

Protecting theatres
for **everyone**



Ref.: TC

25 August 2023

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

Application: DC/23/2989/VOC

Site: Thorington Theatre Thorington Road Thorington Nr Southwold Suffolk IP17 3RB

Proposal: Variation of Condition No.2 on DC/21/1239/FUL - Change of use to outdoor theatre. (Retrospective) - The use of the site as an outdoor theatre shall be restricted to 84 days in any one calendar year and between the hours of 10am and 10pm, (and the site vacated of all patrons/performers/staff and equipment by 10.30pm) except during school term time (Monday to Friday excluding Bank Holidays) when there shall be no use before 6pm unless previously agreed in writing with the LPA.

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

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Comment:

Thank you for consulting Theatres Trust on this application for a variation of condition 2 of permission reference DC/21/1239/FUL at Thorington Theatre. The current condition restricts use of the theatre to 56 days per calendar year as well as limits hours of operation. It is proposed that the condition be amended to increase use of the theatre to 84 days per calendar year, to enable use on Bank Holidays during term time and to withdraw a restriction on months of operation.

We were supportive of the original proposal for this theatre. It is of wider interest as a venue because there are few permanent outdoor theatres in the UK and it was constructed using sustainable materials within an amphitheatre environment created by a bomb dropped during World War II. It hosts both professional and local amateur productions, thereby helping improve local access to culture and the arts and contributing to the area's tourism offer.

The ability to host further shows and events will help ensure the theatre's continued viability and financial sustainability, and further enhance its social, cultural and economic value to the local economy. It is not proposed that limitations managing traffic implications from these events are withdrawn. With regards to the existing wording around term time use, we consider there is a flaw that could be considered unreasonable and therefore in contravention of guidance on the use of planning conditions and paragraph 55 of the NPPF (2021) in that Bank Holidays would not currently be permitted even if schools are not operating. There may also be circumstances where events outside of May to September could be attractive, for example to coincide with special events or holidays.

We are therefore supportive of the proposed variation of conditions.

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

Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Adviser

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