

Protecting theatres
for **everyone**



Ref.: TC

11 October 2023

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Planning Services
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Hereford
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By e-mail: planning_enquiries@herefordshire.gov.uk

Application: P232665/A

Site: The Phoenix Theatre Palace Pound St Marys Street Ross-On-Wye
Herefordshire HR9 5HT

Proposal: Proposal is to replace the existing glass-fronted display cabinet with a waterproof digital display board to advertise posters relating to events at the theatre. It is anticipated that the board will be switched off overnight.

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 advertisement consent at the Phoenix Theatre has come to the attention of Theatres Trust. It seeks to replace an existing glass display cabinet located to the front of the theatre with a digital display screen. We note from the

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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Council's applications portal that we were formally notified and invited to comment but this was not received.

The Phoenix Theatre is owned and operated by the Phoenix Theatre Company, a local amateur group which was established in 1921 as the Ross Operatic and Drama Society. They acquired the theatre in 1983, converting what was originally a fire station, and extended it in 2002. Its auditorium has a capacity of sixty-four seats, and is technically well-equipped. It also has a rehearsal space and bar. Its programme consists of the groups own productions along with other occasional performances and events, and regular film screenings. Venues such as this are particularly important for the social and cultural well-being of local people, providing access to culture and the arts as well as opportunities to participate, volunteer and develop skills. Paragraph 93 of the NPPF (2023) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities of this nature.

There have been a number of applications come forward in recent years of this nature as theatres seek digital signage in place of printed posters, including at venues which are designated heritage assets. This gives greater flexibility as it removes the need for manual printing and changing of displays. More generally, theatre signage and advertisements play an important function in promoting venues and the events they are hosting.

Whilst this is a sensitive location being within the Ross-on-Wye Conservation Area and the setting of designated heritage assets, the principle of an advertisement is already accepted. The proposed screen is of broadly the same dimensions as the existing poster board. Levels of brightness can be managed through condition, as can hours of operation. We note the applicant has stated the screen will be switched off overnight. We do not consider that this proposal will undermine highway safety or cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of nearby properties. We therefore raise no objection to the granting of advertisement consent.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or should you wish to discuss these comments in further detail.

Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Adviser

Theatres Trust

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