

# Protecting theatres for **everyone**



Our Ref.: RA/686

21 July 2017

Andrew Gregory  
Development Management Team  
Southampton City Council  
Civic Centre  
Southampton SO14 7LS

Dear Mr Gregory,

**Mayflower Theatre, Commercial Road, Southampton**

Application ref: 17/01100/LBC

I write regarding the above listed building application for refurbishment and internal works to the auditorium at the Mayflower Theatre. Please see our comments below.

**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'.

**Comment:** The Theatres Trust actively encourages theatres owners and operators to upgrade their venues to ensure they meet the needs and expectations of audiences, staff, and performers as well as meeting modern building and accessibility standards. The Trust therefore supports the proposed works to restore, alter and redecorate the auditorium at the Grade II listed Mayflower Theatre.

We note the last major refurbishment of the auditorium was over 30 years ago and welcome this significant investment in the upkeep of the historic building fabric, which will involve the repair, maintenance and redecoration of the existing plasterwork, joinery, panelling, metal work and other fixtures and fittings. We understand the rationale behind the introduction of a new, darker colour scheme, and while the selected colours do not replicate the original silver and grey scheme from 1928, it has been successfully used in a number of other theatres designed by W and TR Milburn, and the paint samples suggest similar colours were used at some point in the past. The drapes, ruster rail coverings and carpets are to be replaced or newly installed to match the scheme, and we appreciate the efforts to find an appropriate patterned carpet to suit the style of the theatre, and that the impact on acoustics by the introduction of additional soft fittings has been considered.

Of note is the proposed maintenance and strengthening works proposed for the plaster work and suspended ceiling and it is expected that this will be carried out in accordance with the mandatory directions from the Health and Safety Executive and the Association of British Theatre Technicians' Guidance Note 20 – Suspended Fibrous Plaster Ceilings.

With regards to the alterations to the wooden panels at the rear of the stalls and circle, they are

**Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

**T** 020 7836 8591

**F** 020 7836 3302

**E** [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk)

**W** [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk)

**Chair** Tim Eyles **Director** Jon Morgan

**Trustees** Richard Baldwin, David Blyth, Pam Bone, Paul Cartwright, Paddy Dillon, Ruth Eastwood, David Ian, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Dara Ó Briain, Simon Ricketts, Peter Roberts, Ann Skippers, Anna Stapleton

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

obviously a key feature of the original design, however, we also recognise that the tiered nature of theatre seating means there are few opportunities to create accessible wheelchair areas, and in this instance the panels need to be altered to facilitate this. We also support the alterations to the sales point hatches and opportunity to remove signage and make the openings more sympathetic to the wall panelling. We would consider the benefit of both these alterations to outweigh any harm caused to this heritage asset.

Finally, we support the upgrade and replacement of the orchestra pit, lighting, electrical and mechanical systems to improve safety, working and the environmental conditions within the auditorium as well as making the theatre more sustainable and efficient to operate.

The Trust recommends granting listed building consent, attaching conditions as appropriate.

This advice reflects guidance in Paragraph 70 of the NPPF which states that in 'promoting healthy communities', planning decisions should '*plan positively for cultural buildings*' and ensure that such facilities '*are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable, and retained for the benefit of the community*'.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ross Anthony', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Ross Anthony  
Planning Adviser