

# Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/2344

06 April 2022

David Shankland  
Planning  
Economy, Planning and Employability Services  
Kingdom House  
Kingdom Avenue  
Glenrothes  
KY7 5LY

By e-mail: [development.central@fife.gov.uk](mailto:development.central@fife.gov.uk)

**Application:** 22/00601/CAC

**Site:** 9 Esplanade Kirkcaldy Fife KY1 1HR

**Proposal:** Conservation Area Consent for Demolition of ballroom and stage area of Old Cinema

## **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:**

This application for conservation area consent has come to the attention of the Trust because it is seeking demolition at King's Theatre for two areas of the building. The current plan is that only the former ballroom area will be taken forward in the near future under 'Phase 1' with a second area which is the current bar following at a later stage. King's is a priority case for the Trust as it is on our UK-wide Theatres at Risk register. We have been providing support to the community group who own it, King's Theatre Kirkcaldy Ltd, in their efforts to restore and re-open the building to the public.

King's Theatre is Category B listed. It was originally built in 1904 with a capacity of 2,400 across pit, stalls, circle, gallery and ten boxes and was lavishly decorated, although following major refurbishment in an Art Deco style in 1937 only its Italian marble stairways survive along with its façade and some areas of original plasterwork in the foyer which are masked by later additions. It underwent a number of changes in ownership and names in its earlier years. Cinema was first introduced in 1909 and later it became the first provincial venue in Scotland to install sound equipment. In 1937 it underwent major refurbishment in an Art Deco style. It was renamed to

## **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** 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

## Protecting theatres for everyone



the ABC in 1963 and was sub-divided in the late 1970s to create three separate screens. After another series of name-changes due to takeovers it became an Odeon in the late 1990s, but was closed in 2000 after the company consolidated their operations at a new multiplex in Dunfermline. It has been vacant since that time, although a community group called King's Theatre Kirkcaldy Ltd have undertaken some renovations since they took it on around 2016 including making it weathertight. In the meantime they have purchased and opened the former YWCA to the rear of the theatre as a 'Live Lounge' which offers live music, comedy and a space for the community. This is generating an income which is helping to support the core restoration project.

With regards to the former ballroom within Phase 1 of demolition, it is in very poor condition, illustrated by the photographs supplied with the application. It is missing its roof, its timber frames are saturated and likely to require replacement and there is extensive debris containing asbestos. Repairing the building to something usable would require considerable expense and there is no obvious or viable purpose for it. Therefore it is considered that the most realistic option is for its removal, although the boundary wall to Redburn Wynd is to be retained. This will enable extension of the current 'temporary' venue's external courtyard space which will enhance its role and further contribute to income-generation which in turn is supporting the core project of restoring the Category B listed theatre.

Phase 2 relates to the current bar. Its removal may be required in order to enable works to restore and re-open the main theatre building, which constitutes a public benefit given its historic significance and potential to be a transformational project for the town supporting wider regeneration. Although demolition of this element is not definitive the granting of permission would afford certainty and enable quicker progression should funding requirements for the wider project be achieved.

Although the subjects of this application have some degree of historic interest and value given their age and association with the YWCA, certainly in the case of the ballroom this has diminished with its deterioration which is demonstrably beyond reasonable retention. The project also offers substantial public benefits in supporting the restoration and return to use of King's Theatre. Therefore we are supportive of the granting of conservation area consent for demolition.

Please contact us should you wish to discuss this representation in further detail, and ensure Theatres Trust is notified of further applications at King's.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser

**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** 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