

Ref.: TC/3870

20 March 2024

Clare Saint
Lichfield District Council
Civic Offices
Bridge Street
Reading
RG1 2LU

By e-mail: neighbour.responses@lichfielddc.gov.uk

Application: 24/00195/FUL

Site: The Lichfield Garrick Theatre Castle Dyke Lichfield Staffordshire WS13 6HR

Proposal: Proposed internal alterations and external visual & access alterations

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:

This application for planning permission has come to the attention of Theatres Trust because it is seeking to undertake alterations at the Lichfield Garrick Theatre. We have not been formally notified despite this falling within our statutory remit outlined above.

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

Telephone 020 7836 8591 **Email** info@theatretrust.org.uk **Website** theatretrust.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 Garrick opened in 2003 within a converted municipal civic hall, which had previously been used as an arts space. The 2003 redevelopment provided an auditorium with stalls, circle and gallery seating, along with a fly tower and orchestra pit. This is naturally ventilated and passively cooled, winning environmental design awards. There is a second 'black box' flat-floored flexible studio and gallery space. A front extension provides a foyer. The theatre has a mixed programme, and is an important cultural and social asset for the town. Paragraph 97 of the NPPF (2023) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities such as this.

This project seeks to carry out a number of internal and external alterations.

Externally, there will be new lighting and signage to the Castle Dyke and Wade Street elevations, a replacement of the external stairs and ramp to the Castle Dyke entrance with a widening of the entrance doors, and a new canopy above the Castle Dyke entrance.

It appears from the elevation drawings that the existing signage above the Wade Street elevation will be updated with newer branding, and this is labelled on the proposed floorplan as being a lightbox, and the banner signage to the Castle Dyke junction is being replaced by a longer version which is also to be a lightbox. The Planning Statement notes the intention is to, "clearly identify the Castle Dyke elevation, as the main access point". However, it is not clear from the proposed elevations whether that objective is being achieved as does not appear to be obviously prominent than the Wade Street elevation. It is however welcomed that the Castle Dyke entrance is being made more accessible through improvement of the ramp and alteration to the door openings to facilitate replacement with new automatic sliding doors. The entry will be made more attractive and welcoming with planting and some bench seating. There will also be installation of a canopy above this entrance, but there does not appear to be specific detail on this.

There are also a number of internal changes, particularly with the intention of improving and enhancing front of house areas.

Within the Castle Dyke foyer is currently a bar with kitchen area and spiral staircase to the level above. The staircase is being removed and the bar servery reduced in footprint and relocated the opposite side in its place. The kitchen will be repurposed as a store. This will create greater space within this foyer, it should be ensured that the new bar meets current standards of accessibility for both audiences and staff. Within the Wade Street foyer where there are currently voids above what appears to

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

Telephone 020 7836 8591 **Email** info@theatrestrust.org.uk **Website** 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

be entry into the theatre's offices there will be infilling and a new reception/ticket office installed.

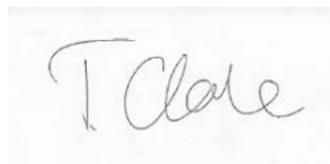
At the upper foyer there will again be additional space created, utilising the removal of the spiral staircase, reduction in size of the store at this level and an altered bar layout. With the angle of the bar it will need to be ensured this works operationally and again it should be ensured that it meets accessibility standards. There will be an increase in female WC provision as well as installation of an accessible WC, this is welcomed.

Within the upper circle foyer the current male WC block will be refurbished and become a unisex block therefore making it more flexible. It is stated a further new accessible WC will be provided which is welcomed.

We would question the need for infilling the outer voids within the Wade Street section to its elevation. This appears to give quite limited additional floorspace but will interrupt and detract from its architectural quality. Although a small slot is being left open it will nonetheless result in a clash between the floor plate and glazing. Architecturally the voids help visually connect the foyer levels to the language of the exterior façade. We note the impact of infilling on ventilation needs to be checked. Whilst we do not object to this element, and it is potentially a reversible change, we would encourage reconsideration so that the architectural quality and interest of the Wade Street façade can be maintained.

We welcome that efforts are being made to improve the theatre's facilities and the experience of its audiences, and these plans largely meet what appears to be the design brief. We have raised matters for further consideration and would urge a different approach to infill affecting the Wade Street facade, but overall we are supportive of the granting of planning permission.

Please engage with Theatres Trust further should plans be subsequently revised.



Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Adviser

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

Telephone 020 7836 8591 **Email** info@theatrestrust.org.uk **Website** 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