

# Theatres fit for the **future**



Ref.: TC/2264

26 February 2025

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**Application:** 24/00844/FUL

**Site:** Morecambe Winter Gardens And 214 Marine Road Central Morecambe  
Lancashire LA4 4BU

**Proposal:** Relevant demolition of former substation, erection of a part two/part three storey side extension, installation of replacement of windows, doors and stage door to rear elevation and widening of existing opening and installation of a new door to side elevation

## **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:**

### **Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

**Telephone** 020 7836 8591 **Email** [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk) **Website** [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk) **Twitter** @TheatresTrust

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**Chair** Dave Moutrey OBE

**Director** Jon Morgan

**Trustees** Vicky Browning OBE, Anna Collins, James Dacre, Suba Das, Liam Evans-Ford, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Tracy Ann Oberman, Lucy Osborne, Saratha Rajeswaran, Truda Spruyt, Michèle Taylor MBE, Katie Town

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Thank you for consulting Theatres Trust on this application for planning permission at Morecambe Winter Gardens. It seeks to construct a side extension to provide much-needed WCs for the venue facilitated by the demolition of a redundant substation and the addition of new openings from the original building, with further additional alterations. There is a corresponding application for listed building consent.

The Winter Gardens is a Grade II\* listed heritage asset. It is a priority building for Theatres Trust as it is on our national Theatres at Risk register as well as being on Historic England's Heritage at Risk register. We are supportive of efforts by the Morecambe Winter Gardens Preservation Trust Limited to restore and fully reopen this important building.

We have been aware of this project for some time and provided comment to the applicant's design team as it was developed. We have also undertaken a site visit to the Winter Gardens in January 2023. These works will enable the return to use of the Circle level through providing the requisite means of escape and WCs to support a higher audience capacity. Accessibility provision will also be improved through an evacuation lift which will provide access to upper levels. This constitutes an important element of the wider vision and masterplan.

We have no objection to the removal and demolition of the existing sub-station, the re-location of a gas meter or the removal of temporary fencing and temporary cabins installed under a 2022 consent. These are later additions which we consider lacks significance and which do not contribute to the special interest and setting of the Winter Gardens and wider conservation area.

Similarly, whilst there are to be new openings towards the southern end of the eastern elevation these are largely concealed within the proposed extension. The fire door to the centre of that elevation will be replaced and widened; there is a functional necessity for this alteration to provide adequate egress and as this elevation is more utilitarian in character the impact can be considered neutral. That is also the case for the replacement fire doors either side of the southern elevation.

The side extension is a substantial new addition. This will provide much-needed additional WCs at ground and first floor levels including an accessible WC at both levels, as well as a lift which will make the circle and parts of the upper circle level accessible. This is welcomed. The need for these facilities is clearly set out within the supporting documents. We consider the external design, materials and massing of the extension to be of sufficient quality given the significance of the Winter Gardens. Impact is also minimised through location of the extension to the south-east corner of

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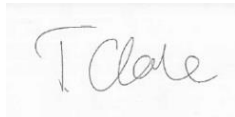
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the building which is not visible from the more sensitive front elevation and is partially concealed when viewed from Bath Street/Northumberland Street.

We consider this scheme has made effective use of the current budget available. Should opportunities for additional funding come forward it could be advantageous for the second floor to be extended beyond the lift and plant to provide further WCs to serve the upper circle.

This project is an important step in supporting the future development of the Winter Gardens and eventually having it removed as an asset at risk. We are supportive of the granting of planning permission.

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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