

# Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC

15 August 2022

Sharon Thompson  
Planning Applications Group  
First Floor  
Invicta House  
County Hall  
Maidstone  
Kent  
ME14 1XX

By e-mail: [planning.applications@kent.gov.uk](mailto:planning.applications@kent.gov.uk)

**Application:** KCC/DO/0062/2022

**Site:** Dover Discovery Centre, Market Square, Dover, Kent CT16 1PH

**Proposal:** Proposed refurbishment and upgrading of Dover Discovery Centre including internal alterations, new external access ramp and entrance, replacement of the conservatory roofs with solid panels, new windows in the rotunda, additional glazing to the ground floor and repairs to curtain walling, roof repairs and louvre screens to new roof plant and railings

## **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:**

Thank you for re-consulting Theatres Trust following submission of further information, a report on 'Roundhouse Theatre Removal Justification'.

In our previous comments of 29<sup>th</sup> April 2022 we objected to this application due to loss of theatre provision without replacement. Whilst this report outlines the rationale for the project being taken forward and reports on usage of the theatre the underlying reason of our objection is not addressed.

The table showing theatre usage does not appear to be accurate as recorded dates do not correspond with information on performances which remain publicly viewable online. For example in 2018 there are sessions attributed to Avenue Q performances in November and

## **Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL  
T 020 7836 8591 E [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk) W [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk)

**Chair** Dave Moutrey **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

## Protecting theatres for everyone



December 2018 whereas this production took place in October 2018. For 2019 there is no reference to the Dover Youth Theatre production of 'Our Man in Havana'. The report acknowledges there may have been one-off ad-hoc bookings and events which are not recorded, for which the Roundhouse appears to have been used for three such performances already in 2022. The usage figures of 0.38% and 1.7% for 2016 and 2017 respectively are misleading; for 2017 there was a run of five dates for Spamalot by Blackfish Academy and also performances of The Hollow and Gamblers by Dover Youth Theatre. This equates to 1.9% of days in 2017 even before rehearsals, preparation and removal of sets and regular activities are taken into account. Without accurate information the table and headline figures should not be included.

In turn the report later states there to be "limited usage of the Theatre space" and that the theatre is "heavily underutilised". This is subjective terminology which is not necessarily representative of true usage, however even were it to be considered accurate there is no further context as to why the theatre is underused. We would expect to see for example what efforts have been made to identify additional hirers/user groups or attract additional shows and why this has been unsuccessful. There should also be further explanation behind the assertion that usage declined due to the pandemic. It is public record that reports on these plans had already been presented to the County Council's Executive in July 2021 prior to the full lifting of Covid restrictions. The Ministerial Statement of 14 July 2020 establishes a principle that during that era until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 the impacts of Covid-19 should not result in the loss of theatres and similar facilities with authorities to have due regard for current circumstances where change of use is proposed. Therefore we content that this element of justification should be disregarded. As set out in our previous comments the theatre is a designated Asset of Community Value and the level of opposition to these plans shows there is clear public demand in it being retained.

On the basis of flaws and inaccuracies in the justification for loss within the additional report and no acceptable alternative provision having been identified we maintain our objection to the granting of planning permission.

We remain keen to engage positively with the Council and other interested parties.

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "T Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser

**Theatres Trust**  
22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL  
T 020 7836 8591 E [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk) W [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk)

**Chair** Dave Moutrey **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