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Phoenix Theatre

Design & Access with Heritage Statement

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Fig 1. External Elevation

Job no: 618

Design & Access with Heritage Statement

Foster Wilson Architects LLP

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This design and access statement supports a listed building consent application for the refurbishment of the existing washroom at upper circle level. The refurbishment will consist of new flooring, sanitary ware, cubicles, duct panel system and finishes. New Led lighting and water saving taps will also be implemented to improve the energy efficiency of the theatre washrooms. The works will not effect the rest of the building and will have a positive impact on the general appearance and accessibility of the facilities.

Foster Wilson Architects (FWA) were commissioned by Ambassador Theatre Group (ATG) to submit this application on behalf of the venue.

2.0 Documents

- 2.1 This Design & Access Statement is to be read in conjunction with the following documents:

618.00.00 Location/Site Plan & Block plan

01 Existing Basement Plan
02 Existing Stalls Plan
03 Existing Street Level Plan
04 Existing Dress Circle Plan
05 Existing Upper Circle Lower Plan
06 Existing Upper Circle Top Plan
07 Existing Fourth Floor & Roof Plan

00 105 Existing/ Demo Stalls Washroom 01

00 200 Proposed washroom plan

22 600 Proposed Drylining Detail
22 600 Proposed Washroom Door Detail
32 601 Proposed Cubicle Door Detail
43 600 Proposed Wall, Floor and Step Details
74 603 Proposed Standard WC Type 02
74 604 Proposed Ambulant WC Type 02
74 605 Proposed Enlarged WC Type 02
74 606 Typical Wheelchair Accessible WC
74 607 Proposed Standard WC Type 03
74 610 Proposed Vanity Type 01 Details
74 611 Proposed Vanity Type 02 Detail
74 612 Proposed General Setting Out
74 613 Proposed General Setting out
74 620 Proposed Urinal Types 01 & 02

Other documents forming part of this submission:

Heritage statement

3.0 History & Significance

- 3.1 The Phoenix theatre is a Grade II listed designated heritage asset. Listed Building Consent is sought to replace the existing washroom finishes at Dress Circle level including floor finish, cubicles, tiles and paint with new finishes to update the washroom decor.

Theatre Trust Entry as follows

<https://database.theatrust.org.uk/resources/theatres/show/2025>

This is one of the London theatres built in the curiously productive theatre-building year of 1930. It was commissioned by Sidney L Bernstein as a dedicated theatre 'free from any restrictive policy'.

The extraordinary list of credits for the design calls for examination. Sir Giles Gilbert Scott designed the entrance corner facing Charing Cross Road and this may well have been his only contribution (apart from his name, which gave the project a touch of class). It is doubtful whether he even acted as aesthetic arbiter. Crewe provided the first designs submitted in 1926 and 1928. He was near the end of his career but his name on the drawings would have been recognised and respected by the London County Council Theatres Section Officers as indicating a safe pair of hands in charge. Revised designs submitted in 1929 and 1930 bore the names of both Crewe and Masey and it seems fairly certain that Masey (who had worked in Crewe's office early in the century) had by this time become lead architect.

Masey, who was already working for Bernstein on the rising generation of Granada super cinemas, left the decorative design of his interiors to stars in this field. The Phoenix has delightful interiors by Theodor Komisarjevsky in free but well-studied Renaissance styles using plaster modelling, rich colours and mirror-reflected views. This interior is identified by Allen Eyles as the key precursor to the most sumptuous of the 1930s Granada designs like those at Tooting and Woolwich.

The theatre is unusual in a number of ways. The site has frontages to Charing Cross Road and Phoenix Street, both making architectural statements and both seeming to compete for the status of the principal entrance front. The Charing Cross Road façade, on a curved corner, has a loggia with four giant columns above the canopy and is topped by an attic with square windows. The main entrance is in Phoenix Street, with a more freely treated two-storey, three-bay arcade with twisted columns.

The lively and colourful auditorium with figure-painted panels by Vladimir Polunin in the attic over boxes is now (2004) showing signs of age and interference but merits careful restoration as one of Komisarjevsky's most significant surviving works. The splendidly painted safety curtain by Polunin ('The Triumph of Love', after Del Sellaio) is also in need of tender loving care. It is a rare and important work of theatrical art in its own right.

4 Design

The current layout has 6 cubicles and a waiting area with two chairs and a table. The proposed works will add one ambulant cubicle and an enlarged cubicle with baby changing facilities to bring the total number of cubicle to eight.

4.1 Flooring

The current flooring is a non-slip vinyl system however it has become worn over time and

needs replacing to improve the overall appearance of the washrooms.

The Proposed floor covering will be non-slip vinyl tiles in dark grey with stone effect. The slip resistance will match current flooring and will comply with building regulations.

4.2 Decoration

The current finishes are light grey painted plaster. The ceiling is painted white.

The proposed finishes are green glazed tiles to the lower half of the wall and bathroom grade eggshell in dark grey. The ceiling will be painted white.

4.3 Cubicles & Duct Panels

The current cubicles have solid three quarter height partitions with stained timber doors. The current duct panel system is light gray with a single flush leaver.

These will be replaced with new partitions, Doors, Pilasters and duct panel system. The new cubicles will be made of a high pressure wood effect laminate system. The vanity units will be wood effect laminate to match the cubicles with a Quartz (marble effect) vanity counter with inset sinks

4.4 Sanitary Ware.

The current sanitary ware is white ceramic. The hand wash sinks have hand turn mixer taps.

The proposed sanitary ware will be white ceramic. The hand wash sinks will have sensor taps with auto shut off.

4.5 Lighting

The current lighting is a circular surface mounted light fitting.

The proposed lighting is a recessed LED light fitting with intumescent cover.

4.6 Doors

The current door is stained timber with brass push plate and door closer.

The current Washroom entrance door will be refurbished and painted grey with satin stainless steel ironmongery

4.7 Images of current finishes.



Fig 2. Existing Vanity Unit



Fig 3. Existing Cubicles



Fig 4. Existing Window



Fig 5. Existing Door To Washroom



Fig 6. Existing Vanity Unit

5 Access

5.1 Washrooms

The proposed changes will not impact on the running of the theatre and will improve accessibility when completed.

6 Heritage statement- Produced by John Earl

6.1 The Phoenix is an active West End playhouse and musical house of special architectural or historic interest, listed at Grade II but, in my opinion, worthy of upgrading to II*. It was designed by an architectural team effectively led by Cecil Masey, with art decorations by Theodore Komisarjevsky. Completed in 1930, it is owned today by a company whose whole business is concerned with the running of theatres and whose commitment to theatre activity and the care of theatre buildings is demonstrated in the West End of London and across the country.

6.2 The cultural significance of the building centres on its architectural and historic character as a well-preserved example of a mid-twentieth century addition to the world's densest concentration of active theatres, known as West End Theatreland. Its interior is of outstanding quality and, so far as West End theatres are concerned, unique.

6.3 1930 was the peak year of the extraordinary 'little boom' in theatre building that gave London's West End eleven new theatres in barely seven years, starting with the Fortune in 1924 and ending with Saville, now a cinema, in 1931 (the 1937 Prince of Wales was a late rebuild). Sidney L Bernstein, for whom it was built, said that it had been designed 'with historical traditions in mind emphasising those elements of luxury and comfort peculiar to the architecture of the Italian Renaissance princes'.

6.4 The multiple authorship of the Phoenix (Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, Bertie Crewe, Cecil Masey and Theodore Komisarjevsky) reads dangerously like a recipe for architectural disaster but, in fact, the division of labour was clear cut and perfectly workable.

6.5 Theodore Komisarjevsky's was the creative mind for the interior as it was for the great Bernstein Granada cinemas that were to follow. The Phoenix was one of his first such works and here, as with the best of his Granadas, he worked with the painter Vladimir Polunin.

6.6 The Phoenix is a delightful theatre. Komisarjevsky's free Renaissance decorative schemes, using plaster modelling, rich colours, and mirror-reflected views have a unifying effect throughout. It continues to serve modern audiences, remaining firmly in the use it was designed for and it has demonstrated in the thirteen year run of 'Blood Brothers' that it is highly suitable for modern musical theatre productions. Continuation of that use is the most effective way of ensuring its proper preservation.

6.4 Summary of Proposals and Justification.

Written by Foster Wilson Architects on behalf of the client ATG. The works, which are the subject of this application are:

Public washroom at upper circle level.

- Removal of all existing finishes and fittings
- New finishes- Tiles, flooring, paint and lighting
- New colour scheme
- New lighting
- New cubicles and sanitary ware

The scheme proposes the removal of all fittings and refurbishment of the washrooms. Flooring is to be replaced and the space will be redecorated using a new colour scheme.

The refurbishment of the washrooms will improve the appearance and accessibility for the audience.

The works will have a minimal effect on the original fabric of the building and the parts to be stripped out are in areas of low significance.