

Our Ref.: MP/73

20 August 2010

Mr Richard Stewart Bsc (Hons) MA MRTPI  
Planning Officer  
Tamworth Borough Council  
Marmion House  
Lichfield Street  
Tamworth  
Staffordshire B79 7BZ



Dear Mr Stewart,

**Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Tamworth, Staffordshire**  
**Application numbers: 0337/2010 & 0336/2010**

Thank you for consulting The Theatres Trust on the above listed building and advertisement applications for replacement poster signs at the *Tamworth Assembly Rooms*. The Trust **supports** the applications. Please see our detailed advice below.

**Remit:** *Tamworth Assembly Rooms* was constructed in 1889 as a multipurpose public hall with a stage and backstage facilities. As such, there is absolutely no doubt that it falls within The Theatres Trust Act of 1976 i.e. (subsection 5) '*any building or part of a building constructed wholly or mainly for the public performance of plays*'. The Theatres Trust is The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres. Furthermore, The Town & Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995, Article 10, Para (v) requires the Trust to be consulted on planning applications which include '*development involving any land on which there is a theatre.*' It was established by The Theatres Trust Act 1976 '*to promote the better protection of theatres*'. This applies to all theatre buildings. Our main objective is to safeguard theatre use, or the potential for such use but we also provide expert advice on design, conservation, property and planning matters to theatre operators, local authorities and official bodies.

**Advice/comment:** The Trust supports the proposal for new poster signs in principle because they will provide a new opportunity to strengthen the visibility of the building; and moreover, will not adversely harm the architectural significance of the heritage asset. Signs of this nature are essential to advertise the incumbent or future production as well as supporting the sustainable use of the theatre. The existing timber poster boards do not appear to have any significant architectural or historic merit for them to be retained. The proposed replacements in brown powder-coated aluminium frames appear robust, slender in section, and their simplicity will not detract from the appearance of the building. Commercial performance venues require substantial improvement if they are to keep pace with the public's expectations and the needs of performers and producers and the Trust is keen to help owners do more to improve their buildings and to attract new audiences.

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## Protecting theatres for everyone

**Director** Mhora Samuel **Chairman** Rob Dickins CBE  
**Trustees** Jason Barnes, Phil Clark, Marilyn Cutts, Venu Dhupa, Tim Foster, Penelope Keith CBE DL,  
Dr Pauleen Lane CBE, Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall, Anne McReynolds, Matthew Rooke,  
Chris Shepley CBE, Sam Shrouder, Ben Twist

Signage is in fact a traditional feature on theatre buildings and has always been used to attract theatregoers. This was optimised in the 1920s and 30s with the use of neon, and in the 1960s and 70s with the use of internally illuminated light boxes.

Modern show signs, using modern lighting techniques (such as low energy voltage sources) and discreet wiring, can be very successful in advertising productions and indeed can liven up the building while allowing the historic asset to be appreciated behind. Innovations in flat panel technology have rendered the bulk of old-fashioned light boxes unnecessary. The opportunity should be taken to use these new signs as a tool to attract passersby to stop and notice the show that is being promoted.

For your information, I have attached a number of images of the signage at the grade II\* listed *Wyndham's Theatre*, London, which you may wish to consider as an alternative option and in the Trust's opinion is a very successful example of this type of modern signage.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if we may be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MJP', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark J Price, MRTPI, IHBC  
Planning and Heritage Adviser

cc Paul Griffiths, Tamworth Borough Council  
Alan Tonks, Chairman, Tamworth Arts Club  
Alan Taylor, Historic Buildings Inspector, English Heritage

Examples of modern signage on the grade II\* Wyndham's Theatre in London

