

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/3824

23 September 2022

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By e-mail: planning.reps@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Application: 22/01210/LBC

Site: Groundlings Theatre 42 Kent Street Portsmouth PO1 3BT

Proposals: External and internal repair works, including repairs to existing windows, brickwork, slate roofing, internal ceilings, render, and replacement windows to first and second floor staircases

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:

This application for listed building consent has come to the attention of the Trust because it is seeking repair works at Groundlings Theatre.

Groundlings Theatre occupies Portsea's former Beneficial School and is a Grade II* listed heritage asset. This is on the basis of its high level of historic and cultural significance having been built in 1784 as a charitable school for poor children with a public hall for meetings and theatre. The theatre is on the Trust's Theatres at Risk register as well as Historic England's Heritage at Risk list on account of its general poor condition and continuing decay in particular its roof structure and windows. As a theatre Groundlings has unique character and charm and provides tremendous value as a cultural, community and social asset for Portsmouth and the surrounding area. It produces its own works and its cabaret-style layout is very different to other venues in the area. It supports opportunities for learning and volunteering particularly for youth and vulnerable groups, works with local schools and runs a successful drama school. Paragraph 93 of the NPPF seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities such as this.

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL
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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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Deficiencies with the building have been well documented as demonstrated through Groundlings' inclusion on the national risk registers of ourselves and Historic England, as well as having been witnessed on site visits. Photographic evidence is contained within the Heritage Statement. This application seeks extensive repairs and upgrades with particular focus on windows and roof works, which have been identified as especially critical, but also for other parts of the building and its fabric both internal and external. This is welcomed.

An inventory of repairs is included within the Heritage Statement with the proposed plans identifying prioritisation. The table of repairs (3.3) sets out that where possible items will be repaired, although where replacement is necessary this will be on a like-for-like basis. In some cases there will also be addition/upgrading, for instance the insertion of draught seals and double-glazing where windows are to be replaced. Internally replacement lighting will be more energy efficient.

We support this approach because it will help conserve the asset and protect it for future generations, it will improve general safety, comfort and working conditions for those using the building, it will better insulate and reduce energy consumption within the building thus improving its efficiency and environmental sustainability, and will have neutral impact on historic significance.

In conclusion we support the granting of listed building consent.

Please contact us should you wish to discuss this representation further.

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

Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

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