

Ref.: TC/2063

13 March 2024

Jacky Olsen  
Housing & Regeneration  
Medway Council  
Gun Wharf  
Dock Road  
Chatham ME4 4TR

By e-mail: [planning.representations@medway.gov.uk](mailto:planning.representations@medway.gov.uk)

**Application:** MC/24/0335

**Site:** The Brook Theatre Old Town Hall The Brook Chatham Medway ME4 4SE

**Proposal:** Refurbishment and upgrading of Brook Theatre, including structural repairs and fire safety works.

**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 Theatres Trust because it is seeking to undertake repairs, refurbishments and alterations at the Brook Theatre.

**Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

**Telephone** 020 7836 8591 **Email** [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk) **Website** [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk) **Twitter** @TheatresTrust

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

**Chair** Dave Moutrey OBE

**Director** Jon Morgan

**Trustees** James Dacre, Suba Das, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Lucy Osborne, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

The Brook Theatre sits within the former Chatham Town Hall, which was built in 1900 and is a Grade II listed heritage asset. Following a period of vacancy after the Council relocated in the 1980s it was reopened as the Medway Arts Centre in 1987. Ten years later it was renamed to the Brook Theatre. Its main auditorium has a capacity of around 400 and there are also various studio, office and meeting spaces. The theatre has a mixed programme with a particular focus on children and young people's theatre. It is an important cultural and community asset for the town. Paragraph 97 of the NPPF (2023) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for this type of facility.

The Brook is currently closed whilst it undergoes a long-term programme of works including those covered within this application. This includes structural works, repair and restoration of historic features, refurbishment of the main theatre, front of house spaces and studios, additional WCs, improved access and general accessibility, improved ventilation, technical upgrades and additional meeting and co-working space. This investment in the building and the theatre's facilities is welcomed and supported.

Many of these works are internal, and are therefore covered by the corresponding listed building consent to which we have provided comment under separate cover. These comments cover external matters.

There will be a new substation and bin store to Barrier Road, enclosed with a corten style screening. We consider this location to be appropriate in minimising harm to the building's setting, and minimising its impact.

There will be pavement and drainage works along the theatre's north-east elevation. This is to address poor drainage and water ingress which is causing damage to the building and leaking into the basement, along with strengthening to better facilitate parking by service vehicles. Similarly, pavement lights will be replaced with heavier duty equivalents. This is supported, as it assists with the ongoing conservation of the building and will give an enhanced public realm.

Light wells will be restored with more sensitive grilles utilised which will enhance setting.

Improved ventilation will see replacement of the former coal chute doors with a new ventilation 'beehive', and replacement of two existing beehives which are in a poor state of repair. Whilst the coal chute is of some historic interest for its function, the new fit-for-purpose ventilation system constitutes a public benefit.

#### **Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

**Telephone** 020 7836 8591 **Email** [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk) **Website** [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk) **Twitter** @TheatresTrust

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

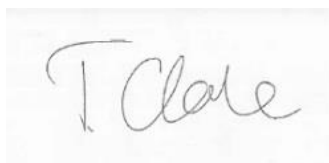
**Chair** Dave Moutrey OBE

**Director** Jon Morgan

**Trustees** James Dacre, Suba Das, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Lucy Osborne, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

In conclusion, we welcome this project. We are therefore 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.



Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Adviser

**Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

**Telephone** 020 7836 8591 **Email** [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk) **Website** [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk) **Twitter** @TheatresTrust

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

**Chair** Dave Moutrey OBE

**Director** Jon Morgan

**Trustees** James Dacre, Suba Das, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Lucy Osborne, 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