

Protecting theatres  
for **everyone**



Ref.: TC/1987

13 December 2023

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**Application:** DC/2023/00888 & DC/2023/00889

**Site:** Former Garrick Theatre Garrick Parade Lord Street Southport PR8 1RN

**Proposal:** Proposed change of use to mixed use classes including: 11 No. residential units (C3), a hotel providing 137 No. rooms (C1) including a terrace and pool at 4th floor, various commercial units comprising: a gym and spa/day spa (E(d)), event kiosk/box office(E(a)), a bar and restaurant (Sui Generis); with the refurbishment of the existing event auditorium (Sui Generis), the erection of a lift to the rear, a roof top extension to the existing fly-tower to provide 3 No. additional floors, and the erection of a canopy to the front elevation with associated works

### 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

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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

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

**Comment:**

Thank you for re-consulting Theatres Trust on these applications for planning permission and listed building consent at the former Garrick Theatre. This follows the submission of revised plans and supporting information.

In our previous comments of 7<sup>th</sup> August 2023 we raised no objection to the general principle of development or to the proposed uses but were unable to support the granting of planning permission or listed building consent. This was due to concerns around deliverability given some of the constraints and heritage implications associated with a building of this nature. We also highlighted a need for the submission of further information and justification which would ordinarily be expected for proposals of this nature where there is significant change and alteration to and within designated heritage assets.

Compared to the previous plans, the main changes within this iteration are alterations to function within the basement and ground floor levels within the stage house with a larger reception, changes to the number and layout of commercial units, and the removal of the hotel rooms which had been planned for the roof above the auditorium. The latter is something that is welcomed given that we had previously cited our reservations about the ability of the fibrous plaster ceiling to support a floor slab above. The proposed openings within the roof to insert skylights will not now be taken forward as they are not required; the proposed elevation diagrams have been amended but the visualisation still shows the previous view. Paragraph 6.5 of the Heritage Statement still refers to interventions within the roof space which have been removed from the scheme.

Within the auditorium/performance space there were previously two dressing rooms which served the stage. These have now been removed which further limits the usability of this space. There remains a lack of attention given to the function of the auditorium. For example, there is no level access into the auditorium and the stage is also inaccessible to performers. There are very few WCs to serve the lower (stalls) level, and there is no accessible WC other than within commercial unit five. There is limited bar space and there appears to be a lack of space for storage of products. If the auditorium were to be used in better and more functional way (which meets modern standards of accessibility) it would not just help secure the ongoing conservation and operation of this significant space but also support the business model and overall viability of the scheme. We would therefore strongly encourage further revision which could include for example alteration or removal of bingo-era floor levels and insertions. There must be provision made for accessibility. We would

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welcome further engagement with the applicant on such matters.

A new table has been included within paragraph 6.17 of the Heritage Statement to illustrate harm and benefits of the scheme. This includes the fly tower which references pre-application comments from the Council on this area not being intended to be seen by audiences and not possessing the same architectural or decorative features of the auditorium as a purely functional and utilitarian space. This is not a true representation of the role and potential significance of this space. It was vital in supporting the functioning of the Garrick as a receiving theatre of major touring and West End shows. The grid and any machinery which may be present may not be of special significance due to the era in which the Garrick was built (although this should be confirmed), but there should be at least a programme of recording carried out to capture and document what is in place.

The Heritage Statement has removed reference to Crittall windows and strategy for repair and replacement. It would be beneficial to retain such a strategy given the character and decorative significance of many of the building's windows.

In our previous comments we noted the need for internal acoustic assessment as well as from external sources to ensure that there would not be conflict between the performance space and in particular the residential units. There would also need to be sufficient soundproofing between the stage and the reception and residential accommodation above.

Although some of these revisions and additional information go some way to addressing points that we raised within our previous comments, a number of our concerns remain. In particular we consider there is a lack of attention given to the function and accessibility of the auditorium/performance space.

We remain supportive of the overall principle of development, but are still unable to support the granting of planning permission or listed building consent.

Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Adviser

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