

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/1611

09 September 2022

Melissa Webster
Halton Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
Kingsway
Widnes
WA8 7QF

By e-mail: dev.control@halton.gov.uk

Applications: 22/00417/HBCFUL

Site: The Brindley Theatre High Street Runcorn Cheshire WA7 1BG

Proposals: Proposed two storey extension to the Brindley Theatre including cafe/restaurant and library with ancillary accommodation. Demolition works to the existing building, ie the current glazed entrance and to internal elements where there is also some proposed remodelling works, together with ancillary works including landscape works within the site boundary

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:

Thank you for consulting Theatres Trust on this application for planning permission at The Brindley, which seeks an extension to the building to incorporate a library and new front of house facilities along with external landscaping.

The Brindley is a modern arts centre serving Runcorn and Widnes and their surrounding communities. It has two performance spaces, a 420-capacity main auditorium called The Transporter named after a demolished Victorian transporter bridge and a smaller studio space with a capacity of 108. It opened in 2004 and was of highly acclaimed design, winning a RIBA award and Civic Trust Centre Vision Award. Internally it features artwork by Bill Culbert and its front of house spaces were intended to be bright and spacious with views to the adjacent Bridgewater Canal to encourage public use outside of performance times and enhance its value as a facility for the community. The Brindley has a mixed programme including theatre, live music

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL
T 020 7836 8591 E info@theatrestrust.org.uk W 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



and comedy alongside talks and other events. Paragraph 93 of the NPPF (2021) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities of this nature.

The Council has been in receipt of funding from the Government's Towns Fund, part of which is being utilised to bring forward this project. The primary objective of the extension is to incorporate the town's library and to further enhance and expand the Brindley's popular café/bar offer. This will make the venue more of a 'cultural hub' and help develop and diversify income generation which can help support the wider arts and cultural function and give greater financial sustainability. We welcome and are supportive of the Council's plans to invest in and develop The Brindley and its facilities in this way; bringing more people into the building will help enhance its role as a facility for the community and encourage greater access and engagement with the arts.

With the existing building being of high merit in terms of design and function it is important that this extension complements that and responds well to its wider canal-side setting. We consider this has been achieved, with the extension being added in a sensitive way which still allows the form of the original building to be read. Proposed floorplans suggest the incoming library areas will function well alongside existing uses. There will be additional WCs which are also of benefit to audiences. We would note that whilst there is a degree of overhang which will provide some shading for the glazed area it should be ensured there is adequate ventilation and that the glass sufficiently protects the building from overheating.

Externally the paved terrace provides good space for outside seating and activities. The overall landscaping and public realm works are very formal and we suggest there may be an opportunity to improve the Brindley's sustainability, support biodiversity and add further visual interest by considering incorporation of wildflowers or similar measures.

To conclude, we welcome this project and are supportive of the granting of planning permission.

Please contact us should you wish to discuss these comments further, and we would encourage early engagement with the Trust should plans be subsequently revised.

Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

Theatres Trust
22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL
T 020 7836 8591 E info@theatrestrust.org.uk W 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