

Ref.: TC/1824

15 July 2025

Kate Pickard
Town Hall
Watford
WD17 3EX

By e-mail: developmentcontrol@watford.gov.uk

Application: 25/00516/FUL

Site: Watford Palace Theatre 20 Clarendon Road Watford WD17 1JZ

Proposal: Removal of existing plant at second floor roof level and installation of Air Source Heat Pumps; installation of replacement and new radiators at ground, first, second and third floor levels and associated infrastructure.

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:

Thank you for consulting Theatres Trust on this application for planning permission at the Palace Theatre. It seeks to remove the theatre's existing mechanical and electrical installations providing heating, cooling and ventilation and to replace them with heat pumps. We have also been consulted on the corresponding application for listed building consent to which we have responded under separate cover.

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

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

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Chair Dave Moutrey OBE

CEO Joshua McTaggart

Trustees Vicky Browning OBE, Anna Collins, James Dacre, 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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The Palace is a Grade II listed heritage asset. It opened in 1908 as the Watford Palace of Varieties and was externally remodelled just two years later. This gave the more decorative façade which remains present today and raised the capacity of the auditorium by enlarging its boxes and rearranging the positioning of the gallery above the circle. Today the theatre has a capacity of around 600 seats. It is described within the Theatres Trust database as being “intimate with excellent sightlines”. It has a mixed programme of touring shows and original productions. It is an important theatre and cultural venue for Watford and its wider catchment. Paragraph 98 of the NPPF (2024) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities such as this.

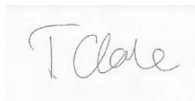
Current systems were installed during the theatre's refurbishment programme which concluded over twenty years ago. They are therefore approaching the end of their operational lives and will not be the most efficient or cost effective.

We are highly supportive of theatres and their operators seeking to reduce their emissions and operating costs by investing in environmental sustainability initiatives and more efficient equipment. Paragraph 167 of the NPPF also affords significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency. On that basis we welcome this project and the stated aim of decarbonising the theatre.

There is existing equipment in place which will be replaced. Whilst the overall profile will be altered with some additional height and bulk in places overall we consider the new installations to have minimal impact on character and setting. They are also located to a less sensitive part of the building. We note the conclusions of the acoustic report which assesses impact on nearby sensitive receptors to be acceptable.

We 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.



Tom Clarke MRTPI

Planning Advice Manager

Theatres Trust

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