

Ref.: TC/9003221

22 April 2025

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Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
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By e-mail: planningdevelopmentservices@stockton.gov.uk

Application: 25/0667/LBC

Site: The Forum Theatre Town Centre Billingham Stockton-On-Tees TS23 2LJ

Proposal: Listed Building Consent for the installation of PV panels to roof.

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 listed building consent has come to the attention of Theatres Trust because it relates to development at the Forum Theatre, specifically the installation of PV panels to its roof.

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

The Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund supports the work of The Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697

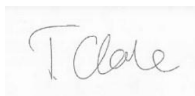
The Forum Theatre is of architectural, cultural and civic significance arising from it being the first example of a comprehensive community recreation centre in England combining both arts and sports provision within the same complex. The intention was to provide ‘a forum for recreation’ and encourage family participation across the functions. The centre opened in 1967 with the theatre being completed the following year. The theatre was designed to provide a family night out featuring a number of prominently located boxes with high quality timber slatted fronts for that purpose. The Theatres Trust database entry for this theatre considers it to be “an exceptional modern auditorium, extraordinarily warm and intimate, made even more so by the superb quality of the wood finishes”. It is also well-equipped technically and in terms of its supporting front and back of house facilities. Once under threat of demolition in favour of a supermarket, it was awarded Grade II listing in 2004 following a joint submission by Theatres Trust and Twentieth Century Society. The theatre remains an important cultural facility for Billingham with a busy programme.

This proposal will see the addition of PV panels above much of the complex, excluding the ice rink. This includes panels on top of the theatre’s auditorium and fly tower. The purpose of the project is to reduce the Forum’s energy costs and improve its environmental sustainability.

We are highly supportive of theatres and their operators investing in environmental sustainability initiatives. Whilst interventions affecting heritage assets can lead to conflict between sustainability and harm to architectural and historic significance, in this instance the panels are shielded from view and will therefore have minimal impact on appreciation of the building and its setting. With reference to paragraph 215 of the NPPF (2024), we consider the public benefits of this scheme to outweigh the low level of less than substantial harm. Paragraph 167 also affords significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency including through installation of new panels.

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 these comments in further detail.



Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Adviser

Theatres Trust

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