

# Theatres fit for the **future**

Theatres  
Trust

Ref.: TC/2736

17 February 2026

Jas Bansil  
Dartford Borough Council

By email: [planning.reps@dartford.gov.uk](mailto:planning.reps@dartford.gov.uk)

**Application:** 26/00059/FUL

**Site:** The Orchard Theatre Home Gardens Dartford Kent DA1 1ED

**Proposal:** Installation of sprinkler infrastructure and associated works including erection of 2 tanks and a pump house and enclosures; removal of parking spaces. Removal of upper roof level windows and replaced with new ventilation louvres (AOVs), associated cladding. Openings to façade for installation of ventilation grilles. Handrails to lower roof plant access. Blocking of ground level external door. Replacement of rooflights with new Velux rooflights. Erection of new UKPN electrical Kiosk. Installation of mechanical ventilation fan and associated ductwork to main 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:**

Thank you for consulting Theatres Trust on this application for planning permission at the Orchard Theatre. It seeks to undertake various additional installations and

### **Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

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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

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

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alterations associated with upgrades of the theatre's health and safety and mechanical infrastructure.

The theatre is currently closed due to the presence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) within the theatre's roof construction. Works to rectify this and reopen the theatre continue to be progressed. We welcome this endeavour the council's efforts in maintaining a programme through use of a temporary space. We are keen to see the Orchard fully re-open. Paragraph 98 of the NPPF (2024) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities such as this.

The theatre's current sprinkler system does not comply with modern standards and there is no capacity to situate tanks and pump equipment internally. This means they will be located externally, in a position on the northern side of the building where there are currently car parking spaces. An enclosure will be constructed around them. Whilst this creates some visual and operational impact, we consider this to be mitigated by the sensitive design of the enclosure and the necessity of meeting safety requirements.

Similarly, new louvres will be installed at high level around the building which will support fire safety, providing smoke extraction and replacement air. Whilst again there is some visual impact, this is minimised through their positioning and mitigated by broadly matching the building's palette. Poor quality roof lanterns around the stage house will be replaced by vertical automatic opening vents.

There are additionally some minor alterations. Firstly, to provide safer access and working conditions new safety railings around the lower plant room roof will be installed. A service doorway at ground floor level which has become redundant due to relocation of plant and electrical equipment will be blocked up with brick to match the surrounding façade.

These works are all necessary and will contribute towards the theatre reopening and ensuring its ongoing safe operation and future conservation. We therefore support the granting of planning permission.

Please contact us should you wish to discuss these comments in further detail.



Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Manager

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