

Ref.: TC

6 February 2024

Rachel Brown  
Stroud District Council  
Ebley Mill  
Ebley Wharf  
Stroud  
GL5 4UB

By e-mail: [rachel.brown@stroud.gov.uk](mailto:rachel.brown@stroud.gov.uk)

**Application:** S.24/0098/FUL

**Site:** The Old Methodist Church Alkerton Eastington Stonehouse Gloucestershire  
GL10 3AA

**Proposal:** Change of use from Use Class F1(f) Public worship, to a mixed Sui Generis Use (including education /display of art work/public meeting space/ Public worship/local community meeting space/theatre rehearsal and performance space. Installation of new glazed porch door. New disabled access to south elevation and access ramps. Replacement roof lights to existing flat roofed extension. New outbuilding

**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'.

**Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

**Telephone** 020 7836 8591 **Email** [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk) **Website** [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk) **Twitter** @TheatresTrust

**Facebook** @theatres.trust **Instagram** @TheatresTrust

**Chair** Dave Moutrey OBE

**Director** Jon Morgan

**Trustees** James Dacre, Suba Das, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Lucy Osborne, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

## **Comment:**

This application has come to the attention of Theatres Trust through a news story because it is seeking the change of use of an existing Methodist chapel to a mixed community and cultural facility including theatre use, for the Twocan Inclusive Theatre Company. Alongside this will be some internal and external alterations.

The theatre company specialises in producing work and undertaking youth and educational programmes with a focus on access and inclusivity, particularly for deaf, disabled and neurodiverse artists. They have acquired this site so that they can develop it as a permanent base for their theatre company. We understand that it will still be available to existing users for church services.

There are two primary elements to this application – the proposed change of use and the development and alterations that will be carried out. These are dealt with in turn.

For the change of use, Delivery Policy EI6 of the Stroud District Local Plan (2015) seeks to protect community uses. The policy primarily manages total loss of facilities and is silent on re-use for alternative community uses. Nonetheless the proposed mixed use allows for greater flexibility and diversity which will enhance community, cultural and social provision available to local people and the existing function as a place of worship will be maintained. Churches and chapels are conducive to theatre use with a number of theatres and arts centres utilising such buildings. Delivery Policy EI11 permits new cultural and leisure facilities subject to conditions. As an existing facility at an accessible location within this settlement, close to other local services, we consider the proposed location to be acceptable. Therefore we support the proposed change of use.

The chapel occupies a wider plot surrounded by a garden with sheds to the rear. The sheds will be replaced with a new outbuilding utilising grey composite cladding with new paving to the front and new landscaping to create a sensory garden. The specific function of the outbuilding is not referenced on the proposed plans, but the press article says that rehearsal and display rooms will be provided. There will also be internal alterations within the chapel, in particular within the side element where two accessible WCs and an accessible changing/dressing room will be provided. Whilst ideally there should be a minimum of three dressing rooms for reasons of safeguarding, we acknowledge the applicant is working within the constraints of an existing building and the budget available to them. The proposed works would not preclude future development should additional opportunities become available in the future. We therefore similarly support the proposed alterations to this building.

### **Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

**Telephone** 020 7836 8591 **Email** [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk) **Website** [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk) **Twitter** @TheatresTrust

**Facebook** @theatres.trust **Instagram** @TheatresTrust

**Chair** Dave Moutrey OBE

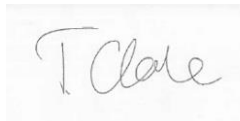
**Director** Jon Morgan

**Trustees** James Dacre, Suba Das, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Lucy Osborne, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

Paragraph 97 of the NPPF (2023) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for these types of facilities and to ensure that facilities can modernise and be retained for the benefit of their communities. We consider this proposal to be consistent with those principles.

We therefore support the granting of planning permission.

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



Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser

**Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

**Telephone** 020 7836 8591 **Email** [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk) **Website** [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk) **Twitter** @TheatresTrust

**Facebook** @theatres.trust **Instagram** @TheatresTrust

**Chair** Dave Moutrey OBE

**Director** Jon Morgan

**Trustees** James Dacre, Suba Das, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Lucy Osborne, 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