

Ref.: TC/2063

13 March 2024

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

By e-mail: planning.representations@medway.gov.uk

Application: MC/24/0336

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

Proposal: Listed Building Consent for the 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 listed building consent has come to the attention of Theatres Trust because it is seeking to undertake repairs, refurbishments and alterations at the Brook Theatre. We have also provided comment on the corresponding planning permission under separate cover.

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 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

As stated in our other comments, investment in the building and enhancement of the theatre's facilities is welcomed and supported.

A number of works are in relation to improved accessibility. To the ground floor main entrance the existing platform lift will be replaced with a 'hidden' lift system. This is a more sensitive approach which will also help improve audience flow. This is also the case for internal circulation steps which currently make parts of the building inaccessible. The box office counter will be replaced with a lower counter with new wider door to make it also accessible for staff. As later interventions these are of low significance, and while the lift structure and storage will result in some alteration within the basement there is a clear public benefit which mitigates impact.

The back of house lift is currently a goods lift between the basement and ground floor, but this will be replaced with a new passenger lift which will serve all levels. This results in alteration to the surrounding stairwell and roof area. Although this will see loss of historic fabric, again with reference to paragraph 208 of the NPPF (2023) we consider this to be offset by the public benefits of making the building much more accessible.

We are supportive of refurbishments to WCs including provision of additional accessible WCs particularly to the first floor directly serving the main theatre and to the second floor. Providing sufficient WCs particularly within older buildings is often a challenge. We note that some original wall finishes will be retained.

Within the main auditorium there will be replacement of entry doors for better acoustic protection, which will help the building function better and more flexibly with better ability to programme different areas simultaneously. The doors themselves are not original in any case, but existing original frames and architraves are being retained. Light fittings are being removed and it is stated these will be carefully packed and stored or reused elsewhere; there would be merit in this being conditioned for further approval, including details of how these will be labelled to minimise risk of them being mislaid (this also applies to those being removed from the studio theatre). Technical improvements and upgrades are supported, and will help ensure the theatre remains attractive to producers.

Alterations within and around the studio theatre will increase its capacity through additional egress. The addition of retractable raked seating will enhance flexibility.

As per our other comments, we support works which will see repairs and arrest water ingress particularly around the basement areas but also other structural works which will help conserve this building and its function into the future.

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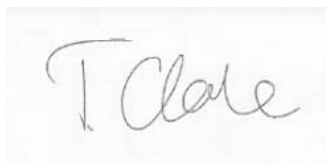
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We are therefore similarly supportive of the granting of listed building consent.

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

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