



MANCHESTER OPERA HOUSE.

DESIGN, ACCESS AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

FOR THE REPAIR OF FAÇADE RENDER AND DECORATION



1.0 INTRODUCTION

This statement supports the application for repairs and replacement of corroded steel beams in the lower ground floor bar area and above a gated entrance of the Manchester Opera House and the installation of concrete pavement lights to the pavement along Byrom street.

This statement documents the key elements of the proposal in terms of design, access and heritage.

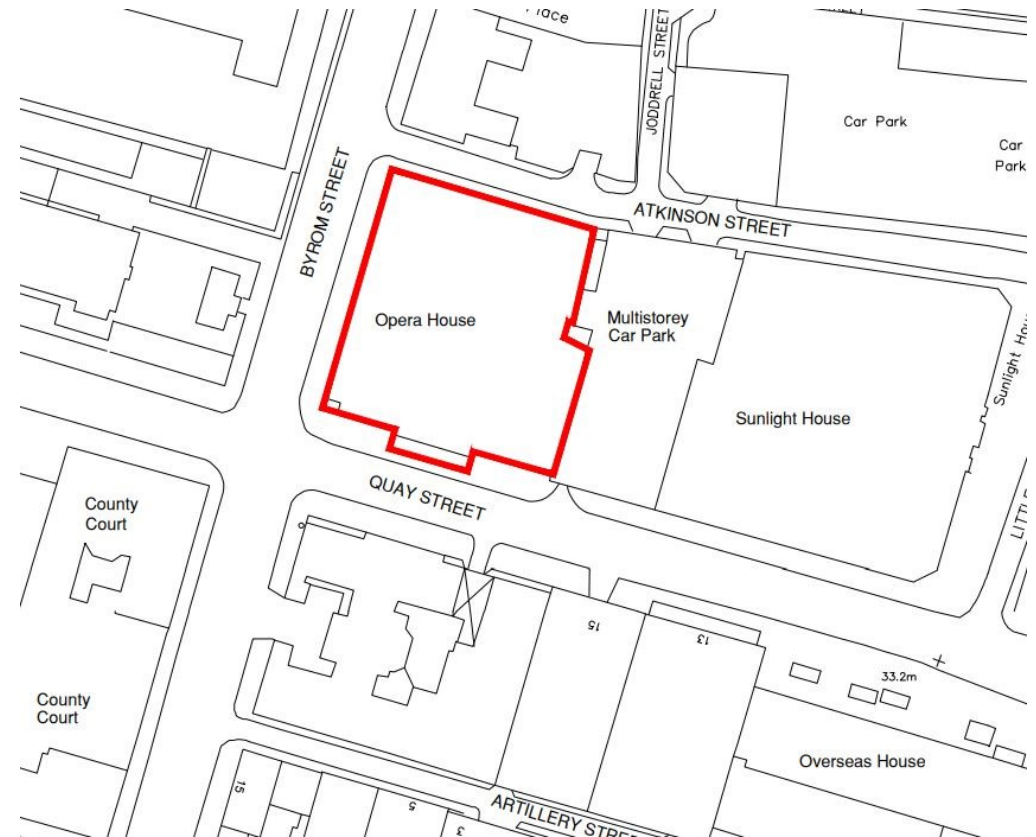
It will be used to support the application for Listed Building Consent and for a full planning application.

1.2 THE SITE

The site is located on Quay Street, Manchester. The frontage is more visible on the approach from the East. The recent addition of the Quay House development to the West has made the frontage less visible as the elevation of Quay house has moved further forward on the street than the previous building.

Permission has previously been granted as follows:

126635/LO/2020	06/07/2020	LISTED BUILDING CONSENT Repairs to external windows
118311/LO/2017	27/11/2017	LISTED BUILDING CONSENT Replacement of the Theatres Main Entrance Doors off the Quay Street Elevation
092689/LO/2010/C1	31/01/2013	LISTED BUILDING CONSENT for works to rooftop comprising installation of 2 no. new access ladders, installation of new edge protection, re-roofing of flat and pitched roofs and retention of existing edge protection
091693/FO/2009/C1	20/04/2010	Replacement of the existing external lighting units with 16 no. lighting units, 2 to be located on the Byrom Street elevation and the remainder on the Quay Street elevation
087679/LO/2008/C1	11/09/2008	LISTED BUILDING CONSENT for the installation of bird netting to 9 No. windows on front elevation



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2.0 HERITAGE -

When it first opened its doors, the venue was aptly named New Theatre. The venue celebrated its opening day on Boxing Day in 1912. The venue struggled to compete with other establishments in the area, and was consequently sold to United Theatre Ltd three years after its opening. After being sold, the venue was renamed New Queens Theatre.

Between 1916 and 1920, Sir Thomas Beecham performed on several occasions. In his honour, the theatre was renamed The Opera House in 1920.

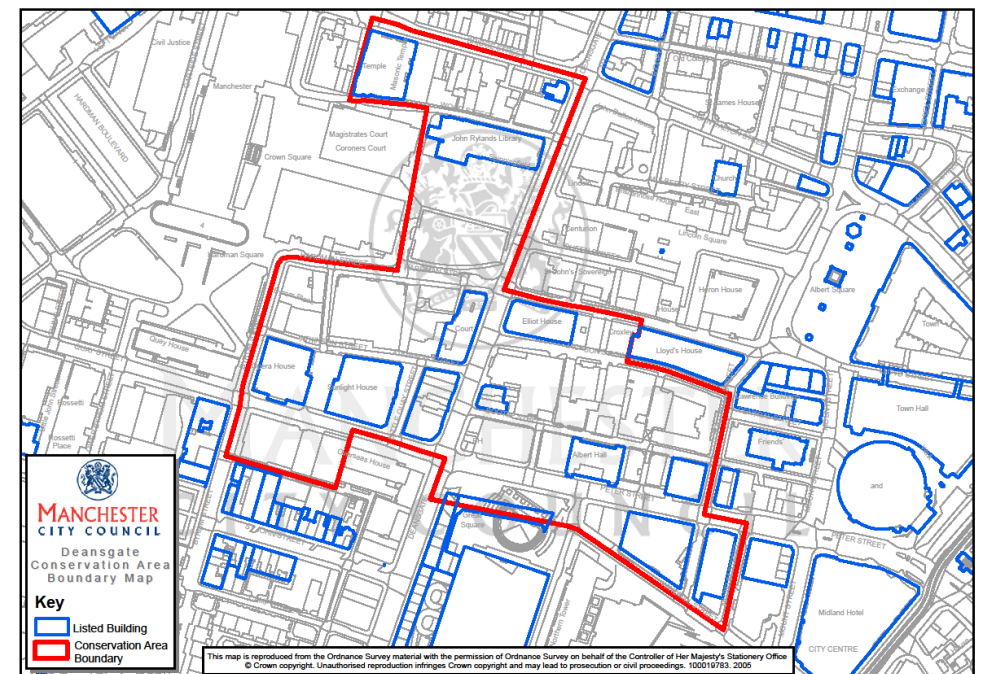
Throughout its history, the venue has adapted to the world around it. The Opera House survived the Second World War and even served as a cinema and bingo hall for some time. It wasn't until 1984 that the venue would once again operate as a theatre. Since this time, the theatre has played host to several famous shows, including Phantom of the Opera, Bar-nu-m and Oliver.

In 2003, the venue was refurbished and still continues to attract some of the best in entertainment.

The manchester Opera House has a very large auditorium with two cantilevered balconies, each with a capacity of around 500, but because of their size they have rather restricted sight-lines to the rear. The Theatre's current capacity is 1,920. The Theatre was bought by the Ambassador Theatre Group in November 2009

The Manchester Opera House features a 15 bay facade and was designed in the Classical style. A relief of a horse-drawn carriage is situated above the central bays. An entrance canopy was added during the 20th century.

The opera house features a seating capacity of 1,920. Two cantilevered, curved balconies inside of the auditorium hold 500 seats each. The spacious stage and orchestra pit makes the theatre a great venue for musicals and orchestral performances. The theatre's stage is 37 feet wide and 42 feet deep, and the orchestra pit can hold up to 80 musicians. Although the theatre was redecorated in March of 2011, the green and gold colour scheme inside of the auditorium was preserved.



The Opera house is situated on the edge of the Deansgate conservation area.

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2.1 HERITAGE - Significance

Significance

Construction as described in the listing, is of a classical style, the front block of three storeys with Attic 1:1:11:1:1 bays symmetrical, the first and last bays set back with plinth, banded rusticated stucco to all levels; giant order to first and second floors consisting of a five bay centre with engaged fluted ionic columns.

The first and fifth bays breaking forwards and each containing lettered pedestal at the foot and mask roundel at the top, flanked by three pilastered bay each side, these and the three centre bays having windows at the top with geometric glazing. There is an entablature with frieze letter "THE PLAY MIRRORS LIFE" in the centre and decorated in Wedgewood style in the other bays, dentilled cornice carried round and surmounted in the centre by a large semi-circular tympanum with allegorical relief.

There is a pedimental gable with moulded cornice on the brackets. At street level there is a five bay entrance at ground floor with canopy. The left side of the elevation is less ornate however the entablature extends to this elevation at the second floor level, forming the eaves detailing through without the Wedgewood styling. The plinth extends along the left elevation. The left elevation is divided into three bays with the first and last of banded stucco appearance, the central bay is mostly facing brick.

The inside of the theatre also holds much significance. The large auditorium has two very deep, slightly curved cantilevered balconies of approximately 500 seats each, which overhang to an excessive degree, evidence, perhaps, of the architect's unfamiliarity with theatre design, producing poor sight-lines at the rear and a feeling of oppressiveness.

The space between the balcony fronts and the stage is architecturally impressive. It displays an assured handling of Neo-Classical motifs. Flanking each side is a stack of superimposed boxes between pairs of giant fluted Corinthian columns. The upper boxes are a later insertion, following the removal of heavily-draped canopies over the dress-circle

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boxes. The balcony and box fronts are formed of enriched iron balustrading. Spanning between the entablatures over the giant columns is a deep, coffered segmental arch which forms the tympanum above the high rectangular proscenium, filled by a large circular medallion flanked by winged gryphons. The immensely high main ceiling, covering the full width and depth of the auditorium, is in the form of a coffered segmental tunnel vault.

The theatre is ingeniously planned to take maximum advantage of the site, with the stalls below street level and the main entrance foyer formed within the void of the first balcony - the

rear wall of the auditorium thus forming the wall of the street façade.

Architectural Significance

The Theatre once held a significant position on Quay St with land to the West of the site largely vacant affording better views of the front corner and side of the theatre from this approach. The photo opposite shows the vacant plot opposite to the West of the theatre.

Some sketches of the proposed Theatre, originally to be called His Majesty's Theatre, were published in the Academy Architecture and Architectural review of 1912, both long standing publications.

There is a consistent design to the windows within the primary front elevation of the theatre overlooking quay street. The windows are casement style windows with a cross detail formed by glazing bars. These decorative windows are in contrast to the Byrom Street elevation where plain sash windows are located. The inside of the windows have a decorative bead detail whilst the external frames are simple square section. The decoration hints that the upper areas may once have been accessible to the public although the

2.1 HERITAGE - Significance

historic plans of the building do not support this.

The principal and most decorative elevation of the theatre fronts on to Quay Street and is largely unchanged from the original building save for a new link extension to the right hand side forming an access onto the main road and housing a bar area above.

Internally the plan of the building again stays true to the original although uses of spaces has been adapted in some areas and decoration has been added and updated over the years, perhaps most significantly in the entrance foyer.

Historic photos of the building show that the main façade remains largely unchanged.

Some of the windows to the frontage have been altered particularly on the front West corner of the façade. The original decorative lights set above the canopy have also now been removed.

The Byrom Street elevation is more utilitarian in its appearance with decorative render reserved for the ground floor section only. Windows are simple non decorative sashes and walls above ground floor are finished with facing brick.

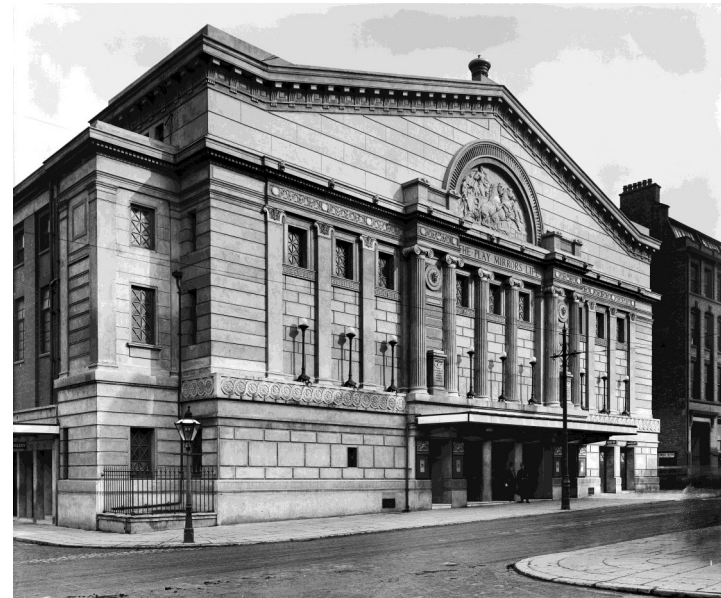
Historical Significance

The ERA reported on the opening of the New Theatre in their 4th of January 1913 edition saying:- 'After tremendous efforts to keep faith with its undertaking to open on Boxing Day, the New Theatre, Quay-street, Manchester, duly threw open its doors to the public for a matinee performance of "Kismet."

The reporting of the opening of a Manchester Theatre in the National publication shows the prominence of the building at the time of opening.

Today the building retains its original use as a theatre.

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2.2 HERITAGE - Development

Brief Summary of Architectural development

1912

The Opera House on Quay Street, Manchester was designed by Farquharson, Richardson & Gill and originally opened as the 'New Theatre' with a production of 'Kismet' on Boxing Day, the 26th of December 1912.

1915

The Theatre was renamed the New Queen's Theatre in 1915, as an homage to the former Queen's Theatres on Spring Gardens and Bridge Street.

1931

In 1931 the Theatre was bought by Howard & Wyndham Ltd, led by A. Stewart Cruikshank from its headquarters in the King's Theatre, Edinburgh.

1979

The Theatre was Manchester's main Touring House until 1979 when it closed and was converted for Bingo use but this lasted for only five years and in 1984 it was bought by the Palace Theatre Trust. During the 80's a large scale refurbishment of the Opera House was undertaken and some of the windows to the front elevation are believed to have been replaced during this time.

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2.3 HERITAGE - Listing Information.

HARVARD HOUSE

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1247470

Date first listed: 03-Oct-1974

Statutory Address: THE OPERA HOUSE, QUAY STREET

Location

Statutory Address:

THE OPERA HOUSE, QUAY STREET

District: Manchester (Metropolitan Authority)

National Grid Reference: SJ 83414 98041

Details

MANCHESTER

SJ8398 QUAY STREET 698-1/16/348 (North side) 03/10/74 The Opera House

GV II

Formerly known as: The New Theatre QUAY STREET. Theatre, now opera house. 1912, by Richardson and Gill with Farquarson; altered. Stucco on brick, slate roof. Rectangular plan at right-angles to street. Classical style. Front block of 3 storeys with attic, 1:1:11:1:1 bays, symmetrical, the first and last bays set back; with plinth, banded rusticated stucco to all levels; giant order to 1st and 2nd floors, consisting of a 5-bay centre with engaged fluted Ionic columns, the 1st and 5th bays breaking forwards and each containing a lettered pedestal at the foot and a mask roundel at the top, flanked by 3 pilastered bays each side, these and the 3 centre bays having windows at the top with geometric glazing; entablature with frieze lettered "THE PLAY MIRRORS LIFE" in the centre and decorated in Wedgwood style in the other bays, dentilled cornice carried round and surmounted in the centre by a large semi-circular tympanum with allegorical relief; pedimental gable with moulded cornice on brackets. Five-bay wide entrance at ground floor, with later C20 canopy.

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3.0 CONDITION

The front façade is currently looking tired and has areas of significant cracking. Paint decoration is dirty and there are areas that are peeling and flaking. To some of the decorative moulded sections render has cracked and fallen revealing some sections of exposed rebar.

Some analysis of the render was undertaken in 2021 by Manchester Building and Testing Laboratories Limited. A copy of the report is attached in Appendix A for information. In summary it was found that the existing render was a 1:6.6 mix cement sand render. Issues with the weak mix were further heightened by the fact that sand in the mix was very fine and poorly graded. The analysis suggests that this mix of render is particularly prone to shrinkage and debonding.

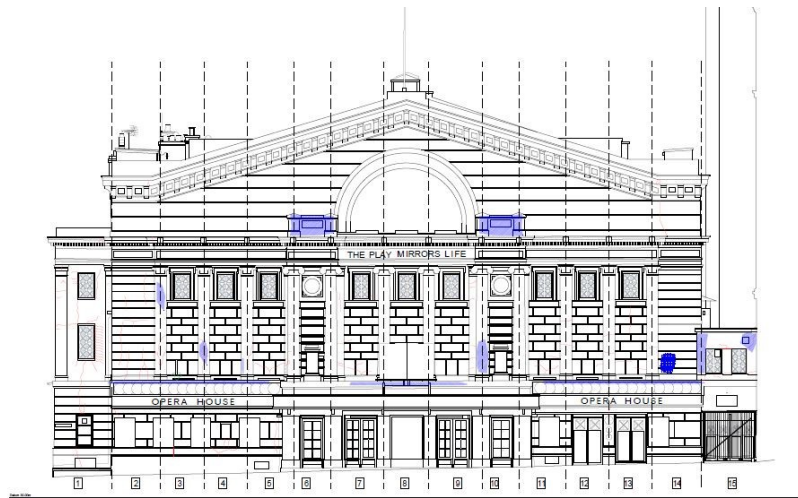
As well as the issues with the render mix it was also found that the render had higher than usual levels of sulphates which could be caused by water ingress through the façade render or elsewhere causing sulphates to be drawn out of the brickwork below. Sulphates can be seen in areas of internal damp on the rendered elevations although this is regularly cleaned down and decorated for aesthetics and day to day running of the theatre as a public space.



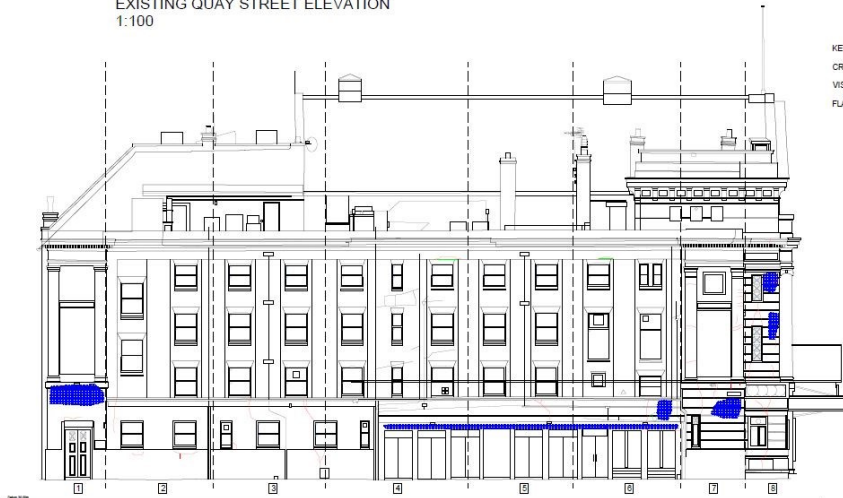
Example of current render condition

OSBORNES CHARTERED ARCHITECTS

The Balconies . Hanley Swan . Worcestershire . WR8 0DN



EXISTING QUAY STREET ELEVATION
1:100



EXISTING BYROM STREET ELEVATION
1:100

Whilst the majority of repairs are focused on the principal façade there are other areas that require additional attention including areas above door soffits on Byrom Street where render to lintels has failed and fallen in some instances.

Defects survey taken from street level. Visual inspection only.

4.0 REPAIRS

PROPOSALS

The majority of the proposed works is localised repair of the façade render. This will involve cutting back render where cracked or hollow and applying new render and decoration.

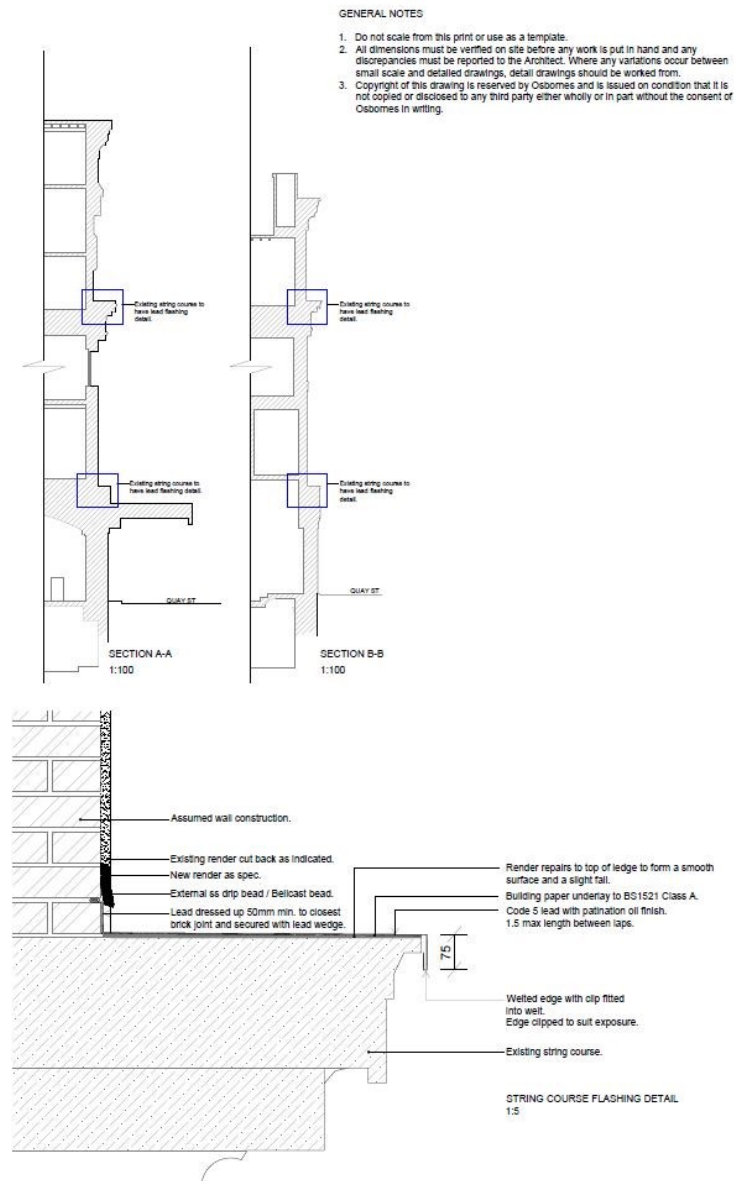
Due to the poor quality of the existing render and the fact that it is a sand:cement mix, it is proposed to replace render with a more breathable mix. The mix suggested would be a sand:cement:lime mix to provide greater breathability and elasticity to sections undergoing repair or replacement as identified on the elevation drawings.

To ensure consistency of render used it is proposed to use a pre bagged mix of Keim Universal render.

It is likely that over the next 10—20 years further repairs will be required to the façade and it is hoped that the more suitable render specification can be extended to undertake further repairs as required in the future.

Whilst the render repair is being undertaken it is also proposed that the detail to the string and cornice detail is improved to try and aid with some of the water ingress issues that are apparent to the front of the building. The projecting elements of the façade are currently poorly weathered with flat sections of render that have some plant growth and cracking where standing water is thought to be an issue. It is proposed in these areas to introduce a lead flashing detail to direct water away from the building and removal a vulnerable section of render. This detail is present on some other areas of the façade where the lead could be easily dressed into exposed brickwork.

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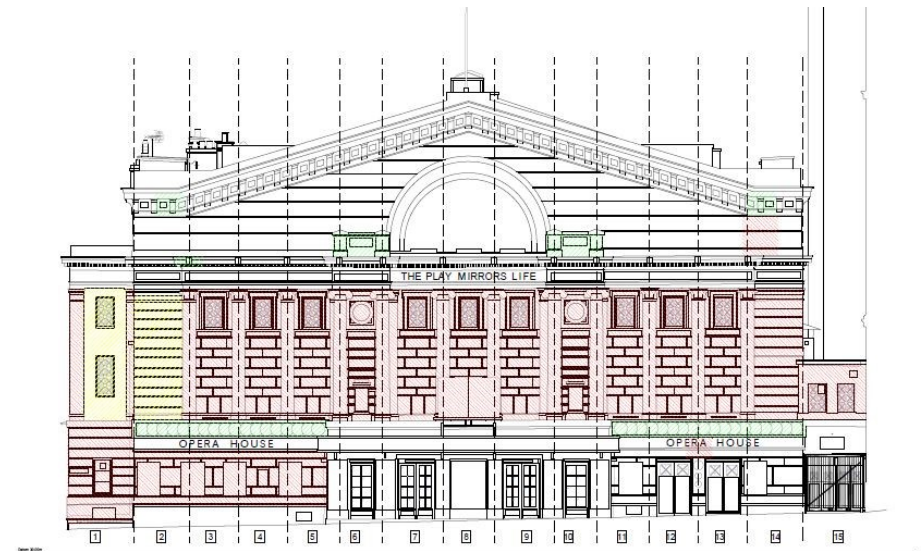


4.0 NEW WORKS

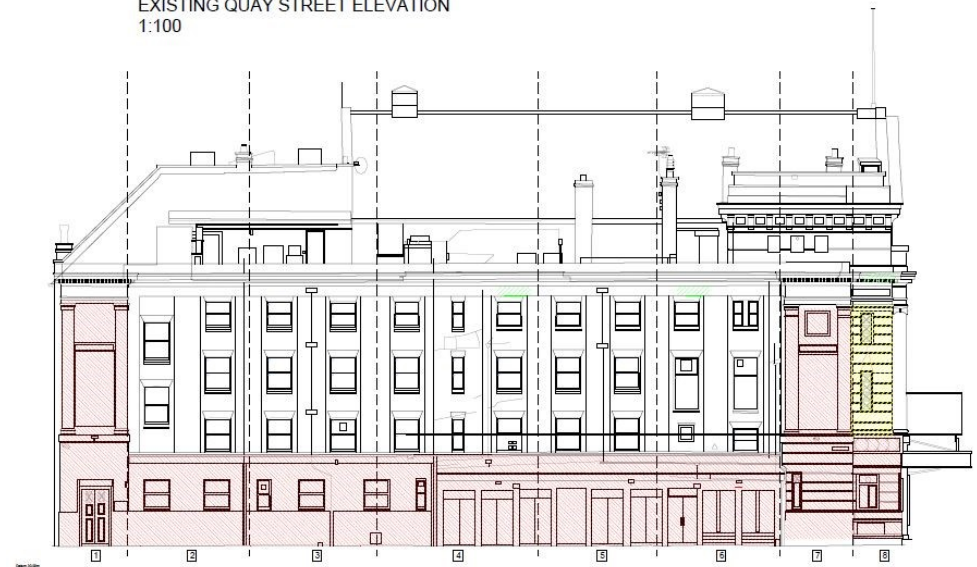
PROPOSALS

The drawings highlight that the front West corner of the building has the most issues with the render with a greater amount of cracking and delamination. In these areas it is proposed that the render is removed in its entirety and a new Keim Universal render is applied. The keim render should offer greater flexibility and uses mesh reinforcement within the render.

As with other areas of the façade it is proposed that the render is painted to match the existing colour scheme. It is proposed to use a Keim mineral paint to achieve better bonding with the substrate and also increased breathability to aid drying out of damp sections of the façade.



EXISTING QUAY STREET ELEVATION
1:100



EXISTING BYROM STREET ELEVATION
1:100

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4.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSALS

EXISTING FACADE

The main façade appears to have been rendered since the theatre was opened. Historic photos and drawings from the time show the same patterns to the walls and decorative elements that exist today.

It is not known to what extent there have been previous repairs although there is record that some repair was undertaken in the early 2000's, although locations, extent and materials used are not known.

From the render analysis it is believed that the majority of render is possibly original and may explain the high level of sulphates present due to the method of brick firing used at the time and the subsequent movement of sulphates into the single coat render.

REPAIR

Where possible like for like repair is being proposed although the mix of the render will be improved to conform to BS EN 13914-1 and BS 5262.

Where larger replacement is required new proprietary cement:lime:sand render will be used (keim or similar) to offer better breathability and flexibility of the render itself.

OUTCOMES

It is hoped that the repair and replacement of render as identified will help to protect the façade of the building from water ingress that is currently seen internally throughout the front of the building. The repairs will also ensure safety of pedestrians and the general public by ensuring the façade render is stable and no longer prone to

delamination and failure.

ICOMOS IMPACT ANALYSIS

The Icomos assessment suggests the impact on the Heritage asset would be slight, with designation of the asset as High and the proposed works being Negligible (beneficial).

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5.0 DESIGN

The works are to be undertaken to maintain the aesthetic of the current building. Works focus on like for like repair where possible with the final result being that the façade is redecorated to provide a fresh looking façade free from contaminants and cracking.

It is felt that the works will be a positive for both the building and surrounding area as a whole.

6.0 ACCESS

The façade itself has no impact upon access and use of the building day to day, however carrying out the works will mean the use of a scaffold and blocking off areas of the pavement to facilitate the repair.

Works to erect a scaffold will be done following licence approval from MCC highways and scaffold will be provided with crash deck and netting protection to ensure public safety during the works.

7.0 APPENDIX A

Render Analysis