

Ref.: TC/2028

30 May 2025

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Pending Applications
Development Planning
City of Westminster
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Application: 25/02995/LBC

Site: Wyndhams Theatre Charing Cross Road London WC2H 0DA

Proposal: Internal alterations including creation of a gender neutral WC; box A within the auditorium at rear stalls level; Replacement of the external door to the Stage Door entrance; and other associated works.

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'.

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

Telephone 020 7836 8591 **Email** info@theatrestrust.org.uk **Website** theatrestrust.org.uk

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Chair Dave Moutrey OBE

CEO Joshua McTaggart

Trustees Vicky Browning OBE, Anna Collins, James Dacre, Liam Evans-Ford, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson OBE, Tracy Ann Oberman, Lucy Osborne, Saratha Rajeswaran, Truda Spruyt, Michèle Taylor MBE, Katie Town

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Comment:

Thank you for consulting Theatres Trust on this application for listed building consent at Wyndham's Theatre. It seeks to undertake a number of internal alterations as well as replacement of the external stage door and works to the windows next to it which we have covered in our comments on the corresponding application for planning permission.

These are dealt with in turn.

'Box A'

Like many older theatres, Wyndham's suffered from poor accessibility arising from its layout and multiple changes of level. Previous works around ten years ago alleviated this by introducing an accessible entrance to this box along with an accessible WC. However, users of this box are otherwise isolated from the rest of the stalls and this makes assisting them problematic because the route is onto Charing Cross Road and back in through the newer entrance. Similarly the accessible WC can only be used by audiences in that box.

It is therefore proposed that the two rows of seating in front of the box will be rearranged with no net loss of seating in order to create an aisleway through to the box, and for the existing balustrade and column to be removed which provides a new route through into the box. This will enable staff and companions of wheelchair users to move more freely through the building, and to make the accessible WC available to other audiences who may require it.

Whilst removal of the column and balustrade will result in the loss of some decorative detailing, the design and layout of this area has evolved over time. Although this will further alter the rear of the stalls, with reference to paragraph 215 of the NPPF (2024) we consider the need and public benefits of this intervention to mitigate the harm generated.

Dress Circle WCs (female block)

Again, provision of sufficient WCs to meet needs is also a challenge within older theatres. Currently this block contains four cubicles. It is proposed that this will be reconfigured, which will provide a net gain of one additional WC which will be an ambulant cubicle. This block is of lesser significance and sensitivity, having been previously altered and with more modern fittings. We welcome efforts to improve WC provision and support this proposal.

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First floor WCs serving Royal Circle

Currently this block offers two cubicles for females. As with the Dress Circle block this area will be reconfigured and will now provide two cubicles but with self-contained hand basins. This will mean this block will become a gender neutral facility which increases flexibility; there is an existing female WC block at this level to the opposite side of the rear of the Royal Circle. Again, this area is not of significance and so there is no impact in heritage terms.

Cunard Bar

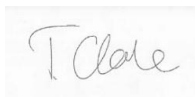
The Cunard Bar sits within a recess to the steps down to the stalls bar. It is used as a cloakroom and small sales or merchandising counter. This area is of significance, being part of the original main foyer and circulation route, although the overall decorative scheme is thought to date from the 1930s. The counter itself is a more modern insertion in mahogany which jars with the timber aesthetic surrounding it. It is proposed that the counter is removed to be replaced by a mobile sales unit. This will make this space more flexible and improve circulation. The detailing will match those of their surroundings, which can be considered a heritage benefit.

Stage door

There is a need to rearrange this area because currently it is too small and constrained and has sub-optimal function and security. It is of low significance in heritage terms. We therefore support the interventions proposed, including replacement of the non-original external door and re-glazing and re-setting of the windows. Those works have negligible impact on character and setting but improve function and security.

On the basis that we support each of these elements, we can in turn support the granting of listed building consent.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or should you wish to discuss these comments in further detail.



Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Adviser

Theatres Trust

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