

Protecting theatres for **everyone**



Our Ref.:206

20 April 2017

For the attention of Elaine Atkinson
Development Services
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Church Road
Stockton on Tees TS18 1LD

Dear Ms Atkinson,

The Globe Theatre, High Street, Stockton-on-Tees

Application Ref: 17/0755/LBC and 17/0754/COU

I write regarding the above planning and listed building applications for the restoration and refurbishment of the Grade II listed The Globe 'super-theatre' for use as a multi-purpose entertainment venue. The Trust supports the applications.

Remit: The 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 through The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, requiring the Trust to be consulted on planning applications which include 'development involving any land on which there is a theatre'.

Background: The Globe opened in 1935, built to designs by Newcastle architect Percy Lindsay Browne. Designed as a ciné-variety 'super cinema theatre', it had full stage facilities with dressing rooms on three floors to support both live theatre and cinema. It became an ABC cinema in 1937, but still saw occasional live theatre use. The cinema closed in 1977 and was converted to a bingo hall, which continued until 1996, and has been vacant since.

Stockton's Globe is one of the few remaining and complete 'super cinemas theatres' in the UK, the majority of other examples having been subdivided and/ or extensively modernised. While the theatre has deteriorated due to lack of use and neglect, there have not been many significant changes or alterations since it was built in 1935. The ground floor frontage, which originally had shop fronts flanking the entrance, has now been tiled. Above this, the moderne stucco façade has fluted giant pilaster strips rising through two storeys to a stepped attic featuring two short, cubist towers. Internally much of the original ornament has survived. The auditorium has characteristic, almost unaltered ornament to the single balcony front, the side walls feature original stylised light fountains, and the broad, square proscenium remains intact.

Comment: The Theatres Trust actively encourages local authorities and theatre owners to revitalise cultural buildings as a catalyst for wider regeneration, to benefit the local economy, improve the conservation area, and support the cultural wellbeing of the local community. The

Theatres Trust

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The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund co-operates with Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697

Trust therefore supports this proposal to restore The Globe, including the conversion of the building at 153 High Street, to create a fully functioning live performing arts venue to bring it back into a sustainable and viable cultural use.

The Theatres Trust was involved in pre-application discussions for this project and agree the scheme proposes a sensitive restoration of the theatre that, in our opinion, enhances the special architectural interest or character of this heritage asset. We welcome the 'light touch' treatment proposed within the auditorium in terms of the stabilisation and restoration of the auditorium and plasterwork, with interventions mainly being made to meet building access and safety standards, provide WCs, and to flatten the stalls floor to make it suitable for both seated and standing events to maximise its use.

As with most historic theatre and cinema buildings, there is little opportunity to provide additional front of house facilities within the existing footprint of the building, and by their nature, they do not easily facilitate disabled access. The proposals indicate 2 new lifts to allow access to both stalls and circle levels of the auditorium and a further lift back of house within an extended dressing room block. The lift to access the stalls level is located within the auditorium footprint, however, in order to minimise the impact on the auditorium, a separate lift is located within the 153 High Street building to provide access to the circle level. Whilst the lift access to the auditorium is located away from the main auditorium access stair, this has been necessary to preserve the historic integrity of the auditorium and avoid alterations to the balcony. The current lift arrangement allows both choice of seating within the auditorium and good links to the new bar and WC facilities.

The proposal is supported by the conversion of the adjoining building at 153 High Street, which not only provides expanded bar facilities but also serves to provide space for offices, lift access to the stalls and upper levels of the auditorium, and also much needed additional toilet facilities and circulation space. We note the bar in this building will be operated as both a bar for events at the Globe and also as a standalone venue that is open at other times, and, and the Trust supports this, as most performance venues need additional ancillary functions and uses of this nature to help establish income streams and diversify their business models.

We also support the rebuilding and extension of the back of house/ dressing room wing to provide modern and additional spaces, and recognise this is important in order to attract artists and performers to the venue and does not affect areas of heritage significance.

In summary, the Trust considers that the proposed refurbishment works for the Stockton Globe Theatre provides a sensitive and considered approach to the historic asset, maintaining the building's architectural integrity but also greatly improving the ancillary facilities, through enhanced levels of comfort, safety and amenity for the users of the venue. The Trust would therefore recommend granting planning and Listed Building Consent.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely,



Ross Anthony
Planning Adviser