

Protecting theatres  
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Ref.: TC/1097

23 May 2023

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**Application:** 2023/1415/L

**Site:** Ambassadors Theatre West Street London WC2H 9ND

**Proposal:** Alterations to entrance door threshold facing Tower Court with new matching marble central infill sloped to provide level access.

**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 Ambassadors Theatre. It seeks alterations to its main entrance to provide level

**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** Paul Cartwright, James Dacre, Suba Das, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Lucy Osborne, Jane Spiers, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

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access. These works are associated with a wider project at the theatre which has encompassed other applications for which the Trust has provided comments of support. We have undertaken a site visit.

The theatre has been inaccessible to wheelchair users and this is something the project has addressed, implementing lift access from converted space within the foyer area to the rear of the stalls along with an accessible WC. However, there is a small level change between the pavement and the foyer marked by a marble step around the entry threshold. Without some intervention the theatre would remain without accessibility to wheelchair users.

Therefore it is proposed that the marble step is altered to provide access. This will be achieved through replacing the current central section of marble with a new ramped piece with an acceptable gradient for wheelchair users.

Whilst loss of fabric is regrettable, this intervention is considered to be the only practical means of making the building accessible. Making the theatre accessible constitutes a substantial public benefit. Furthermore all users entering through the same means constitutes best practice, and as cited in previous comments the lift which is just inside the foyer behind the box office is likely located in the optimum position and minimises internal harm.

The applicant has set out why adaption of the existing marble is not possible. Temporary ramping over the marble is also not desirable from a highways perspective due to the obstruction it would create to the pavement. The current marble has also demonstrably suffered deterioration. We consider the design approach to be acceptable.

On balance we consider the public benefits associated with making the theatre accessible outweigh the less-than-substantial harm arising through loss of fabric. Therefore we 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 Adviser

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