

Protecting theatres for everyone

Ref.: TC/2120

21 July 2022

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By e-mail: consultsandreps@calderdale.gov.uk

Application: 22/00675/FUL & 22/00676/LBC

Site: The Theatre 1A Wards End Halifax Calderdale HX1 1DD

Proposal: Conversion of former theatre to form 106 bed hotel with meeting rooms and basement parking including retention and modification to external walls, new mansard roof and internal demolition.

Remit:

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 which seek change of use, internal demolition, alterations and upward extension to facilitate a new hotel. We have been notified because the application site is the former Theatre Royal, a Grade II listed heritage asset which was most recently utilised as a nightclub and restaurant but has been vacant for around fifteen years.

Theatre Royal opened in 1905 and replaced an earlier theatre; this is reflected by the dates of 1790 and 1904 carved into the stonework at high level either side of Theatre Royal lettering which represents the opening and final performance of the previous theatre. Its front façade was designed by local architects Richard Horsfall & Son and is significant, built with ashlar stone in a Baroque revival style, and is considered to be unusually formal for a theatre. A major fire in early 1927 destroyed its stage and other back of house facilities but the safety curtain prevented significant damage to the auditorium. These were quickly rebuilt and the theatre re-opened towards the end of the same year.

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL
T 020 7836 8591 **E** info@theatretrust.org.uk **W** theatretrust.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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In 1933 the theatre was converted for cinema use which saw significant alteration and much of the original interior and decoration was lost. This lasted until the 1960s at which point the building was converted for bingo use until closure in 1992. A period of vacancy followed before it was converted to a bar and restaurant in 1999 and then a nightclub in 2004. This closed in 2007 and the building has been vacant since.

Over the last fifteen years there have been a number of applications for conversion to a hotel, with the Trust having commented on these. We visited the building in 2008 and assessed that clearly the façade remained architecturally significant with the building being an important landmark which is a positive contributor to local character and streetscape. However internally the various alterations over the years had left little of significance internally particularly at stalls level and the remodelled interior of the 1930s was of comparatively poor architectural and decorative quality. Furthermore Halifax remains well served by active theatres and performance venues leaving little prospect or need for Theatre Royal to be returned to live performance use. Therefore the principle of change of use is accepted, and this has been articulated in our response to previous applications. We are keen to see the building return to viable use to ensure its significant façade can be repaired, restored, maintained and conserved into the future.

We have had cause to object to some previous schemes or elements of them due to what were considered to be inappropriate designs which caused significant harm to the historic front elevation and the wider setting of the conservation area. Those concerns were addressed within the previous submission. This scheme appears to be quite similar; amendments include loss of the reinstated canopy but with timber framed doors and windows to the front (west) elevation. On balance we consider this to be a preferable approach which reflects the original architectural style of the building. A greater quantum of original external fabric will also be retained which is also welcomed.

Therefore we raise no objection to the granting of planning permission and listed building consent. However, as with previous applications this is subject to the insertion of a recording condition to be discharged prior to commencement of works. We recommend that Theatres Trust is consulted on draft reports prior to discharge.

Please contact us should you wish to discuss these comments in further detail.

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

Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

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