

Ref.: TC/2756

12 January 2026

Jon Sharp
Northumberland County Council
Development Management
County Hall
Morpeth
NE61 2EF

By e-mail: planningcomments@northumberland.gov.uk

Application: 25/04579/VARYCO

Site: The Maltings Theatre And Cinema Eastern Lane Berwick-Upon-Tweed
Northumberland TD15 1AJ

Proposal: Variation of condition 2 (Approved Plans), 14 (Biodiversity Mitigation), 17 (Noise Fixed Plant), 26 (Archaeological Scheme of Works) in order to revise the scheme to include more retention of the existing structure, the component parts of the use and related internal spaces to be reallocated to different positions within the new building, which changes the internal and external design details.

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

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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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Comment:

Thank you for consulting Theatres Trust on this application to vary various planning conditions attached to consent reference 25/00792/CCD at The Maltings. The project seeks to redevelop and extend the building to expand and refurbish the theatre's facilities. We submitted comments in support of the scheme in 2025, having had pre-application engagement prior to that. These variations have come about following proposed revisions to the scheme, namely changes to external design and massing as well as to internal functions. In particular the main theatre space is being brought up from the first floor to the upper main entry level at fourth floor, which as a result necessitates further internal changes. The overall range of facilities and functions remains largely in line with the original scheme.

The Maltings is an important theatre and cultural facility for Berwick and its surrounding catchment, and we continue to support its development and expansion.

We consider the revised ground floor to function better and to provide a stronger and more coherent arrival point for persons entering from Shoe Lane. Whereas previously visitors were largely met by services off a modest foyer, and the cinema screen at this level felt a little isolated from the wider venue, there is now a more defined entry lobby opening into a foyer with its own bar as well as a number of WCs. The cinema screen is significantly larger with greater capacity. These changes will be more conducive to using this part of the building in isolation, for example should there be private hires. The second screen being directly above makes the cinema offer more cohesive.

The theatre now being at fourth floor level has operational benefits, with a more efficient get-in as sets and equipment can be brought straight onto stage from the scene dock at the same level. Audiences will have immediate access to the main foyer and café/bar.

The changes to external design partly arise as a result on the internal amendments. The overall character and style of the development remains consistent, but there is greater massing. The lettering to the south elevation has been removed, whilst we supported this element due to it giving identity to the theatre we acknowledge that other consultees had differing views.

We continue to support this scheme, and in turn support permission being granted for variation of these planning conditions.

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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 Manager

Theatres Trust

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