

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/1993

04 February 2021

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Pending Applications
Development Planning
City of Westminster
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By e-mail: southplanningteam@westminster.gov.uk

Application: 21/00113/LBC

Site: Her Majestys Theatre 72-78 Haymarket London SW1Y 4QL

Proposal: Internal works to the stage area including alteration to the proscenium, boxes and orchestra pit and repainting of the ceiling.

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:

Thank you for consulting the Theatres Trust on the above application for Listed Building Consent at Her Majesty's Theatre which seeks to carry out works to the proscenium, orchestra pit and Dress Circle boxes.

Her Majesty's Theatre is a statutory Grade II* listed heritage asset. It was built in 1897 by notable theatre architect C.J. Phipps as part of a redevelopment of a block including a previous theatre which at the time was considered out-dated; the Royal Arcade to the rear of the theatre was spared. The theatre is of French Renaissance design internally with a grand exterior. Since 1986 the theatre has been the home of Phantom of the Opera although its current closure due to Covid-19 affords an opportunity to carry out refurbishments and to implement a new set design for the show.

Much of this project relates to works to the proscenium and is focussed on the scagliola including stabilising fixings for its horizontal sections, removing remaining elements of its vertical section

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

T 020 7836 8591 **E** info@theatrestrust.org.uk **W** theatrestrust.org.uk

Chair Tim Eyles **Director** Jon Morgan

Trustees Richard Baldwin, Paul Cartwright, Paddy Dillon, Annie Hampson, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Jane Spiers, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

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

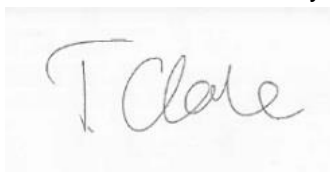
for storage and conservation with view to reinstatement at a future date should Phantom close or move elsewhere and restoring and reinstating missing sections. Alongside this the original rail to the orchestra pit will be reinstated.

The need for these works has been justified within the supporting Design & Access Statement, Heritage Statement and a cover letter from the applicant's consultant who contacted the Trust directly. The Trust attended a recent site visit to the theatre prior to the implementation of greater Covid-19 restrictions. With regards to the scagliola it has been covered by a false proscenium since at least 1986. It has been found that lower sections have been removed with upper elements damaged and painted black. Therefore preservation of the vertical elements, stabilisation of the horizontal elements and reinstatement of vertical sections represents a heritage benefit. However to ensure the safe preservation and retention of the removed elements we urge that they are clearly labelled, packaged and sufficiently protected in crates for storage on-site perhaps within the basement as was the case at the Whitehall Theatre. We are concerned they could become mislaid if moved elsewhere. We also recommend insertion of a recording condition, and note that recording is referenced by the applicant within the Heritage Statement.

Similarly, reinstatement of the pit rail is also a heritage benefit which we welcome as this will help reinstate the theatre's original design and appearance. We have no objection to the proposed protective box fronts to the Dress Circle boxes and welcome that these boxes will be brought back into use with the equipment currently occupying them being moved back towards the stage.

Overall we are supportive of the applicant's proposals which will contribute towards the ongoing operation and preservation of the theatre as a cultural and heritage asset of more than special interest. We recommend the granting of listed building consent, although urge that a programme of recording is conditioned and that removed scagliola is kept on site.

Please contact us should you wish to discuss these comments in further detail.



Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

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