

Protecting theatres
for everyone



Ref.: TC

09 June 2022

Planning Department
Town Hall
The Parade
Hugh Town
St Mary's
TR21 0LW

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

Application Reference: P/22/033/COU & P/22/034/LBC

Site: Town Hall, The Parade, St Mary's

Proposal: Change of use of a Grade 2 listed Town Hall & Museum to Museum & Cultural Centre (Sui Generis) for the Isles of Scilly including demolition of the existing modern boiler house provide space for the extension and reconfiguration of the existing 1970s extension including a new roof to accommodate new air source heat pumps. (Listed Building)

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 has come to the attention of the Trust because it is seeking change of use, alteration and extension of the Grade II listed St Mary's Town Hall to provide a multi-purpose cultural centre which will include a new performance space.

Supporting documents show the ambition is for the Town Hall to be able to host theatre, live music, film screenings and other events. The islands are currently without a dedicated theatre space; we understand the St Mary's Theatre Club undertakes activities at various locations including performances at Five Islands Academy and there is occasional outdoor theatre. There was a small cinema at Hugh Town which closed in 1967 along with a screen within the New Inn on Tresco which is no longer offered. Therefore provision of this theatre space is to be welcomed as it will enable expanded and year-round provision which will enhance the cultural well-being of local people.

Theatres Trust

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Chair Dave Moutrey **Director** Jon Morgan

Trustees Paul Cartwright, James Dacre, Suba Das, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Lucy Osborne, Jane Spiers, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

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

Plans show the theatre space will be flexible, offering 124 seats across stalls and balcony. At stalls level these will be retractable which could allow increased capacity for standing events with a stage which can be lowered and raised if the space is required for other events. A platform lift is shown which we assume is intended to make the stage accessible although the plans don't show these to be clearly linked. It should be ensured that when in seated mode wheelchair spaces are made available, which to meet best practice should be offered in different positions.


There are no specific dressing rooms but this could be addressed through flexible use of other back of house spaces such as the hall store and activity/meeting space above (one of which is labelled as a potential dressing room). To ensure appropriate safeguarding particularly if shows include children and young people a number of spaces should be made available. Although overall there are sufficient WCs to meet minimum standards some should be safeguarded for use by performers, therefore there should be an operational plan to help manage this as well as direct audience members to other facilities around the building to avoid queues at peak periods such as intervals.

The presence of the foyer café/bar and upper level means there is a good amount of front of house space. Again there may need to be an operational plan to guide audiences to the upper balconies particularly as one requires crossing the stalls or crossing the gallery at the upper level. Consideration will need to be given to securing other spaces within the building that may not be operational, or ensuring they can be suitably accessed if being utilised at the same time as the theatre space is in use. There would need to be appropriate soundproofing of the theatre space to ensure performances are not disturbed by activity elsewhere.

Paragraph 93 of the NPPF (2021) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for provision of community facilities and to support the improvement of social and cultural wellbeing. Strategic Aim 5 of the Isles of Scilly Local Plan 2015-2030 also has an objective of facilitating growth through the provision of services which support cultural and social well-being and to support investment into cultural and leisure services. Policy SS4(1) supports development of new facilities. This proposal will help meet those aims, and we look forward to seeing these plans progress. Theatres Trust is a source of free advice and guidance for theatre projects, we would encourage the applicant to engage with us as plans may be further refined.

Whilst it is not appropriate that we comment on design matters and alterations relating to the wider extension and use of the building, we are supportive of the change of use and the principle of bringing cultural and social functions together and are supportive of the theatre element of this scheme. We would support a granting of planning permission and listed building consent on that basis.

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


Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

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