

Ref.: TC/2232

28 March 2024

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Aberdeen City Council
Business Hub 4
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By e-mail: pi@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Application: 240287/LBC

Site: The Tivoli Theatre 34 - 48 Guild Street Aberdeen AB11 6NB

Proposal: Installation of internal and external platform lift; internal works including installation of safety rails and associated signage

Remit:

The Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. We were established through the Theatres Trust Act 1978 'to promote the better protection of theatres' and provide statutory planning advice on theatre buildings and theatre use in Scotland through The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulation 2013, 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 Theatres Trust because it seeks to carry out internal and external alterations at the Tivoli

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 James Dacre, Suba Das, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Lucy Osborne, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

Theatre, specifically the installation of internal and external platform lifts as well as new signage. There are corresponding applications for planning permission and advertisement consent to which we have responded under separate cover.

The Tivoli Theatre is Category A listed. It opened in 1872 as Her Majesty's Theatre and was designed by local architect James Matthews with consultation from noted theatre architect Charles J. Phipps. Externally the 1872 scheme remains, but internally the auditorium was redesigned by esteemed theatre architect Frank Matcham in 1897. There was a further reconstruction again by Matcham in 1909. In the mid-1960s like many other theatres and cinemas around that time there was a conversion to bingo use which continued until 1998. A period of vacancy followed, during which time it was featured on Theatres Trust's 'Sleeping Beauties' list which was a predecessor of our current Theatres at Risk register. In 2009 it was sold, restored and reopened as a theatre in 2013. A programme of subsequent works to bring it up to appropriate standard followed.

Architecturally the Tivoli has an Italian Gothic facade to the street, the main building being of three storeys and seven bays with the windows in each storey united by a series of parti-coloured arches. The rear wall to Wapping Street is rendered with slightly recessed arcaded bays resembling to an older style of music hall. Internally the auditorium has two balconies with two superimposed boxes on each side, stepped down in level from the balcony fronts and flanked by tall Ionic columns. The upper boxes have canopies surmounted by cartouches set in front of characteristic shell hoods. The rectangular proscenium is framed by slender, garlanded colonnettes which carry scrolled brackets. On either side are female figures carrying lamps. Above is a tympanum with rounded corners framing a cartouche. Of particular decorative significance is the opulently decorated circular ceiling, incorporating four painted panels.

The Tivoli has a busy programme of theatre, live music, comedy and other events. It is an important part of Aberdeen's cultural offer.

This current project focuses on improving access to the building, as well as reinstating historic signage. In this case it covers both improved front of house accessibility for audiences, staff and other visitors into the auditorium as well as improved back of house service access to get props and other stage equipment into the venue. This investment and continued improvement of the theatre's facilities and inclusiveness is welcomed. Whilst the associated planning permission covers the

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service lift as it necessitates some external alteration, this application also covers the front of house lift and signage.

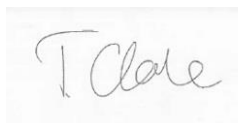
Currently the theatre offers poor levels of accessibility for audiences who are wheelchair users or have reduced mobility. This has been a challenge common with older theatres. This proposal would see a new platform lift installed to one of the theatre's staircases with alterations to the lowest three stairs to give access from street level to the stalls. Whilst this results in some change to historic fabric, we consider this to be very minimal and contained within a small area (it is noted this staircase is non-original, dating from the works of the early 1900s). Nonetheless, there is considerable public benefit in improving accessibility. This intervention is also reversible. We support this change.

The constrained nature of the theatre's current service access arrangements make it uncompetitive for receiving some shows. Therefore the installation of the proposed platform lift will generate heritage and public benefits through enhancing and broadening the Tivoli's offer, which in turn will improve its financial sustainability. This will help conserve and safeguard the building into the future for its intended use. We consider the lift to have little impact on the theatre's architectural and historic significance.

The final part of this proposal is the installation of external illuminated signage to the theatre's front elevation. Historic images show this to be a reinstatement. We consider the signage to be sensitive to the theatre's historic character, and will help improve its prominence. This part is also supported.

We are therefore supportive of the granting of listed building consent.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or should you wish to discuss these comments in further detail.



Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

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