

Ref.: TC/3142

23 October 2024

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West Berkshire Council
Development and Planning
West Berkshire Council
Market Street
Newbury
RG14 5LD

By e-mail: planapps@westberks.gov.uk

Application: 24/01832/LBC

Site: Watermill Theatre Bagnor Newbury RG20 8AE

Proposal: Removal of existing, deteriorating, timber escape stair. Construction of new escape stair.

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 **Website** theatrestrust.org.uk **Twitter** @TheatresTrust

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Chair Dave Moutrey OBE

Director Jon Morgan

Trustees Vicky Browning OBE, Anna Collins, James Dacre, Suba Das, Liam Evans-Ford, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Tracy Ann Oberman, Lucy Osborne, Saratha Rajeswaran, Truda Spruyt, Michèle Taylor MBE, Katie Town

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Comment:

This application for listed building consent has come to the attention of Theatres Trust because it is seeking to replace an existing timber staircase with a metal staircase at the Watermill Theatre.

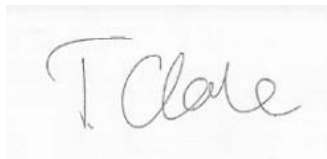
The Watermill is a Grade II listed heritage asset which was converted into a repertory theatre in 1967. It has produced a number of shows and supports youth theatre and educational opportunities. It is therefore an important and valued cultural asset for the local area, also drawing in visitors from further afield. Paragraph 97 of the NPPF (2023) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities of this nature.

The staircase is located to the rear of the building and provides a means of escape. It is demonstrably in a deteriorated condition which presents an increasing risk to the safety of audiences and therefore the operations of the theatre. Therefore replacement is necessary.

The proposed replacement stair will be more durable. We do not consider its design will cause harm to the significance of the Watermill as a designated heritage asset. With reference to paragraph 208 of the NPPF there is an any case a public benefit in providing sufficient means of escape and keeping the building in operation.

We therefore support the granting of listed building consent.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or should you wish to discuss this representation in greater detail.



Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Adviser

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