

Ref.: TC/544

2 September 2024

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**Application:** 24/03016/LBA

**Site:** Theatre Royal, Sawclose, City Centre, Bath, Bath And North East Somerset, BA1 1ET

**Proposal:** Internal and external alterations for the conversion of Stalls Bar Vault and Royal Circle kitchen area to provide additional Female W.C. cubicles.

**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](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk) **Website** [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk) **Twitter** @TheatresTrust

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**Chair** Dave Moutrey OBE

**Director** Jon Morgan

**Trustees** Vicky Browning OBE, Anna Collins, James Dacre, Suba Das, Liam Evans-Ford, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Tracy Ann Oberman, Lucy Osborne, Saratha Rajeswaran, Truda Spruyt, Michèle Taylor MBE, Katie Town

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## **Comment:**

This application for listed building consent has come to the attention of Theatres Trust because it is seeking alterations within Theatre Royal Bath to provide additional WCs. There is a corresponding application for planning permission to which we have commented under separate cover.

Theatre Royal is a Grade II\* listed heritage asset, which opened in 1805 and is described within our database as, “One of the most important surviving examples of Georgian theatre architecture”. It replaced an earlier theatre and is notable for being the first theatre company outside of London to obtain a royal patent enabling the Theatre Royal name. The original interior was destroyed by fire in 1862 after which it was redesigned to the plans of notable theatre architect C. J. Phipps. Despite later redecoration the auditorium largely survives intact. The theatre is operated by a charitable trust, who have been able to expand and diversify provision by adding a studio theatre to the rear in 1997 (the Ustinov Studio) and a children’s theatre in 2005 within the adjoining former Robins Cinema/St Pauls Church Hall which is called ‘The Egg’. They are also seeking to add a fourth performance space.

As with many older theatres, the venue has a lack of WCs. There was a previous consent from 2019 for internal alterations to create WCs which was renewed in 2023. That scheme is not being taken forward due to budget constraints so these proposals constitute a revised project.

At stalls level the theatre’s refurbishment in 2010 upgraded a previous restaurant within a vaulted area and converted it into a bar. It has been determined there is an over-provision of floorspace so the rear vault will be reconfigured with an opening enlarged to install a new block of seven WCs. The remaining opening into the bar area will also be enlarged to the same design, which is necessary to aid the flow of people into the bar. Whilst this will result in some loss of historic fabric, with reference to paragraph 208 of the NPPF (2023) we consider improving provision of WCs is necessary to meet modern standards and expectations of audiences and therefore constitutes a public benefit.

Due to the restaurant having been taken out of use there is not the same need for a kitchen, which remains located at Royal Circle level behind its bar area. As a result some of this floorspace is also being repurposed for WCs, with four cubicles being provided. Again, with the great need for additional WCs this is a welcomed intervention.

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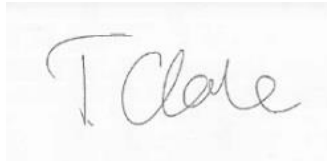
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Externally there will be some excavation to enlarge the drainage route and make it more robust. We have no objections to this, and the applicant notes an archaeological watching brief will be required. To the Royal Circle level will be insertion of a roof light within a slate pitched roof. We do not consider this area to be of particular significance and as it is shielded from public view it will not cause harm to the theatre's significance or its wider setting.

As with our comments for the previous WC scheme, increasing provision will provide significant benefits to Theatre Royal and the experience of its audiences. We therefore support the granting of listed building consent.

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 Adviser

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