

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/1080

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By e-mail: planning.control@newcastle.gov.uk

Application: 2022/0482/01/LBC

Site: Tyne Theatre And Opera House, 111 - 113 Westgate Road, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 4AG

Proposal: Internal alterations for restoration of overstage historic stage machinery.

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 the attention of the Trust by the applicant. It is seeking to reinstate historic overstage machinery utilising equipment of similar size and scale that was removed from Theatre Royal Bath over forty years ago and held in storage since that time.

Tyne Theatre and Opera House is a Grade I listed heritage asset, one of very few purpose-built theatres across the UK to be designated at the highest level. The Trust's database describes its auditorium as one of the finest of its date in Britain and structurally the same as when originally built. It opened in 1867 and in 1919 was converted into a cinema by the architectural practice of renowned theatre architect Frank Matcham. Those works little altered the building, adding a projection box in the upper circle and projection screen onto the stage with a grid dividing partition to reduce heating requirements within the large stage house. Its machinery and other

Theatres Trust

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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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significant features were concealed behind. The cinema closed in 1974 and for a short time the building was vacant before being reopened as a theatre in 1977 by a local community group. In 1985 the theatre suffered a fire which destroyed the fly tower and subsequently the stage and machinery were damaged when the remaining standing wall collapsed in poor weather around three weeks later. The stage house was quickly restored and re-opened eleven months later. After periods of challenge the theatre came into the ownership of the Council who transferred it to a local trust. The theatre currently has a busy programme including high-profile comedians, speakers, live music and theatre. As well as being a heritage asset of great significance it is also an important part of Newcastle's cultural offer.

The theatre has intentions for a wider improvement and restoration project which will help support its role and function into the future, better raising awareness of the building and its historic significance amongst the local community and increasing engagement. With regards to this specific element there is an opportunity for grant funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund subject to approval of listed building consent.

The proposal to insert transferred overstage machinery generates heritage benefits on two fronts. Firstly, it will reinstate features and machinery very similar to those that would originally have been in place but were lost as a result of the 1985 fire. This will provide an example of original British wooden stage design. Secondly it would bring long-stored historic machinery back into active use. These can be considered significant public benefits.

Therefore we are supportive of the granting of listed building consent.

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

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

Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

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