

Ref.: TC

10 April 2025

Ms Laleeta Butoy
Planning
Regeneration
Education and Enterprise
Wolverhampton City Council
Civic Centre, St. Peter's Square
Wolverhampton
WV1 1RP

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

Application: 25/00201/FUL

Site: Newhampton Arts Centre Dunkley Street Wolverhampton West Midlands WV1 4AN

Proposal: Proposed re-opening of pedestrian access, new entrance steps and wheelchair ramp, external lighting, replacement external windows, boundary treatment changes and new soft landscaping, new roof stairways with handrails for repairs and maintenance access, with other reconfiguration, repair and renovation work.

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 planning permission has come to the attention of Theatres Trust because it is seeking to carry out alterations and repair works at Newhampton Arts Centre.

Newhampton Arts Centre occupies the former Municipal Grammar School. In 1989 it was taken on by Wilfrun College (now Wolverhampton College) with part of it run by the council as a small arts centre. Over time the arts provision expanded through refurbishment of vacant spaces offering recording and rehearsal studios, a dance studio, a theatre within the former gym along with a café and offices. The college vacated in 2013 at which point the arts centre took on the whole site. Newhampton Arts Centre provides a home to several local cultural and creative organisations, provides a number of spaces for hire and use by local people, offers exhibitions and gallery space, and has a mixed performance programme including theatre, comedy and live music. It is a valued social and cultural facility for Wolverhampton.

Paragraph 98 of the NPPF (2024) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities such as this.

There are a few elements to this proposal, namely providing a more visible main entrance with improved accessibility by reinstating a former entrance on its south-eastern elevation to New Hampton Road East, providing a new accessible WC within the building close to that entrance, upgrading single glazed timber windows to double glazed aluminium, undertaking repairs to roof and rainwater goods with installation of safer access for ongoing maintenance, and associated landscaping improvements.

We are supportive of improving access and accessibility into and through the arts centre, which will help support its inclusivity and function. This will also better activate that elevation and enable enhancement of its landscaping. We also welcome and support general maintenance which will help conserve the building and ensure its ongoing operation, and the improvement of safety for staff and contractors.

With regards to works to windows, recent Historic England guidance encourages conservation rather than replacement for reasons of both preserving heritage and supporting environmental sustainability. The Design & Access Statement notes the existing windows are in poor condition and require replacement, for which there is some photographic evidence. On the assumption that the existing frames are indeed beyond repair, we can support the installation of sensitive replacement. Improving

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energy efficiency and reducing costs constitutes a benefit to mitigate the impact of alteration.

We can therefore support the granting of planning permission.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Adviser

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