Development Management – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWDM/1173/24 **Recommendation – APPROVE**

Site: Pavilion Theatre Worthing Pier The Promenade Worthing West Sussex BN11 3PX

Proposal: Application for Listed Building Consent for the proposed installation of a wheelchair-accessible ramp to the stalls within Worthing Pavilion Theatre

Date of site visit: 24/09/2024

Neighbours checked: Y

Additional neighbour notifications: Site notice and press notice

Site and Surroundings
The Pavilion Theatre is located to the south of Marine Parade at the entrance to Worthing Pier. The building is Grade II listed as part of the wider pier complex with the following listing:

Originally 1860-62. Designed by Robert Rawlinson for J Cliff of Bradford. 960 ft long. The neck was widened from 15 ft to 30 ft in 1887-9 and the pierhead enlarged to 105 ft. Pier consists of 24 spans of longitudinal lattice girders supported by cast iron trestles and carrying timber joists for the wooden decking. 'Shoreward or Pierfoot Pavilion 1926. Stucco to walls, metal clad roofs. Consists of a polygonal hall with an oval vestibule on the shoreside, and two square side pavilions joined to it by concave quadrant pilastrades. The vestibule is of 5 bays externally, separated by engaged Corinthian columns over which the entablature breaks. Festooned frieze. Central three bays have glazed double doors with mask keystones. Here the domed roof has 3 glazed oculus dormers, while the domical main roof has bullseye dormers. Delicate iron cresting in the manner of a balustrade. The main roof has a low clerestory with lattice glazing. A plainer cornice carries round the hall. The lower side pavilions have strongly swept mansard roofs with round headed dormers, plain entablatures over Doric pilasters. The pier entrances, in the quadrants, are flanked by engaged Corinthian columns. The detail , a subtle and festive neo-brec, is carried through into the two domed interiors. The Pierhead Pavilion was designed in 1935 by the Borough Architect. It is a handsome and largely unaltered example of the Nautical Style. The shape is a rectangle with rounded ends, with terraces wrapped around a small concert hall. Frame construction clad in metal faced Plymax, using almost continuous glazing of the Crittall type. Asphalt terraces and roofing. Four bay hall with simple proscenium arch surmounted by radiating design. From the outside the main effect is strongly horizontal, created by the projecting decks and cornices. Good mahogany doors which retain some frosted glass panels with wave patterns. Midway Amusement Arcade, 1959, not of special interest on current criteria .

The site is within Chapel Road Conservation Area.

Proposal

The development proposes to remove a section of the wood panelling surrounding within the auditorium and install a short accessible ramp. This would allow access to the lower-level seating.

The heritage statement provides the following justification:

"The primary goal of the proposed ramp installation is to ensure that the Pavilion Theatre meets modern accessibility standards, in line with the Equality Act 2010, which mandates public buildings to be accessible to all. Currently, the lack of wheelchair access to the stalls limits the theatre's inclusivity, excluding disabled visitors from fully enjoying the venue's offerings.

The proposal has been carefully designed to balance the need for improved accessibility with the preservation of the building's historic features. By enhancing access, the theatre will continue to serve as a welcoming venue for a diverse audience, including those with mobility impairments. This aligns with the Pavilion's long-standing role as a community hub, fostering engagement and inclusivity."

Relevant Planning History:

Various listed building consents for other alterations.

Consultations:

The **conservation architect** advised that the project was acceptable and asked for further details of the handrail. Upon receipt of details of the wooden handrail he confirmed it was suitable and recommended approval.

Worthing Society: Thank you for requesting our comments in respect of the above application for Listed Building Consent which relates to a Grade II Listed theatre in the South Street Conservation Area. I have now had the opportunity to discuss the proposal with our Heritage Team and I am pleased to advise that the Society has no objection to the installation of a wheelchair accessible ramp.

Theatres Trust: This application for listed building consent has come to the attention of Theatres Trust because it is seeking to undertake alteration within the stalls at the Pavilion Theatre, specifically to install a ramp to provide wheelchair accessibility.

The Pavilion Theatre is part of the Grade II listing of the pier and is historically and culturally significant as one the very few remaining pier theatres. The pier was completed in 1862 and the Pavilion was built in 1926. It is designed in a European Kursaal style with an oval domed entrance block with engaged columns with vases above the entablature. The auditorium is oval shaped with

a semi-circular proscenium on the long side. It has a mixed programme of theatre, live music, comedy, cinema and other events. It is an important cultural facility for the town. Paragraph 97 of the NPPF (2023) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities such as this.

Currently wheelchair accessibility within the stalls is inadequate, which diminishes the theatre's value as a community asset because it lacks inclusivity. We therefore welcome that the venue is seeking to address this. It will be achieved through inserting a ramp to the front right-hand corner of the auditorium (stage left). The design approach minimises harm to historic fabric and plan form, nonetheless with reference to paragraph 208 of the NPPF we consider that the less than substantial harm generated is mitigated by the significant public benefit of improving accessibility.

We therefore support the granting of listed building consent**.**

Representations:

None received

Relevant Planning Policies

Worthing Local Plan policies (WBC 2023): SP1, DM5, DM23, DM24
National Planning Policy Framework (2023)
Planning Practice Guidance

Planning Assessment

The proposal seeks to install a ramp within the stalls of the Pavilion Theatre.

The heritage statement describes it as follows:

"The proposed ramp will be located on the South West corner of the auditorium, where the most convenient access can be provided without disrupting the internal layout. The design of the ramp is sympathetic to the building's use and historical character. The ramp will incorporate materials that match the existing contemporary wood panel balustrade. The slope of the ramp has been designed to minimize impact on the seating capacity, and it will be positioned in a way that avoids detracting from the original architectural layout of the stalls"

The proposal will increase accessibility to the auditorium which is a positive impact and in line with policy. Timber panelling will be installed to match the existing. Further details have been provided of the handrail which will be timber with a natural finish to contrast with the panelling as required by building regulations. Conditions will be included to ensure the development protects the listed building during construction.

Recommendation

APPROVE subject to Conditions:-

1. Drawing Numbers
2. Standard time limit
3. Materials as specified in the approved plans
4. Protect listed building
5. Make good any damage

Informative

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by identifying matters of concern within the application (as originally submitted) and negotiating, with the Applicant, acceptable amendments to the proposal to address those concerns. As a result, the Local Planning Authority has been able to grant planning permission for an acceptable proposal, in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Is recommendation contrary to letter(s) of representation? N

Case Officer: Louise Prew Date: 23/10/2024

Authorised by: Jo Morin Date: 23.10.2024