

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/2023

30 August 2022

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Application: 22/05089/FULL & 22/05090/LBC

Site: The Lyceum Theatre 17 - 21 Wellington Street London WC2E 7RQ

Proposal: Installation of new roof level water tank with new supporting steel beams under and new concrete padstones.

Remit:

The 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:

These applications have come to the attention of the Trust because they are seeking planning permission and listed building consent at the Lyceum Theatre for a replacement water tank and associated works. We have undertaken a site visit and met with the applicant. A revised and expanded Heritage Statement has been submitted since our meeting.

This proposal has come forward because the current tank which is located within a plant room on top of the building is insufficient to meet the needs of the theatre and its audiences. This is largely due to a more general issue affecting the wider area of mains pressure having dropped over time but further compounded more recently by increased hand cleaning since the pandemic. One of the main issues affects toilets at peak periods such as intervals where cisterns are unable to fill in time. Efforts to limit and mitigate this such as installation of water-saving devices have still been inadequate in addressing the underlying problem. Therefore the applicant is seeking to replace the tank to increase storage capacity, necessitating a larger tank which exceeds the space available within the existing plant room.

Theatres Trust

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Chair Dave Moutrey **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

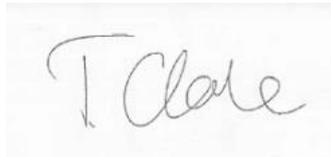
In identifying a new location there is a constraint in that the replacement tank needs to be positioned within the same general area as the existing one in order to feed into existing pipework, thus avoiding more costly and potentially disruptive and harmful alterations if new servicing was required. It also needs to be located externally due to the loading required and to keep it isolated from sensitive areas of fibrous plasterwork. The proposed position is at roof level towards the north-east corner (Wellington Street elevation) slightly north/north-west of the existing plant room.

We understand this rationale and concur that it is the most appropriate location, however the application would be enhanced by the Heritage Statement appraising possible options to justify the approach taken. The works will necessitate installation of a suspended steel grillage bearing onto concrete padstones. The tank should not be particularly visible from street level although it would be seen from the adjacent hotel. However we consider the low level of harm through addition at roof level to be mitigated by the necessity of the project to maintain the operations of the theatre.

Associated with these works will be the removal of existing guardrails towards the edge of the building and their re-positioning with a non-slip walkway just behind the parapet. This will make the handrail visible from Exeter Street heading from the north-east and from Wellington Street heading from the north-west. This is required because the walkway, which provides safe access, needs to be relocated around the new tank. Again this is not referenced within the Heritage Statement or particularly shown on proposed elevations even though it will give rise to some harm to setting. As with the need for the tank we suggest the necessity of this location should be described within the application and the resulting harm justified. We would also encourage further thought on the appearance and treatment of the rail to minimise visual impact.

Although the revised Heritage Statement is an improvement on the original submission, we still consider it to be lacking in detail on options and impact which undermines the applicant's case. Nonetheless with the benefit of better understanding of this scheme gained from our site visit we can support the granting of planning permission and listed building consent, subject to satisfaction that the impact of the re-located guardrails is minimised as far as possible and that care is taken on managing and loading installation of the replacement tank.

Please contact us should you wish to discuss these comments in further detail.



Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

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