

Protecting theatres
for **everyone**



Ref.: TC/1871

10 May 2023

Graham Dickman
Neighbourhoods Directorate
Planning and Infrastructure
Development Management
PO Box 30
Civic Centre
West Street
Oldham
OL1 1UQ

By e-mail: planning@oldham.gov.uk

Application: DEM/350827/23

Site: Demolition of building

Proposal: 53 - 55 King Street Oldham OL8 1EU

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'.

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

Telephone 020 7836 8591 **Email** info@theatrestrust.org.uk **Website** theatrestrust.org.uk **Twitter** @TheatresTrust

Facebook @theatres.trust **Instagram** @TheatresTrust

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

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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Comment:

This demolition notification has come to the attention of the Trust because it would result in the loss of the former Grand Theatre and Opera House.

The Grand first opened in 1908. Its exterior is built with terracotta and brick with a corner entrance with clock tower added in 1936. Its interior was described as 'elaborate' and the most prestigious theatre in Oldham, but this was remodelled in 1937 when it was taken on by Gaumont Super Cinemas. It had a 45 foot stage and was equipped with an orchestra pit. It closed as a cinema in 1961 and reverted to live use under a new name, the Astoria. It hosted famous names including The Beatles but this venture lasted just one year before it was converted to a bowling alley. In 1973 it was converted again to a nightclub with a pool club in the former foyer. After a period of closure it was converted to a roller derby centre called the Thunderdome for the Rainy City team. The team was forced to vacate in 2020 and still do not have a permanent home.

It is regretful that this building will be entirely demolished rather than being retained and re-used, at least in part. It can be considered a non-designated heritage asset and externally has retained distinctive features which positively contribute to local townscape and character. Demolition and new development is also not the optimum approach from an environmental sustainable perspective.

Whilst demolition of this building cannot be prevented, we would urge that a programme of historic building recording is undertaken first in order to document any remaining features of historic interest and significance which might remain.

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

Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Adviser

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