

# Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/2291

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**Application:** PF/22/2332 & LA/22/2413

**Site:** Pavilion Theatre Promenade Cromer Norfolk NR27 9HE

**Proposal:** Renovation of existing cafe, bar, upgrade of toilets including accessible toilet and alterations of other rooms such as office room and store room.

## **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:**

These applications for planning permission and listed building consent have come to the attention of the Trust through press reports. They are seeking alterations and refurbishments at the Pavilion Theatre. We have not been directly notified despite this falling within our statutory remit outlined above.

The Pavilion is a designated heritage asset being an integral part of the Grade II listed pier it sits on. It was built in 1901 initially as a bandstand with seating and was roofed over in 1905. In 1912 the bandstand was replaced with a stage and proscenium. Front of house provision was added in 1969 through screening at the rear of the auditorium and further alterations followed in 1978. In 2004 capacity was increased and a restaurant, shop and extended bar were provided.

Architecturally it consists of iron framework in three bays with lower perimeter stanchions and four taller columns. The main roof is formed by flat lattice trusses between the main columns. It has a single-storey extension beyond the framework which enlarged the auditorium and provided

## **Theatres Trust**

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**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

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ancillary facilities and foyer space. The auditorium is decorated in red terracotta, and is described as being “warm and intimate” within our database entry.

The Pavilion is one of the few remaining pier theatres which adds to its historic and cultural interest and significance. It maintains a programme of annual ‘end-of-pier’ summer variety and Christmas shows along with a year-round programme of theatrical productions, comedy and live music. It is an attractor of visitors into the area as well as providing for the social and cultural needs of local people. Paragraph 93 of the NPPF (2021) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities of this nature.

These plans will see internal alterations to change the layout and function of WCs and parts of surrounding foyer areas and the bar. This will also see a minor extension of the building’s footprint. Within the WCs there will be repositioning to increase the number of urinals within the male block, and the female block will be merged into the location of the existing accessible WC to provide further cubicles. Provision of sufficient WCs is a common challenge within older theatres so efforts to increase provision are to be welcomed; this also improves the experience of audiences and visitors by reducing queueing at peak times. A replacement accessible WC will be provided in place of an existing office along with additional storage space. A replacement office will be provided the opposite side of the foyer with an altered ice cream servery, although this isn’t marked as currently being in place on the existing plan.

We are supportive of this project although it will necessitate some external alteration. Overall we consider the design approach to be acceptable and broadly sensitive to the Pavilion’s existing character and thus constitutes less than substantial harm. With reference to paragraph 202 of the NPPF this can be justified through the public benefits of improving the Pavilion’s facilities which will help meet the needs of audiences and users. However we suggest there is scope for some refinement, currently there is symmetry between the east and west elevations which from proposed drawings appears to be lost through these proposals. We suggest that with some revision to the number and layout of windows this could minimise harm. Also existing plans appear to show external bench seating to the east, south and west elevations which is being removed. It is unclear whether these are of significance and they are not mentioned in the Heritage Statement, so we recommend this is clarified and thought is given to their potential reinstatement or relocation.

Overall we can support the granting of planning permission and listed building consent for the scheme as submitted, but would encourage consideration of the points we have raised.

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

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National Planning Adviser

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