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Ref.: TC/807

19 May 2023

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Pending Applications
Development Planning
City of Westminster
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Application: 23/02876/LBC

Site: Novello Theatre 5 Aldwych London WC2B 4LD

Proposal: Creation of a new suite of Balcony-level Ladies WCs (converting a current storeroom) and the introduction of brass handrails to the main entrance step within the Entrance Lobby.

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 consulting Theatres Trust on this application for listed building consent at the Novello Theatre. It seeks two sets of works – the conversion of a staff and store

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

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

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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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room at balcony level to WCs and the insertion of brass handrails to the main entrance steps within the foyer.

Like many older theatres, the Novello has suffered from a lack of WCs to meet the needs of audiences. Therefore we welcome efforts by its operator to identify opportunities to increase provision and improve the experience of audiences. Whilst the theatre is a heritage asset of great significance, the space to be converted is not sensitive as demonstrated through the images submitted with the application. Details have been provided on the internal treatment of the new WC block but there is no information as to whether there will be change to the entry door. The applicant may need to consider the acoustic treatment of the door to avoid disturbance to performances in the event of the WCs being used during shows.

With regards to the foyer steps, these are quite wide but have no central handrails which means there are implications on health and safety. It is proposed that two handrails will be inserted corresponding with the sets of doors. We consider the design of these to be sensitive.

Therefore, assuming the entry to the new WC block would retail current appearance or would otherwise be sensitively finished, these interventions will improve the function and audience experience of the theatre. On that basis we support the granting of listed building consent.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance.

Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Adviser

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