

Ref.: TC/1074

14 August 2026

Holly Sharpley  
Pending Applications  
Development Planning  
City of Westminster  
PO Box 732  
Redhill  
RH1 9FL

By e-mail: [southplanningteam@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:southplanningteam@westminster.gov.uk)

**Application:** 26/04692/LBC

**Site:** 49 Aldwych London WC2B 4DF

**Proposal:** The replacement of the raked stage, enhancing sight lines to seating, and associated physical changes to the stage/back of house area.

## **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:**

Thank you for consulting Theatres Trust on this application for listed building consent at the Aldwych Theatre. It seeks to undertake internal alteration to the stage, with

### **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)

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

**Chair** Dave Moutrey OBE

**CEO** Joshua McTaggart

**Trustees** Vicky Browning OBE, Anna Collins, James Dacre, Liam Evans-Ford, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson OBE, Louisa Harris, Mark Johnston, Adam Knight, Tracy Ann Oberman MBE, Lucy Osborne, Saratha Rajeswaran, Michèle Taylor MBE, Katie Town

The Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund supports the work of The Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697

additional associated works arising from that.

The Aldwych is a Grade II listed designated heritage asset which opened in 1905, designed by renowned theatre architect W.G. Sprague. Architecturally it features a fine stone-faced classical façade built on a corner plot as a symmetrical twin to the Novello Theatre (formerly the Strand Theatre) with the slightly later Waldorf Hotel sitting between them. It features three major bays each of four storeys plus a sheer attic over the main entablature. The two outer bays, facing Aldwych and Drury Lane respectively, display a giant order of engaged columns through second and third floors, carrying pediments with enriched tympana pierced by lunettes at attic level. The centre bay is recessed and turns the corner as a bold pilastered bow. Internally it saw alteration within the auditorium between the 1960s and 1980s but has since been restored to Sprague's original design. The Aldwych is a notable venue within London's West End 'Theatreland' cluster which hosts high-profile productions. It therefore makes a significant contribution to this area's offer and attractiveness which attracts high numbers of visitors into the city.

We recently commented in support of another application for listed building consent (and planning permission) at this theatre for extension of its fly tower. This proposal is related to that in that it is being brought forward for similar purposes; the Aldwych is finding itself unable to meet the needs of modern shows and producers. Whereas the fly tower scheme is to address a lack of loading capacity meaning the theatre is currently constrained in what shows can be accepted, the raked stage is also problematic and unattractive to producers and not suited to modern shows. This means that currently the stage can be boarded over depending on the needs of different shows which is inefficient. As before, in the longer term this is not sustainable and will compromise the theatre's viability. There have been similar works to remove stage rakes at other theatres both within the West End and elsewhere around the UK in recent years.

We have been engaged on these plans and other works by the applicant. The need for this intervention is understood and supported. The replacement stage will provide greater flexibility to meet the needs of different shows, which will support the venue's attractiveness and ensure it continues to receive the shows that audiences demand. Whilst this constitutes less than substantial harm it is considered necessary, and with reference to paragraph 215 of the NPPF (2024) there is public benefit in supporting ongoing operation and conservation of this important asset.

## **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)

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

**Chair** Dave Moutrey OBE

**CEO** Joshua McTaggart

**Trustees** Vicky Browning OBE, Anna Collins, James Dacre, Liam Evans-Ford, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson OBE, Louisa Harris, Mark Johnston, Adam Knight, Tracy Ann Oberman MBE, Lucy Osborne, Saratha Rajeswaran, Michèle Taylor MBE, Katie Town

The Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund supports the work of The Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697

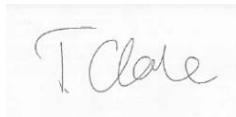
Arising from this is a need to move a back of house doorway backwards to provide steps to/from the new stage level. This results in a low degree of less than substantial harm, which is necessary to support the core intervention of adjusting the stage.

Due to the stage being at an adjusted level, this affects sightlines within the auditorium. To address this there is a need for related alteration to floor levels within the stalls. This will be achieved by building up over the existing floor with timber and then inserting the existing seats into this. This will have little impact on the significance of the auditorium and is a reversible change. It is necessary to ensure audiences continue to have a good experience when attending shows.

The get-in lift will also be altered. Due to the current stage rake this is suspended above the floor with a drop-down. The lift's loading capacity will be increased through removal and replacement of steel beams. The overall appearance of the lift will be the same, and there are significant operational benefits because it will make get-ins and get-outs more efficient.

We therefore support 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 Manager

## 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)

**X** @TheatresTrust **Facebook** [@theatres.trust](https://www.facebook.com/theatres.trust) **Instagram** [@TheatresTrust](https://www.instagram.com/TheatresTrust)

**Chair** Dave Moutrey OBE

**CEO** Joshua McTaggart

**Trustees** Vicky Browning OBE, Anna Collins, James Dacre, Liam Evans-Ford, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson OBE, Louisa Harris, Mark Johnston, Adam Knight, Tracy Ann Oberman MBE, Lucy Osborne, Saratha Rajeswaran, Michèle Taylor MBE, Katie Town

The Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund supports the work of The Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697