

Protecting theatres for **everyone**



Ref.: TC/9005923

11 February 2021

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Application: 20/05799/LBC & 20/05800/FUL

Site: 14 Bath Street Edinburgh EH15 1EY

Proposal: Demolition of auditorium and retention and partial restoration of principal external elements of the Art Deco facade, erection of 21 residential flats with associated car parking and landscaping.

Remit:

The Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. We were established through the Theatres Trust Act 1978 'to promote the better protection of theatres' and provide statutory planning advice on theatre buildings and theatre use in Scotland through The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulation 2013, 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:

These applications for planning permission and listed building consent have been brought to the attention of the Trust. They are seeking the substantial demolition of the Category C listed former George/County Cinema to facilitate the construction of a residential block containing 21 flats with elements of the façade retained.

The County opened in 1939 on the site of an earlier variety hall. Although predominantly a cinema it was built with a small stage. It has a distinctive art deco front façade. Renamed the George in 1954 after being taken over it closed in 1974 after which it became used for bingo. The building has been vacant since bingo use ceased around 2016 shortly before a previous application which also sought similar development. The Trust submitted objection to those applications in 2017.

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

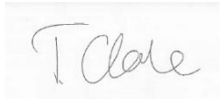
The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

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

Although the applicant has provided further information on this occasion to explain their design approach and rationale, we continue to consider this insufficient to justify the level of harm to the building as a heritage asset. Moreover there is no conclusive evidence justifying the loss of a cultural facility. We are aware of at least one group locally who are seeking to operate the building as an arts centre. Such proposals would be far more compatible with the building's existing form and function. They also provide tremendous benefits to the local economy and to cultural wellbeing as acknowledged within paragraph 56 of the Edinburgh Local Development Plan (2016). Were the Council be minded to approve these applications it must be satisfied the building is surplus to the needs of the community.

However evidence has not been provided and due to the loss of much of the building as a Category C heritage asset we object to the granting of planning permission and listed building consent.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or should you wish to discuss this representation in greater detail.



Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

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