

Design & Access and Historical Impact Statement

For

Proposed Advertising application

At

Phoenix Theatre, London

110 Charing Cross Road,
London
WC2H 0JP

Prepared by:

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On behalf of:

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1 Introduction

The Design & Access and Historical impact Statement has been prepared in support of an advertising application. This will be submitted by MJ Consulting on behalf of the client.

This report shall seek to identify those elements of the Phoenix theatre, London which are of historic importance and consider the impact which the proposed application will have on those elements.

Historic importance should not be considered only in Architectural terms but also extend to encompass the social significance of the building in the locality. Similarly, it should not be assumed that the impact of all works will be detrimental to the historic significance of the building. There is potential for much which may be beneficial to the long term future and appreciation of the historically valued elements of this building.

2 Building Listing

Overview

Heritage Category: Listed Building

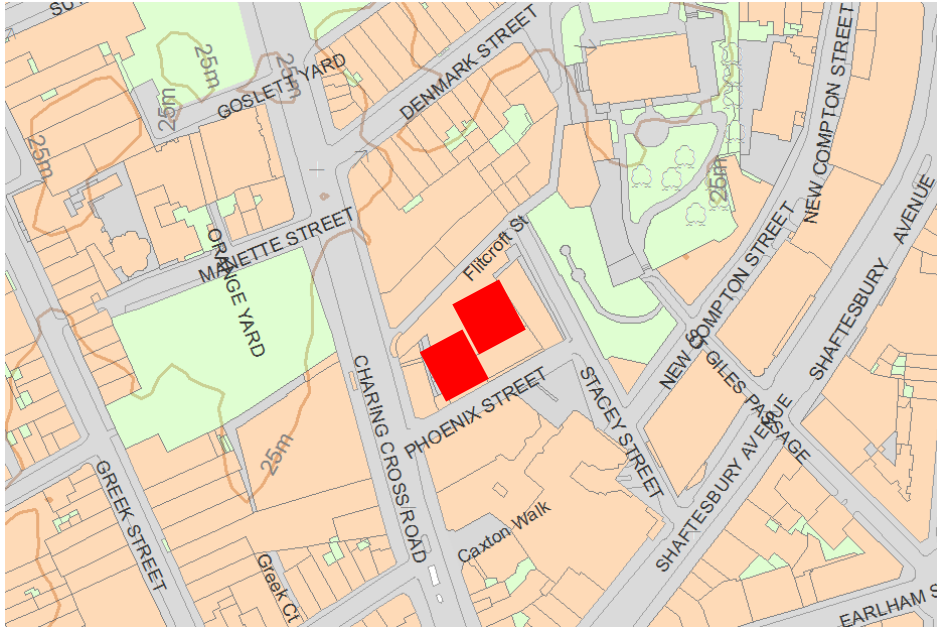
Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1242926

Date first listed: 23-Oct-1973

Statutory Address: Phoenix Theatre, Charing Cross Road

Map



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The above map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale.

Location

Statutory Address: Phoenix Theatre, Charing Cross Road
The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.
District: Camden (London Borough)
Parish: Non Civil Parish
National Grid Reference: TQ 29908 81178

Details

TQ2981SE798-1/104/197

CAMDEN, CHARING CROSS ROAD (East side), Phoenix Theatre

23/10/73

GVII

Theatre. 1929-30. By Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, Cecil Masey & Bertie Crewe. For Sydney Bernstein. Interior by Theodore Komisarjevsky. Stucco with brick and stone. EXTERIOR: facades to Charing Cross Road and Phoenix Street. Charing Cross Road facade on a curved corner with Corinthian columns from 1st to 2nd floors, curved entablature, attic storey with 7 deeply recessed rectangular lights and enriched architraves, those at right and left projecting. Cornice and pantiled roof. Ground floor has 2 pairs of enriched 2-leaf doors, each with 14 bevelled lights. Facade to Phoenix Street ground floor has 3 pairs of enriched 2-leaf doors, each with bevelled lights and decorative fanlights, recessed between decorative metal grilles, to either side of which timber panelled 2-leaf doors recessed in brick architraves. Continuous metal balcony at first floor level. Central feature of stone with 3 round-headed windows, from 1st to 2nd floors, with moulded architraves on Ionic twisted columns and a balcony. To either side, fluted, paired pilasters. Above, a richly decorated entablature, modillioned cornice, blocking course and 4 brick dormers. Flanking this feature, in brick, at 1st floor level, 12-light metal casement windows with brick pediment over, at 2nd floor level, 12-light metal windows with brick lugged architrave. INTERIOR: of elaborate Renaissance design, both auditorium and foyer with painted panels by Vladimir Polunin. The elaborately painted safety curtain forms the fourth wall of the auditorium decoration and is a key part of the composition. HISTORICAL NOTE: the interior decoration of this theatre, well-preserved, anticipates Bernstein's patronage of Komisarjevsky and Polunin in his subsequent 'Granada' chain of cinemas.

Listing NGR: TQ2990881178

3 Overview of significant building work since initial construction

The **Phoenix Theatre** is a West End theatre in the London Borough of Camden, located in Charing Cross Road (on the corner of Flitcroft Street). The entrances are on Phoenix Street and Charing Cross Road. The Phoenix Theatre was built on the site of a former factory and then music hall Alcazar before.

Built for Sidney Bernstein, Baron Bernstein, the theatre was designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, Bertie Crewe and Cecil Massey. It has a restrained neoclassical exterior, but an interior designed in an Italianate style by director and designer Theodore Komisarjevsky. Vladimir Polunin copied works by Tintoretto, Titian, Pinturicchio, and Giorgione. It has a safety curtain that holds Jacopo del Sellaio's *The Triumph of Love*.

There are golden engravings in the auditorium, and red seats, carpets and curtains. This look is based on traditional Italian theatres. There are decorated ceilings and sculpted wooden doors throughout the building.

It opened on 24 September 1930 with the premiere of *Private Lives* by Noel Coward, who also appeared in the play, with Adrienne Allen, Gertrude Lawrence and Laurence Olivier. Coward returned to the theatre with *Tonight at 8.30*, a series of ten plays, in 1936 and *Quadrille* in 1952.

On 16 December 1969, the long association with Coward was celebrated with a midnight matinee in honour of his 70th birthday, and the foyer bar was renamed the *Noel Coward Bar*.

4 The Building setting, it's architectural/historic significance and impact on the heritage asset

The Phoenix has had a number of successful plays including Norman Ginsbury's *Viceroy Sarah* in 1935, and John Gielgud's *Love for Love* during the Second World War. *Harlequinade* and *The Browning Version*, two plays by Terence Rattigan, opened on 8 September 1948 at the theatre. In 1950, it staged Frederick Lonsdale's final play *The Way Things Go*.

In the mid-1950s, Paul Scofield and Peter Brook appeared at the theatre. In 1968, a musical version of Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* opened and ran for around two thousand performances. *Night and Day*, a 1978 play by Tom Stoppard, ran for two years.

The theatre hosted many musicals in the 1980s and 1990s, including *The Biograph Girl* with Sheila White, *The Baker's Wife* by Stephen Schwartz directed by Trevor Nunn, and *Into the Woods* by Stephen Sondheim, starring Julia McKenzie. There were also a number of plays by William Shakespeare. Its first pantomime was *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* starring Dana in 1983.

The production of *Blood Brothers*, the Willy Russell musical that transferred from The Albery Theatre in November 1991, ended a 21-year run on 10 November 2012 after becoming the longest-running production at the theatre. Following limited engagements of *Goodnight Mr Tom* and *Midnight Tango*. The theatre then played host to the original West End production of Broadway musical *Once*, which opened in April 2013 and closed on 21 March 2015.

Bend it Like Beckham: The Musical, *Guys and Dolls* and *The Last Tango* played in 2016, with *Dirty Dancing* and *Peppa Pig's Surprise* comprising the 2016 Christmas season.

The Girls, a musical by Gary Barlow and Tim Firth based on *The Calendar Girls* film, played at the Phoenix Theatre with previews from 28 January 2017, and officially opened on 21 February 2017. The production closed on 15 July 2017.

Chicago the Musical opened at the Phoenix Theatre on 11 April 2018, starring Cuba Gooding Jr. as Billy Flynn, Sarah Soetaert as Roxie Hart, Josefina Gabrielle as Velma Kelly, and Ruthie Henshall as Mama Morton. A cast change saw Martin Kemp take over the role of Billy



Flynn, with Alexandra Burke as Roxie Hart, Mazz Murray as Mama Morton. Denise Van Outen was due to take over as Velma Kelly however a foot injury meant that Josefina Gabrielle returned to the role. The show closed on 5 January 2019.

In June 2018, it was announced that the hit Broadway musical *Come from Away* would transfer to the Phoenix, which it did in February 2019. The production closed on 7 January 2023. The theatre's next production will be *Noises Off*, starring Felicity Kendall, Jonathan Coy, Matthew Kelly, and Tracy-Ann Oberman, from 19 January to 11 March 2023.

The theatre is owned by the Ambassador Theatre Group. Since 1973 it has been a Grade II Listed Building.

5 MJC Background and Experience

MJC work nationwide within the theatre/music industry undertaking complex building surveying and structural works. They have significant experience of undertaking works in a way which is sympathetic to the historical significance of many of the buildings in which they operate whilst incorporating modern equipment and facilities essential for the ongoing operation of the buildings and the increasing demands put on those buildings, and from that protecting the revenue streams essential in the protection of the Historic Asset.

A full list of previous works and experience can be provided upon request.

6 Design and Access Statement/Improvements in design and accessibility

The design and access statement covers both the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the proposed development and how issues relating to access to the development have been dealt with and resolved.

The purpose of the work is to utilise the existing poster boxes/framing and insert new show related signage.

The Charing Cross Road entrance (rotunda) is to have new show related signage strapped to the existing columns. A new curved 3D built light box letters approximate largest size 813(H) x 388(W)mm and the smallest 345(H) x 230(W)mm fixed to a black background comprising of 3mm thick diabond aluminium sheeting with rear lighting around the perimeter. The two high level vertical posters, either side of the columns, are to receive 3D figures coming away from the dibond with halo lights behind.

The high level Phoenix projected sign is to receive neon lettering to one face only, 'Welcome to Hawkins'.

The existing fascia along Charing Cross Road is to receive show related graphics.

The high level corner sign on Charing Cross/Phoenix Street junction is to receive show related signage with 3D figure and letters with halo light behind.

The existing entrance canopy on Phoenix Street is to receive a 3D built lightbox lettering below the existing neon Phoenix Theatre sign. A new window transfer showing a shadowy figure is to be installed on the inside face of the glazed window at high level. Existing fascia and poster boxes to the entrance on Phoenix Street to receive new show related signage.

Accessibility

Due to the heights of the main rotunda sign/lettering and the existing side posters to the Rotunda elevation, a small cherry picker would be advisable for the installation. Also to the existing corner poster to Phoenix Street. The canopy is accessible from a simple tower scaffold. The works are essential in upgrading the structural stability, facilities and safety for the venue users and staff, as well as facilitating enjoyment of this historic asset.

7 Conclusion

The Charing Cross Road entrance could be considered the most architecturally pleasing elevation of the building. The proposed sign denoting the current show production is to be fixed to the columns using existing fixings with the addition of new fixings of the same design, which have been designed to be removable and cause no lasting damage to the columns. The fixings allow for the signs to be installed without obscuring the entire view of the elevation. The canopy along Charing Cross Road and Phoenix Street is to have new show inserts. The canopy itself is situated along an elevation with no significant historical value, with shops to the ground floor and residential flats above. The Phoenix Street entrance has a slightly different style to the Charing Cross Road entrance. The elevations boast ornate column design between the windows and more ornate iron work. The proposed signage to this elevation is to remain within the extents of the existing canopy sign and poster boxes. Thus ensuring the overall size doesn't become too large it begins to obscure the façade behind.

The proposed concept in this application aims to furnish The Phoenix Theatre, Charing Cross Road and Phoenix Street with new signs to allow the patrons to appreciate the current show. The proposals also enhance the patrons' experiences of the beautiful theatre.

Appendix A: Existing drawing references

3622-001 Site location plan
3622-002 Existing Front (Rotunda) elevation
3622-003 Existing Charing Cross elevation
3622-004 Existing Phoenix Street elevation
3622-005 Proposed Front (Rotunda) elevation
3622-006 Proposed Charing Cross Road elevation
3622-007 Proposed Phoenix Street elevation
3622-008 Proposed Rotunda elevation, section and fixing details
3622-009 Proposed visualisations for the main entrance
3622-010 Proposed visualisations for the side entrance

Appendix B: Existing photos of external theatre elevations



Existing main front elevation showing rotunda



Existing Charing Cross Road elevation



Existing Phoenix Street side elevation