

# Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/1549

17 August 2022

Andrew Harker  
Darlington Borough Council

By e-mail: [planning@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:planning@darlington.gov.uk)

**Application:** 22/00792/DCLB

**Site:** Darlington Hippodrome Parkgate DARLINGTON DL1 1RR

**Proposal:** Listed Building Consent for the removal of 6 no. existing external backlit signs to be replaced with 6 no. internally illuminated digital LED signs on front (south) elevation

## **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 on this application for listed building consent at the Hippodrome in relation to alterations to signage.

The Hippodrome is a Grade II listed heritage asset which opened in 1907. Its principal elevations are built in red brick with terracotta dressings in a Baroque style. Internally the auditorium has two balconies with delicate plaster ornaments and a circular ceiling set within a square with plaster ornaments to the corners. The proscenium is decorated with mouldings in a square panelled design. It is unusual in that it carried two names, the Hippodrome and the Palace Theatre for which signage for the latter is retained on the corner of Parkgate and Borough Road. In the 1960s it became the Civic Theatre after having been acquired by the Council who originally planned to build a new theatre on a different site. In the 1990s the building was extended and its gallery was brought back to use and in 2016 a major restoration and refurbishment project created a new entrance, gallery and function room. Audience capacity was increased, accessibility improved and back of house facilities and functionality was enhanced to enable a wider range of shows and larger productions to be received. A further grant subsequently supported an adjacent studio theatre for Theatre Hullabaloo. The Hippodrome is an important cultural asset for the town. Paragraph 93 of the NPPF (2021) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities of this nature.

## **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**



This proposal would see replacement of the theatre's existing poster boards to its front elevation to be removed and replaced with digital LED signs to the same positions and of similar scale.

Digital signage provides benefits for theatres because they are able to alter them with greater frequency, better tailor advertisements for different audiences or times of day and reduce costs associated with printing and manual installation. This also improves working conditions and safety as manual changes are avoided. This is a common project which has been undertaken at several venues across the UK including a number of designated heritage assets. The principle of signage at this scale and location is already established, and in any case advertisements and show signage form an important and recognisable element of theatre character and design. From a heritage perspective this is a reversible intervention, assuming that any new wiring and servicing required does not cause harm to any sensitive features. Brightness and frequency of alteration can be managed by condition if required.

We therefore support the granting of listed building consent.

Please do not hesitate to 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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