

Ref.: TC/2003

7 March 2025

Ross Wise
Planning Department
Town Hall
Castle Circus
Torquay
TQ1 3DR

By e-mail: planning@torbay.gov.uk

Application: P/2025/0051

Site: Brixham Town Hall New Road Brixham TQ5 8TA

Proposal: Removal of existing illuminated signage for Brixham theatre & installation of non-illuminated signage for town hall.

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 Joshua McTaggart

Trustees Vicky Browning OBE, Anna Collins, James Dacre, Suba Das, Liam Evans-Ford, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson OBE, 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 been brought to the attention of Theatres Trust because it relates to alterations affecting Brixham Theatre. It has been submitted by Brixham Town Council which is the theatre's landlord. It seeks to remove the current theatre signage and replace it with new signage.

There was a previous planning application in 2024 which included this change. Whilst we supported works to maintain and repair the building, we objected to the loss of the theatre's signage. We welcomed that the Town Council subsequently amended the application to remove the signage element. It is therefore highly disappointing that they have returned with similar proposals which seek to undermine Brixham Theatre.

Brixham Theatre is purpose-built within the Town Hall. The Town Hall complex is a Grade II listed heritage asset which was constructed in 1886. It is a multi-function facility which alongside the theatre also includes a market, charity shop, offices and function rooms. The theatre has a capacity of 250 and provides a year-round programme including productions by local groups. It is a community-run venue which is operated by volunteers. It provides local people with access to theatre and the arts. Theatres such as this are particularly important for the social and cultural well-being of local people, providing opportunities for people to come together and develop their skills as well as reducing isolation. In heritage terms the theatre keeps the main hall of the Town Hall within an original and compatible function; it has been specifically a theatre since the end of World War I. It also brings people into this heritage asset including tourists and visitors who may not otherwise engage with the building.

Currently Brixham Theatre is afforded a high degree of prominence and visibility with lettered signage to the south elevation along with a smaller fascia sign to the east elevation. The submitted plans show the theatre lettering to the southern elevation being replaced with 'Town Hall'.

This removes an important reference point to the theatre which will have a negative impact on the theatre's visibility. In a town of the nature of Brixham, which has a relatively high degree of tourists and visitors who will be unfamiliar with the theatre, attracting additional passing trade is vital in supporting the overall programme and offer for local people. This will in turn compromise the theatre's ongoing viability.

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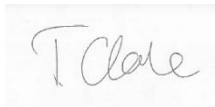
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Paragraph 208 of the NPPF (2024) seeks planning authorities to identify and assess the particular significance of heritage assets which may be affected by a proposal, to avoid conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal. In this case whilst the visual impact of changing one set of lettering for another is neutral, it has a detrimental impact on a historic function within the building. That leaves the theatre element at risk of failing which has wider heritage as well as cultural and social implications. Paragraph 210.a of the NPPF seeks the determination of applications to take account of the desirability of sustaining the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation. Supporting the theatre by refusing this application would meet that objective, moreover with reference to part b. of the same paragraph the theatre supports the economic vitality of the town by bringing people into the town centre.

We again urge and recommend that the Town Council review its strategy for signage at the Town Hall to ensure awareness and visibility of the theatre is maintained. We consider there to be realistic compromise solutions to deliver this.

In conclusion we object to this application and the granting of listed building consent.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or should you wish to discuss these comments in further detail.



Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Adviser

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