

Protecting theatres for **everyone**



Ref.: TC/1813

26 July 2018

Mr I Berry
Planning & Building Control
Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council,
Clarence Arcade,
Stamford Street,
Ashton-under-Lyne,
Tameside,
OL6 0GA

By e-mail: ian.berry@tameside.gov.uk

Application: 18/00490/LBC

Site: Theatre Royal, Corporation Street, Hyde, Tameside, SK14 1AB

Proposal: Temporary Screen to close off the main stage for a period of 12 Months to allow for partial reuse of the building with internal alterations to the entrance to accommodate clients requirements. Refurbishment / replacement of existing toilets to accommodate facilities for both male and female visitors. Internal modifications to existing staircases to remove access from ground floor to upper levels

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 Trust previously wrote to object to application reference 16/00751/FUL, which was permitted. That proposal sought change of use to a mixed D1/D2 use to facilitate use of the Grade II listed vacant theatre as a religious/cultural centre. This application for listed building consent seeks various internal alterations to continue the new use.

Despite our objection, we accept that change of use has been permitted, and there are some potential benefits arising from the building being in use. Nonetheless there is a local trust who are keen to return the theatre to its original use which we would be supportive of. Therefore we consider it essential that any works undertaken by the applicant are reversible and won't lead to any degradation of the building as a valued heritage asset and theatre for Hyde. As such we

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

T 020 7836 8591

F 020 7836 3302

E info@theatrestrust.org.uk

W 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

have some concerns that we request are addressed to make this proposal policy-compliant and enable us to support the granting of listed building consent.

We remind you that Policy C5 of the Tameside Unitary Development Plan (2004) seeks continuation of the use for which the building was designed as most desirable, and states new uses should not adversely affect the essential character of the building. Internal features should harmonise with the existing. We therefore do not object to many of the proposed alterations because although they do not necessarily correspond with the building's character, and hide various features of architectural and historic significance, they are reversible. Nevertheless, it is important that the new structures and installations do not damage historic fabric. There is no clear detailed sections which indicate how these are to be fixed and we suggest that submission of clear section drawings (at scale 1:10) and specifications are conditions before the commencement of works. Likewise it will be important for structural calculations to be undertaken and submitted to ensure that the balcony can withstand the lateral loading of the proposed tarpaulin installation.

Fundamentally though we are concerned that by implementing many of the alterations proposed there will be inadequate care of the closed areas which will lead to damage to features and the lead to the building as a whole falling into poor repair which would be more challenging and costly to rectify later.

For example, while undoubtedly the space the applicant intends to use will be heated and maintained as set out in section 5 of the Heritage Statement, it is not clear whether unused spaces (stage house and back of house spaces, and upper areas of the auditorium) would be heated. There would likely be significant temperature differences, potentially leading to issues of moisture build up and subsequent problems with damp. The proposed material, tarpaulin, does not allow the building to breathe and we would suggest a more open material. This equally applies to the stage house.

There are several factual inaccuracies in the Heritage Statement which undermine the value of the building and the importance of maintaining its character and significance. Primarily this arises from the publication 'Curtains!!! A New Life for Old Theatres' being utilised as the source of all information. This was produced in 1982, therefore no regard is paid to developments after that time. It is stated that the building has been empty since 1985 whereas at that time there was a change of ownership and it remained in use as a cinema until 1992 according to data held by the Trust. The applicant has also referred to the significance of the building being undermined by the insertion of a second cinema screen in the 1970s, but that was taken into account in the statutory listing and was removed by the previous owner in 2011 thus can be disregarded. In addition, the document notes that the projection equipment installed for the second screen could compromise the stage use and subsequently the building's return to theatre use. We believe that this issue can be overcome, for example, by relocating and displaying the equipment elsewhere in the building.

In paragraph 4.0 of the Design and Access Statement it is suggested theatre use is not

sustainable, there have not been credible options to return the building to use as a theatre or cinema and returns on investment in such uses would “inevitably” lead to a loss and decay of the building. The permitted use class of the building is not being determined through this application, nonetheless these statements and assertions are not correct and symptomatic of wider inaccuracies in the applicant’s information.

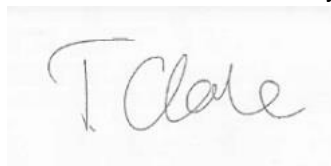
Paragraph 4.3 of the Heritage Statement states the magnitude of changes is “negligible” which is not true because the impact of the proposed changes on the appearance of the building and ability to view both the features and the volume of the auditorium space is significant.

The Heritage Statement and Design and Access Statements state that sanitary ware to the ground floor toilet to the left of the main entrance and right of the escape stair is to be removed, along with the urinal and other sanitary ware in the male toilet to the right of the corner escape route. The proposal description cites refurbishment and replacement but this is not reflected within either document. We recommend clarification that existing facilities will be replaced as part of this consent, and if not justification for the necessity of removing them to be set out as future reinstatement could result in significant additional cost and burden.

We would also highlight that while in the tenure of the applicant the building should be appropriately maintained and this includes inspecting the suspended plaster ceiling regularly, in line with the Association of British Theatre Technicians Guidance note 20 for fibrous plaster ceilings (<http://www.abtt.org.uk/abtt-publish-new-guidance-for-the-inspection-of-suspended-fibrous-plaster-ceilings/>). Please note that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has stated that this inspection regime can be applied to any building with a suspended fibrous plaster ceiling, as good practice.

In conclusion we suggest that further and accurate information is obtained from the applicant before the granting of listed building consent is granted, primarily to justify the need for the alterations proposed which will have a significant impact on the character and appearance of the Grade II listed heritage asset and to ensure that there will be sufficient maintenance and upkeep of the building on an ongoing basis.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance.



Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

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