

Ref.: TC/1041

7 August 2024

Ross Wise
Planning Department
Town Hall
Castle Circus
Torquay
TQ1 3DR

By e-mail: planning@torbay.gov.uk

Application: P/2024/0399

Site: Brixham Town Hall New Road Brixham TQ5 8TA

Proposal: Reordering works to include: Reinstatement of Scala Hall main entrance with level access. Alterations to internal shop area to accommodate new access corridor. Installation of raised terrace to Market Street. Installation of signage. Building fabric repairs.

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:

This application for planning permission has been brought to the attention of Theatres Trust because the Town Hall building includes the Brixham Theatre. It

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

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seeks to undertake some alterations to the building, carry out external repairs and to replace current signage.

The Town Hall is a Grade II listed heritage asset constructed in 1886. It is a multi-function facility which includes a market, a charity shop and office, function rooms and the Brixham Theatre.

Brixham Theatre is purpose-built within the Town Hall. Its auditorium has a capacity of 250 and provides a mixed year-round programme including productions by local groups. It is a community-run venue, operated by volunteers. It provides local people with access to theatre and the arts. Venues such as this are particularly important for the social and cultural well-being of local people, providing opportunities for people to come together and develop their skills as well as reducing isolation. Paragraph 97 of the NPPF (2023) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities of this nature.

Having reviewed the existing and proposed floorplans, the external works which help facilitate internal alterations within the Brixham Does Care office and provide level access to the Scala Hall appear not to directly affect the theatre. However, they will better enable better movement across the ground floor so the principle of this aspect is supported.

We similarly support the carrying out of maintenance and repairs to the building, including repointing to brickwork and stonework, removal of vegetation and clearing of rainwater groups. This will ensure the building is kept in a good state of repair and conserved into the future, benefiting its occupants including Brixham Theatre.

We do however object to the current approach to signage. Currently Brixham Theatre is afforded a high degree of prominence and visibility with lettering to the south elevation and a smaller fascia sign to the east elevation. The proposed plans show to the southern elevation the theatre lettering is replaced with 'Town Hall', and to the eastern elevation new 'Brixham Town Hall' lettering will be installed and the existing theatre fascia sign removed.

This removes any reference to the theatre and will therefore have a negative impact on the theatre's visibility and in turn compromise its ongoing viability. In a town of the nature of Brixham, which has a relatively high degree of tourists and visitors who may be unfamiliar with the theatre, picking up additional passing trade will be vital in supporting the overall programme and offer for local people.

Whilst a new LED screen to the window next to the theatre window could be used for

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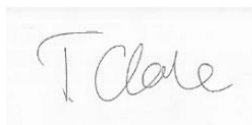
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theatre purposes, this should complement rather than replace the signage above.

We urge and recommend that the signage element of these proposals is revised and that signage for the theatre of existing scale is maintained. There appears to be sufficient scope for this to be achieved alongside enhanced prominence of the Town Hall's wider functions.

We would additionally note that because this site contains a purpose-built theatre we should have been notified as a statutory consultee.

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 Adviser

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The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres. The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund co-operates with the Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697