

Protecting theatres  
for **everyone**



Ref.: TC/1841

13 April 2023

Planning Services  
Leeds City Council  
The Leonardo Building  
2 Rossington Street  
Leeds  
LS2 8HD

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

**Application:** 23/00945/LI

**Site:** Grand Theatre 46 New Briggate Leeds LS1 6NU

**Proposal:** Listed building application for alterations to and refurbishment of the balcony and upper balcony WC's, including the removal of windows

#### **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 internal and external alterations at Leeds Grand in association with refurbishment of WCs to the theatre's balcony and upper balcony. This will see

#### **Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

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**Chair** Dave Moutrey OBE

**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

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additional cubicles provided, units replaced and the infilling of some windows to upper levels in locations where new cubicles are to be installed.

The rationale for this project is that the WC blocks are in need of a refresh due to their condition. Additionally layouts are inefficient; like many historic theatres it lacks the provision expected by modern audiences and falls below the quantum set out in relevant standards for places of entertainment. This creates audience congestion due to queueing. We recognise these challenges and support efforts by theatre owners and operators to seek to identify opportunities to increase their provision and enhance the experience of audiences.

With regards to the infilling of windows, we raise no objection assuming the finish (noted as to be confirmed) is sensitive to surrounding materials. The need for this can also be justified through the public benefits of improving WC provision to meet need.

With regards to the balcony WCs, we are supportive of plans for the female section because this area is of low significance with units and a decorative scheme which are later interventions. It will increase provision from five cubicles to eight utilising space which is otherwise without particular function. Within the male section however there are historic cisterns which are to be removed and replaced. Although indicated these will be offered to other heritage venues, there is no stated rationale or justification for removal. Furthermore it appears that it would also result in a decrease of provision from eight to seven, although there is a discrepancy between the formal proposed plan and the proposed plan shown in the Heritage Statement as the latter shows eight replacement units. If they are to be made available elsewhere it is to be assumed they remain functional and in working order. Therefore we would question whether retention and general refurbishment may be a more appropriate (and possibly lower cost) option from a heritage perspective. If there is justification, this must be set out. Presently this part of the proposal fails to provide clear and convincing justification required by paragraph 200 of the NPPF (2021) and in turn also fails to demonstrate any resultant public benefits sought by paragraph 202.

At the upper balcony level this is currently a male WC block and again historic cisterns will be removed. Whilst there is more understandable rationale in this location because it is converting the space into a gender neutral facility which will provide better flexibility for different audience mixes, this would also need to be properly set out within the Heritage Statement.

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To conclude, there are elements of this scheme which we support namely works to the balcony female WCs and infilling of windows (subject to the condition we outlined). However taken as a whole we would be minded to object to the granting of listed building consent unless the need for loss of historic cisterns can be fully justified and set out within a revised Heritage Statement.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or should you wish to discuss this representation in greater detail.

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

Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser

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