

# Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC

20 January 2023

Stephanie Gardiner  
Civic Centre  
Stockwell Close  
Bromley  
BR1 3UH

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

**Application:** 22/04352/FULL1

**Site:** 46 Bromley Road Beckenham BR3 5JD

**Proposal:** Demolition of existing building and construction of replacement block to contain 1, 2 and 3 bedroom flats together with car and cycle parking, bin stores and new hard and soft landscaping.

## **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 former Beckenham Theatre Club, which seeks demolition of the existing building and redevelopment of the site for residential use.

The Beckenham Theatre Club contained a small 47-seat studio theatre which was used for the club's performances, alongside other facilities. It opened in 1960 following the purchase of a late nineteenth century home which we understand had until then been used as a surgery. The theatre was active until late 2019, it was already known through a survey that extensive repairs and refurbishments were required to bring the building up to acceptable standard but a further discovery of asbestos forced its closure. The costs of repairs exceeded the means of the club. Therefore it was put on the market.

Nonetheless, as a community and cultural facility paragraph 93 of the NPPF (2021) guards against unnecessary loss. Policy 20 of the Local Plan (2019) does not grant permission for loss of facilities unless there is demonstration there is no longer a need and that it is demonstrated no

## **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**



prospective purchasers exist willing to maintain existing use. Policy HC6.B.6 of the London Plan (2021) protects theatres and other arts venues. Therefore there must be robust evidence and satisfaction that this theatre is surplus to requirements before loss can be considered.

Having discussed this case with the theatre group which owned and operated the building we are satisfied that their future needs, and those of other local theatre groups, are best met through arrangements elsewhere. Architecturally this is not a theatre of significance, nonetheless it holds a social and cultural attachment for many people locally having operated for close to sixty years. We would suggest there may be merit in the applicant reflecting its theatrical past within the replacement scheme in some way, perhaps through the development's naming.

We make no comment on the general principle and acceptability of loss of the building as a non-designated heritage asset. Similarly, whilst we accept the redundancy of the theatre we would defer to the Council any assessment as to whether the site should be retained for alternative community, cultural or social use. The design of the replacement development and mix of units is outside of our remit.

In conclusion, given the evidence provided to us, we raise no objection to loss of theatre use and provision in this instance.

Please contact us should you wish to discuss this representation in further detail.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T Clarke".

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