

Ref.: TC/3874

7 August 2026

Rory Hillman
Development Control
Communities and Place
The Council House
Corporation Street
Derby
DE1 2FS

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

Application: 26/00905/FUL

Site: Guildhall Theatre (including 33 Market Place) Market Place Derby DE1 3AE

Proposal: Refurbishment works including extensions (plant room, technical workshop, platform lift and toilets), new plant at roof level

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, Louisa Harris, Mark Johnston, Adam Knight, Tracy Ann Oberman MBE, Lucy Osborne, Saratha Rajeswaran, Michèle Taylor MBE, Katie Town

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Comment:

Thank you for consulting Theatres Trust on this application for planning permission at the Guildhall Theatre. It seeks to undertake refurbishment and repairs including extension, alterations and associated internal and external works to facilitate the venue's return to use. We have also been consulted on the corresponding application for listed building consent. We provided written comment on these plans having been engaged at pre-application stage. We additionally supported two recent applications for listed building consent for associated works, in order to undertake investigative works and repairs.

We are keen to see the Guildhall reopened and welcome that efforts are continuing to achieve this. The venue has been closed since 2019, which has compounded challenges arising from lack of theatre provision in the city following the closure of the Assembly Rooms. The Guildhall is a Grade II listed designated heritage asset and an important theatre for Derby.

The Guildhall is a well-regarded venue but as is common with older buildings, particularly where they have been repurposed from other functions, it was not without its challenges and deficiencies. Whilst already aware of this, a report presented to us at pre-application stage clearly set out the particular needs for change and development influencing these proposals. This is articulated within the Design Considerations (section 3) of the Design and Access Statement.

We recognise those shortcomings, which negatively impact on the theatre experience for audiences, performers and staff. They affect and limit the shows and functions the Guildhall can accept. Moreover, inadequate levels of accessibility affects the inclusivity and social value of the Guildhall. We therefore support the principle of this project, which has a number of positive outcomes including providing better accessibility, more flexibility in programming, a better experience for users, upgraded technical capabilities and enhanced energy efficiency. Paragraph 98 of the NPPF (2024) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities of this nature.

Many of the interventions are internal, and we will comment on those within our submission in relation to the listed building consent. The matters for consideration within this application are the proposed extension and installation of plant at roof level, and other external changes.

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The extension to the rear for a ground floor plant room, first floor technical workshop and additional WCs to the second floor is in a location where there has been previous development. This location is less sensitive as it is better shielded from view and is being designed in a way to replicate existing fabric and finish. There are operational and heritage benefits arising from locating plant outside of the existing building. There is often a need for additional WCs within theatres, and this provides an opportunity to substantially increase numbers of female cubicles. This will reduce queueing at peak periods such as intervals, providing a better audience experience and increasing opportunity for the Guildhall to generate additional sales which supports the venue's financial sustainability. This extension also allows for internal rearrangement, which is providing further WCs at ground floor level including an accessible WC. There will also be provision of a Changing Places facility which we welcome and support, boosting the Guildhall's inclusivity.

There will also be a second extension above the previous ground floor extension to enable installation of a servicing lift as well as an accessible WC and kitchenette. Again, this location has less impact on the building's more visible and sensitive elevations and provides substantial accessibility and operational benefits.

To the roof will be installation of new and replacement plant and air handling equipment. This is necessary for the Guildhall's continued operation and comfort of its users. Again, we consider this location to be appropriate with impact being mitigated by concealment behind the parapet.

We do not consider these extensions and additions to cause harm to the character and significance of the Guildhall, or its wider setting. They are necessary to allow the venue to meet modern needs, and to support its return to use which must be made a priority.

Policy CP14 of the Derby City Local Plan, Part 1 – Core Strategy (2017) commits to elevating Derby's identity and reputation as a cultural and leisure destination, encouraging development that will enhance the quality of the City's offer, increase visitor numbers and increase participation in cultural and leisure activities by Derby's residents. Part b. of the policy supports proposals that make a positive contribution to the City's cultural role and function including through improvement of the use and accessibility of existing attractions. Part c. encourages investment to improve the quality of venues for the arts and theatres, for which facilities should be accessible. This development will help contribute to those strategic objectives.

We therefore support the granting of planning permission.

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Theatres fit for the **future**



Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or should you wish to discuss this representation in greater detail.

Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Manager

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