

# Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/2010

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**Application:** 22/01264/FULL & 22/01755/LBC

**Site:** London Coliseum 32 - 35 St Martin's Lane London WC2N 4ES

**Proposal:** Alterations to existing glazed timber screen to remove existing double glazed window unit, timber fielded panel below. Alterations to existing floor slab to form new external entrance steps, formation of new entrance lobby and double doors and removal of modern partitions to reveal north side light.

## **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 regarding these applications for planning permission and listed building consent at the Coliseum. They are seeking to alter the shopfront area to the southern end of its principal St Martin's Lane elevation to create a new recessed external entrance with steps and associated internal alterations.

The Coliseum is a Grade II\* listed heritage asset reflecting its outstanding architectural and theatrical significance, designed by renowned theatre architect Frank Matcham. The Trust has recently been consulted on further proposals regarding the theatre's entrance where we provided support to revised proposals for an internal entry lobby. We have also met with the applicant and their consultants with regard to these proposals.

## **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

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Historic plans and photographs within our archive show how this part of the building was originally intended as an entrance to a booking office set behind a curved recess with display cases which it is to be assumed would have been filled with show posters. Photographs suggest the display cases were never implemented but that the door and surrounding panelling was decoratively detailed with windows in Crittall style. It was flanked by two columns which remain present within the current shopfront. This area underwent a number of internal changes and the current arrangement has seen this area infilled creating a relatively modern shopfront which is of low significance compared to the rest of the building's frontage.

These proposals therefore to some degree represent a reinstatement of the historic layout and public entrance at this location. The purpose is to provide direct access into the Coliseum's shop area, which currently suffers from lack of awareness of it being open outside of performance times. This corresponds with the wider ambition to make the building appear more open linked to the previous internal lobby application referenced above. Improving and increasing access to and engagement with the building is a heritage benefit, and would also improve income potential which will help sustain and conserve this important asset into the future.

There are constraints which mean that full reinstatement is not practical, for example changes in levels and later floor slab mean that the curved entry and original location of the door cannot be replicated. Nonetheless we consider there are some design amendments which would enhance this proposal and minimise conflict with the rest of the frontage. For example to either side the current windows are being retained whereas the opportunity could be taken to reinstate the crittall effect. In this proposal the side screens are coming off the inside edge of the columns whereas originally they came off the centres. Replicating the centre position would offer a slightly larger door set which may also be of advantage.

This proposal is one of a number of interventions which have come forward at the Coliseum in recent years. Although we support its purpose and appreciate the rationale for the approach taken, we strongly recommend the applicant puts together a more comprehensive masterplan so their ambitions for the building can be planned strategically and it can be ensured that individual elements will not compromise wider ambitions and opportunities or undermine the significance of this heritage asset.

In conclusion we are supportive of the granting of planning permission and listed building consent, although we suggest there is scope for some further refinement of this proposal to better reflect and complement the heritage and significance of the Coliseum.

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

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National Planning Adviser

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