

Heritage Statement

Temporary Scaffold Signage Dominion Theatre

1. This statement supports an application for advertisement consent to display show signage on the scaffold that is required to install the signage approved by 2024/145/L. That show begins in October and two intervening shows have been booked from 22nd August to 21st September.
2. A summary of the history and significance of the Dominion is contained in Appendix 1.
3. In accordance with paragraph 200 of the NPPF the level of detail required in this statement is proportionate to the impact of the proposal.
4. The application does not involve any works to the listed building and the scaffold is related to approved works. The signs are in place for only 6 weeks.
5. The scaffold will obscure the façade of the theatre and as a consequence there will be no opportunity for show signage other than on the scaffold. It follows that as the theatre is obscured it is a moot point as to whether there is any direct impact on the appearance of the listed building by adding show signage to the scaffold compared to having it blank.
6. If there is no signage there will be no shows and the theatre would have to go dark with the knock on impact of the lack of revenue which safeguards the theatre and the wider impact on the vitality of the local cultural hub and on those employed in the theatre industry.
7. The signs enliven the scaffold and retain the character of the theatre in the local public realm where show signage has always made a significant contribution.
8. The main sign replicates the signage that would otherwise be visible on the façade of the theatre and the impact of the proposal is wholly positive since it safeguards the ability of the theatre to function as a theatre which would not be possible otherwise.

Appendix 1 : Significance of the Dominion

9. The history of The Dominion is well documented¹. Designed by W and TR Milburn and completed in 1929 it was built as a theatre and opened as such but was also designed with capacity to act as a super cinema as was popular at the time.
10. A key significance of the Dominion is its large capacity and spaciousness. With 2,835 seats on opening it became one of the largest theatres of the time alongside Drury Lane 2,600 and the Lyceum 2,891. In the late 1950's the balcony was blocked off (now studio space) reducing the capacity to 2,000 but even so it continues to be one of only five London commercial theatres with more than 2,000 seats; Drury Lane, Palladium, Lyceum and Apollo Victoria.
11. Initially the Dominion failed to gain traction as a theatre and was mainly a cinema from 1930 to the 1980's. It was sold to Gaumont in 1933 as a cinema and although occasional live shows took place in the late 1950's and 70's and 80's by the time it was listed in 1988 it had been used as a cinema for more than 50 years.
12. With cinema audiences declining the renewed attempts to stage live performances from 1981 to 1990 met with only limited success and, by the end of this period, its future was in doubt with redevelopment as a hotel mooted by owners Rank. The listing in 1988 taking place amidst these threats.
13. The building was acquired by Apollo Leisure in 1990 who, in association with the current owners Nederlander, began a process to make the theatre a leading West End musical venue. It has since benefited from a number of successful productions and continuing investment in its restoration.
14. The Dominion's success as a theatre is therefore a relatively recent chapter in its history taking some 70 years to arrive in full.
15. The large capacity of the Dominion is a mixed blessing; it has a relatively unique ability to cater for large audiences in a spacious refurbished auditorium, but needs to attract the productions that fill it.
16. Over the period of its ownership Nederlander has invested in an extensive refurbishment of the building with a major restoration of the auditorium and facade in 2014 following the closure of We Will Rock You. It is generally acknowledged that the building is now in the best decorative state that it has ever been post-war.
17. As one of the largest houses (and with even more capacity available) it has the ability to house the largest shows and the aim is to ensure that it can continue to do so. The sheer size of the Dominion means that this is a fundamental commercial requirement but equally important for safeguarding the listed building as there is no more secure way of doing that than having the theatre operating successfully at full capacity in a fully refurbished condition. It also sustains the contribution the Dominion makes to the success of the West End as a premier location for musical theatre and to the range of venues in Camden.

¹ References the listing cites 'The Architect and Building News' in 4th October, (1929) and 'Architects Journal' in 2nd October, (1929). A comprehensive history is given at [ArthurLloyd.co.uk/Dominion Theatre](http://ArthurLloyd.co.uk/DominionTheatre), and in Gaumont British Cinemas by Allen Eyles.