

Our Ref.: RA/2099

21 April 2017

Mr Mark Mirams
Planning Policy and Decisions Team
Royal Borough of Greenwich
35 Wellington Street
London SE18 6HQ

Dear Mr Mirams,

Former Granada Theatre, 186 Powis Street, Woolwich SE16 6NL
Application Ref: 16/1625/L and 16/1624/F (revised drawings consultation)

I write regarding the above planning and listed building applications for extensions to the former Granada Theatre and conversion of the fly tower to office and support spaces. Please note the Trust was not consulted on this, or earlier consultations for these applications, as per our statutory remit.

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 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'. The Act defines a theatre as any building or part of a building that was constructed or used for the public performance of plays, and therefore applies to theatres, playhouses, arts centres, super cinemas, ciné-varieties or buildings converted for theatre use, including those now in other uses or disused.

Comment: While the Theatres Trust does not object to the concept of this proposal, we must object to the application in its current form as we have significant concerns with the works proposed in the fly tower that need clarification before any permission should be granted.

Without repeating the already well documented history of this theatre building, it is important to recognise the key historic and architectural significance of this Grade II* listed 'super cinema', apart from its superb and ornate gothic inspired interior, is that it remains largely intact, which makes it unique as most of the other surviving 'super cinemas' across the country have been converted, modernised and/ or subdivided at some point, considerably damaging their architectural qualities.

Overall, we welcome the general concept, particularly the two proposed side extensions. The rear areas of cinema and theatre buildings tend to be, by their very nature, utilitarian and in stark contrast to their main, usually decorative, street frontages. The street pattern has changed

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The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

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since the Granada was first built and this has left the austere side elevation exposed to the public realm. We recognise the new extensions will help activate these street frontages, making better use of these two otherwise underused spaces, and improve the overall appearance of this part of the building within the streetscape. We particularly welcome the inclusion of a additional entrance and lift within the proposed extension facing Powis Street which will provide full access to the balcony level of the theatre. This minimises the impact and need to alter the ornate foyer, which would otherwise be required to install this essential facility within the existing theatre building. However, it appears on the plans for the second floor that access to the theatre from the lift is via the proposed function/ meeting room, meaning access would not be available when the room is in use and we recommend an additional corridor is created to allow for uninterrupted use and access from the lift.

With regards to the stage house and fly tower, we are surprised the Heritage Statement prepared barely mentions this structure, and there is no statement of significance, yet the Design and Access Statement notes the plan will encase 'historic artefacts'. A picture is shown of these 'historic artefacts' on page 38 and appear to be the ropes from a hemp flying system. We therefore question what stage equipment is in the stage house? Is there a grid? What is proposed for the rest of the flying system? Could the equipment be repurposed?

In addition, there is no indication as to how the proposed floors are to be inserted into the stage house and what impact these structures will have on the historic fabric of the building. Given this is an intact and listed super cinema, it is extremely capable of being returned to live theatre use, we therefore would expect any intervention to be fully reversible.

The Trust therefore recommends the applications are withdrawn, and requests that a full stage house study and statement of significance is prepared in order to assess the full impact of the stage house conversion, and that a structural study is provided to demonstrate how the stage house conversion will be constructed and what internal alterations are required to support this proposed structure.

This advice reflects guidance in paragraph 70 of the NPPF which provides clear guidance on the importance of safeguarding cultural facilities and states that in 'promoting healthy communities', planning decisions should 'plan positively for cultural buildings' and 'guard against the loss of cultural facilities and services'. And section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which places a statutory duty on Council to have a special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they process.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely,



Ross Anthony
Planning Adviser