

# Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/555

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**Application:** 21/04844/LBC

**Site:** Duke Of York's Theatre 103 - 104 St Martin's Lane London WC2N 4BG

**Proposal:** Stage strengthening works to increase the stage loads to 5kN/msq including installation of new timber columns, new timber and steel beams below the stage level and re-levelling of the stage top surface.

**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 Theatres Trust on this application for listed building consent in order to carry out works to the stage at the Grade II listed Duke of York's Theatre.

The works are required because the stage lacks sufficient strength to meet recommended levels and which would enable safe accommodation of heavier sets and equipment to meet the needs of many modern productions. It is also proposed for the stage to be made level as currently it is uneven; although not raked (as this was removed many years ago) a flat surface is again needed to better meet the requirements of producers. Without such works the theatre would be limited as to which shows it can receive, which would make it more challenging to programme and potentially compromising its future sustainability and viability. There is a further proposal to remove the theatre's stage lift covered by a further application to which we have commented under separate cover.

**Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL  
T 020 7836 8591 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, Paul Cartwright, Paddy Dillon, Annie Hampson, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Jane Spiers, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

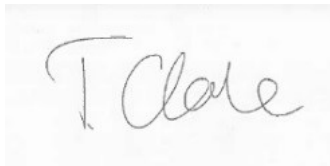
The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund co-operates with the Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697

We would note the Heritage Statement contains some omissions. We understand the drum to the rear was to operate the lift rather than strictly being for scenery and was installed for the notable production of Peter Pan which opened at the theatre in 1904. It is referenced in the Technical Backstage Survey 2009 compiled by the Association of British Theatre Technicians' Historical Research Committee for the Trust. It was rated as being a good example of its type, possibly a 'first' or 'one-off', and having significance on that basis. Its retention is to be supported; although that is referenced within the further corresponding application for listed building consent it is omitted from the submitted proposed plans for this application. We have discussed this with the applicant who have confirmed the drums will be retained so we suggest that revised plans are sought or that retention of the drums is secured by condition.

The Technical Backstage Survey also reports Duke of York's stage and its structure as being a very early example from 1892. Although as set out the stage has been altered and had its rake previously removed we believe evidence remains of the earlier form of the stage. It will be important that any areas or features of significance are identified and conserved or fully recorded and justified if there is to be further loss of historic fabric (the Backstage Survey's assessment of the stage acknowledges it isn't necessarily complete). It is however stated by the applicant none of the original timber structure will be removed.

Otherwise, for the reasons we have set out, there is compelling justification for undertaking strengthening and levelling of the stage. On that basis we are supportive of listed building consent being granted, but this is conditional on there being either no loss of historic stage fabric or any unavoidable removals to be fully recorded.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or should you wish to discuss these comments further.



Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser

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