

Ref.: TC/1863

1 July 2024

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By e-mail: planning@manchester.gov.uk

Application: 140106/LO/2024

Site: Opera House Quay Street Manchester M3 3HP

Proposal: Replacement of existing backlit and externally lit signage with new illuminated LED sign displays on the Quay Street elevations of the Opera House building.

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:

This application for listed building consent has come to the attention of Theatres Trust. It seeks the replacement of existing signage at the Opera House with digital

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

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

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Chair Dave Moutrey OBE

Director Jon Morgan

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

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signage.

Show signage and advertisements can be considered an integral element of the design and character of theatre buildings, as well as cinemas and other live performance venues. Historic images show there has long been signage in place at the Opera House and the nature of this has evolved over time.

The existing signage at the Opera House consists of a series of internally-lit poster boxes along the Quay Street elevation of varying dimensions. There is fascia signage along the central canopy with a large 'V' display projecting above. The large poster to the central bay of the main entrance has a lightbox either side. As is common, these are frequently altered with the various runs of shows which tour to the venue. In some instances the posterboards towards the sides advertise a range of upcoming shows whilst the signage along and above the canopy and around the main entrance generally promotes the current run.

This proposal will replace the five central posterboards around the main entrance with wall-mounted digital screens of similar dimension. The 'V' display above the canopy will also be replaced by a digital screen, again of similar dimension. Currently there are four posterboards towards the western end of the Quay Street elevation and one to the eastern end; under these proposals there will be just one symmetrically located either side of the building. These will also be digital.

Additionally, there will be a screen installed along Byron Street between the set of windows next to the Stage Door. This would appear to replace high-level show signage which has been displayed in recent years.

The principle of signage in these locations is already established. Digital screens constitute a modernisation of existing signage and have been installed at a number of other theatres and cultural venues, including many with statutory listing. They provide operational benefits for venues because it is easier to alter messages and tailor adverts to different audiences. They also support improved safety and working conditions because there is no need for manual change and working at height. In this instance we would contend there are heritage benefits because there is reduction and rationalisation of signage which will reveal a greater quantum of fabric.

If necessary the display and brightness of the screens, and the frequency of change of content, can be managed by condition.

We are supportive of the granting of listed building consent.

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Theatres fit for the **future**



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

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