

Ref.: TC/1667

2 February 2024

Development Management
City Development
Sunderland City Council
PO Box 102
Civic Centre
Sunderland
SR2 7DN

By e-mail: dc@sunderland.gov.uk

Application: 23/02612/LBC

Site: Sunderland Empire Theatre Empire Theatre High Street West Sunderland SR1 3EX

Proposal: Installation of new and replacement wireless access points throughout the theatre to improve access to wireless data for audiences

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:

This application for listed building consent has come to the attention of Theatres Trust because it is seeking to undertake works at the Sunderland Empire, specifically to install new and replacement wifi access points.

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

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

Facebook @theatres.trust **Instagram** @TheatresTrust

Chair Dave Moutrey OBE

Director Jon Morgan

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

The theatre's operator is carrying out similar works across their other venues around the country and we have provided comment on a number of these.

The rationale and benefits of upgrading the theatre's wireless infrastructure have been clearly outlined. There is a general operational and customer service need for functional wifi services, for example to operate sales terminals effectively, for audiences to be able to access and purchase services, and for staff to be able to communicate. Significantly it will also facilitate improved hearing assistance technology and audio captioning.

With reference to paragraph 208 of the NPPF (2023), whilst there will be some limited harm arising from additional installations we consider the public benefits of enhancing provision for audiences with hearing and sight impairments as well as general operational improvements for the theatre and its productions mitigates this.

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 this representation in greater detail.



Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Adviser

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

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

Facebook @theatres.trust **Instagram** @TheatresTrust

Chair Dave Moutrey OBE

Director Jon Morgan

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