

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/41

30 March 2022

Matthew Gest
Planning & Public Protection
Hove Town Hall
Norton Road
Hove
BN3 3BQ

By e-mail: planning.consultation@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Application: BH2022/00648

Site: 52 - 58 Middle Street Brighton BN1 1AL

Proposal: Clearance and treatment of dry rot infested areas including removal of non structural timbers and bingo hall installed fixtures and fittings.

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:

This application for listed building consent has been brought to our attention by other consultees and interested parties because it is seeking works at the Hippodrome, specifically removal and treatment of particular areas of the building due to dry rot. We have not been formally notified despite our specialist expertise for such buildings as a national advisory public body and our previous engagement with the Council and other stakeholders on efforts to restore and return it to positive use. The Hippodrome is a priority case for us given its cultural and architectural significance as a Grade II* listed heritage asset featuring on the risk registers of ourselves and Historic England.

Dry rot has been discovered within the building at multiple locations, with particular attack and deterioration to the area of the stage and fly tower at basement level due to water ingress, lack of ventilation and environmental conditions. It is within these areas that this proposal focuses, in particular the stage structure, basement side rooms and later insertions associated with bingo use. The accompanying report includes photographic evidence of the issue.

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL
T 020 7836 8591 E info@theatrestrust.org.uk W theatrestrust.org.uk

Chair Dave Moutrey **Director** Jon Morgan

Trustees Paul Cartwright, James Dacre, Suba Das, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Lucy Osborne, 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

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It is proposed that infested areas are cleared by specialist contractors and taken off-site, with remaining timber and masonry being chemically treated.

Whilst loss of earlier or original fabric is regretful, in this case it does not compromise the overall significance of the Hippodrome so can be considered as less than substantial harm.

Furthermore in line with paragraph 199 of the NPPF (2021) great weight needs to be placed on the asset's conservation. These works are demonstrably necessary and their undertaking must be prioritised to conserve the Hippodrome and support future restoration. This constitutes a public benefit consistent with NPPF paragraph 202.

However, this application makes no reference to how these areas and their features where significant or of historic interest will be replaced. In the case of the stage in particular this would need to be reinstated in timber with the opportunity taken to reinforce and strengthen to support loadings associated with more modern requirements. It must also be ensured that important features of particular significance around these areas, including the elephant run and get-in, the sub-stage walls with doors to the orchestra pit in the position of the original proscenium, the lighting control and dimmer (of which only four other examples are known to remain in their original locations), remains of the safety curtain, drencher and valves and guides, and the fly galleries and cleat rails are preserved and protected during these works. We recommend appropriate conditions to account for these matters and urge them to include further consultation and engagement with the Trust.

To conclude, owing to the necessity of appropriately removing and treating dry rot at the Hippodrome we recommend the granting of listed building consent subject to the conditions outlined.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T Clarke".

Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

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