

Ref.: TC/2736

09 April 2024

Jas Bansil
Dartford Borough Council
Civic Centre
Home Gardens
Dartford
DA1 1DR

By e-mail: planning.reps@dartford.gov.uk

Application: 24/00305/FUL

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

Proposal: Changes to roof, including replacement of roof due to the existence of RAAC within the existing roof structure, installation of PV panels, and increased parapet height.

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 works to the theatre's roof including some external alteration and installation of PV panels.

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

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

Facebook @theatres.trust **Instagram** @TheatresTrust

Chair Dave Moutrey OBE

Director Jon Morgan

Trustees James Dacre, Suba Das, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Lucy Osborne, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

The Orchard is an important arts and cultural asset for Dartford and its wider catchment. It has a strong theatrical programme with major touring productions, live music, comedy and talks. It also offers conferences and other events and functions. As well as helping meet the cultural needs of local people it also draws visitors into the town centre, benefitting businesses and the local economy. Paragraph 97 of the NPPF (2023) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities such as this.

Due to the presence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) within the theatre's roof construction, the venue was closed in September 2023 and remains out of use. In the meantime a temporary venue is operating on a vacant site nearby. Bringing the main theatre building back to active use must be prioritised, and we welcome the Council and the venue operator's approach in expediting proposals to remedy the situation.

This will be achieved through replacing existing RAAC panels with a steel metal deck. However, to meet current standards of insulation both in terms of energy efficiency and acoustic protection this will require an uplift in depth. As a result, there will be increase in the height of the building's parapet of 400mm. The necessity for these works to allow the venue to operate, and that greater insulation will reduce the venue's operating costs and improve efficiency and sustainability, constitute substantial public benefits. Furthermore we do not consider the building and its wider setting to be sensitive in architectural and heritage terms, therefore we support the proposed design approach.

We are also highly supportive of the installation of PV panels, and in fact we wrote in support of a previous application which included this in 2022. We consider this to accord with the provisions within Policy DP11.2 of the Dartford Development Policies Plan (2017). Paragraph 164 of the NPPF gives significant weight to supporting energy efficiency and low-carbon improvements including through installation of solar panels.

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 Adviser

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