

# Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC

11 February 2022

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**Application:** DC/22/0118/FUL & DC/22/0119/ADI

**Site:** Players Theatre The Lowestoft Players Ltd Battery Green Road Lowestoft Suffolk NR32 1DH

**Proposal:** Change of windows and associated signage; and

Illuminated Advertisement Consent - 1. Main Players Theatre House Sign (Fascia) 2. Corner Light Box on Metal Support Frame (Hanging) 3. Triangular Vertical x 2 Corner Signs (Projecting) 4. Window Box Signs x 2 (Other) 5. Central Deco Monitor Displaying Current Programme (Other) 6. Britain's Most Easterly Theatre (Fascia) 7. Backlit Windows x 2 (Other) 8. Signage on Northside of Building (Fascia)

## Remit:

The 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 has come to the attention of the Trust because it is seeking planning permission and advertisement consent for alterations and signage at the Players Theatre. We should have been formally notified as this falls within our statutory remit outlined above.

Players Theatre is within the former Seaman's and Fisherman's Bethel, a non-conformist chapel which opened in 1899. After closure in 2008 it was purchased by Lowestoft Players who refurbished the building and converted it into a 200-seat theatre; performance venues are common uses for these type of buildings. The theatre hosts the Player's annual productions along with a mixed programme of other community and smaller-scale productions, comedy, live music and private hires. It is also used for the Player's meetings and rehearsals. The theatre is a valued community, cultural and social asset for Lowestoft and its surrounding area, providing

**Theatres Trust**

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**Interim Chair** Katie Town      **Director** Jon Morgan

**Trustees** Paul Cartwright, Annie Hampson, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Jane Spiers, Truda Spruyt

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opportunities for participation and engagement in theatre and the arts. Paragraph 93 of the NPPF (2021) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities of this nature.

The theatre is within an undesignated heritage asset. It is on the edge of the town centre but is severed from the main core of activity by service bays meaning it lacks footfall. It is however on the primary A47 route meaning it can be seen by relatively high levels of passing traffic. Despite this the theatre's existing presence and signage could be considered modest meaning it does not necessarily capitalise on its potential to promote upcoming events and draw additional audiences.

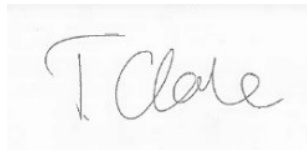
This proposal appears to seek to alleviate that by substantially increasing its signage, adding additional poster boards and banners, putting vinyl screens across its front windows, repainting and adding uplighting. It will also add additional lettering capitalising on the theatre's significance as the most easterly in the UK.

Whilst this will cause some degree of harm to the character and significance of the building as a non-designated heritage asset, this must be considered in the context of the building's function as a place of entertainment. On that basis signage and advertisements are common and important features which contribute towards interest and significance. In this instance there is also the public benefit of helping to promote and sustain an important social and cultural asset, run by a community/voluntary organisation. It would also help add interest to a part of the town which lacks active frontage, and broadly these interventions are reversible.

We do not consider these proposals would cause harm to amenity or highway safety.

Therefore we are supportive of the granting of planning permission and advertisement consent.

Please contact us should you wish to discuss these comments further.



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National Planning Adviser

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