands or other external events within the large terrace. We also suggest that thought is given to some additional greening and planting within the terrace, as it is otherwise a large space which provides no shade.

Overall however we are supportive of and welcome this scheme, and consider it achieves the right balance and approach in terms of the venue's front of house operation. Policy CP6.3b of the Core Strategy (DPD1) (2007) seeks the refurbishment of Cliffs Pavilion. Paragraph 93 of the NPPF (2021) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities of this nature. Therefore we recommend 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 "T Clarke".

Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Adviser

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