Architect:	Foster Wilson Architects	Palace Theatre	
Address:	1 Purley Place, London, N1 1QA		
Works:	Palace Theatre		
Situated at:	Oxford Street, Manchester		
Client:	Ambassador Theatre Group (ATG)		
		Job no:	599
		Issue date:	25.01.18

Palace Theatre, Manchester

Heritage Statement

January 2018

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 The Palace Theatre, which is the subject of this report, is a Grade II listed designated heritage asset and lies within the Whitworth Street Conservation Area in Greater Manchester.

1.2 It is considered that the proposals are sympathetic and appropriate to the character, appearance and special interest of this building and will not harm its significance.

2 Introduction

2.1 This heritage statement has been written by Foster Wilson Architects on behalf of Ambassador Theatre Group to provide information to the local planning authority, Manchester City Council, in support of a listed building consent application for the proposed display of external and internal wayfinding signage at the Palace Theatre. The building is a designated heritage asset and is Grade II listed.

2.2 Any proposed alterations are to be considered in terms of local and national government policies and at the core of all consent regimes is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation areas) Act 1990. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 provides the Government's national planning policy on the historic environment and its conservation.

2.3 In accordance with the NPPF (2012), Section 3 of this statement identifies the relevant heritage assets related to this site.

2.4 Section 4 describes the significance of the listed building in terms of its architectural and historic interest. The section has been prepared using archival research and extracts from relevant theatre databases.

2.5 Section 5 assesses the proposals put forward by the signage and wayfinding consultant, CCD Design & Ergonomics, in as much as they affect the historic fabric within the building.

3 Heritage Asset and Listing Description

3.1 A designated heritage asset is one that has a level of heritage interest that justifies designation. The NPPF (2012) defines such an asset as:

"A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest."

3.2 Listing Description:

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest. The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

Name:	THE PALACE THEATRE
List entry number:	1271227
Location:	The Palace Theatre, Oxford Street
County:	
District:	Manchester
District type:	Metropolitan Authority
Grade:	II
Date first listed:	08-Jun-1977
Most recent amendment:	N/A
Legacy system:	LBS
UID:	455635

SJ 8497 NW 698-1/32/269, MANCHESTER OXFORD STREET (East Side) The Palace Theatre; Grade II

Theatre. 1891, by Alfred Darbyshire and F. Bennett Smith; altered 1913 by Bertie Crewe of London; re-fronted 1956. Probably iron-framed, clad with brick and now faced with buff glazed terracotta; slate roof. Rectangular plan. Three storeys and basement. The façade, in debased modern classical style, is of less interest than the INTERIOR: auditorium with two tiers of segmentally curved balconies (the Circle and the Grand Tier) with bowed ends, the fronts decorated with continuous series of cartouches, anthemions, etc, and two tiers of boxes carried by standing Atlantes, with tetrastyle architraves of giant fluted Ionic columns; and a circular dome in the ceiling with a hinged lighting panel. Circle promenade with Ionic columns and semi-columns, and elaborate pedimented architraves to the staircase doors.

Listed National Grid Reference: SJ8410697617

3.3 The building is situated within the Whitworth Street Conservation Area, focusing on an area of Whitworth Street and Princess Street and extending to London Road in the east and Oxford Road in the west. The Conservation Area was designated in 1974 and extended in 1985.

4 History and Significance

4.1 The statements of significance, which follow, identify the key elements of importance to the designated heritage assets, so that the impact of the proposals can be assessed. The research has been carried out using archival research and extracts from relevant theatre databases.

4.2 The archival information used for this research has included plans, photographs and articles. The sources include:

- Arthur Lloyd theatre database: http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/ManchesterTheatres/PalaceTheatreManchester.htm
- Theatres Trust: https://database.theatrestrust.org.uk/resources/theatres/show/1894-palace

4.3 The theatre was originally designed by architects Alfred Darbyshire and Frederick Bennett Smith, and constructed by William Brown and Son of Salford at a cost of £40,000. The theatre opened as the "Manchester Palace of Varieties" on 18 May 1891 with a ballet production of *Cleopatra*.



Image of the original façade to the Manchester Palace of Varieties, circa 1891-1920.
Copyright: Historic England Archive ref: OP09279

The Palace Theatre was redecorated and altered in 1896 to the designs of the renowned theatre architect Frank Matcham, and he again worked on some improvements to the theatre in 1899.

In 1913, the auditorium was reconstructed by Bertie Crewe. Of the 1891 building, he retained the stage and basic out-side stage. According to the Theatres Trust, the Palace Theatre is considered vastly superior theatrically to Albert Richardson's Manchester Opera House, due to the more satisfactory overall proportions of the auditorium:

"A major contributory factor is the way the wide, though not too deep, auditorium relates to the wide proscenium. The side walls are impressively articulated by ranges of boxes under curved and draped canopies, separated by giant fluted Ionic columns. The high ceiling has a central, coffered saucer-dome."

Further alterations were carried out to the Theatre in 1953 when the exterior was refaced and modernised; as the Theatres Trust puts it, "Darbyshire's splendidly opulent façade was obliterated by unprepossessing faience tiles."

The auditorium of today's Palace Theatre is on three levels; Stalls, Circle and Grand Tier, with a capacity of 2,000 people.



Google Street View image of the Palace Theatre façade to Oxford Street

5 Proposals

5.1 ATG are proposing to replace and improve the existing wayfinding signage at all public levels, to achieve a much higher quality finish in keeping with other ATG venues such as the Apollo Victoria and Lyceum Theatres in London.

The signage proposals put forward by CCD Design & Ergonomics, as presented in the accompanying document, are summarised below.

The existing signage to be replaced is recent in date; no loss of historic fabric is proposed in this application.

5.2 External

The various signs replace the existing box office signage, as seen from the Oxford Street frontage. These are the same size, appearance and serve the same functions as the existing modern signage, yet link the overall identity of the proposed wayfinding signage family. The three external signs are as follows:

- Box office entrance/arrival sign, wall-mounted, internally illuminated box (as existing)
- Box office notice sign, wall-mounted, non-illuminated (as existing)
- Box office projecting sign, wall-mounted, internally illuminated box (as existing)

5.3 Internal

New signage is proposed in the location of the existing internal signage. All signage is to be dark green, selected to mimic the green colouring of the green coloured glass and provide a contrasting tone against the red and gold coloured interior.

The range of illuminated and non-illuminated wayfinding signage includes:

- Directional signage
- Arrival signage
- Level directory signage
- Notice signs
- Toilet identification signs
- Box identification door signs

5.4 It is considered that the proposals are sympathetic and appropriate to the character, appearance and special interest of this building and will not harm any original fabric or the significance of the Grade-II listed heritage asset.

6 Conclusions

6.1 The above proposals are an opportunity to assist the patrons with wayfinding, together with updating the appearance of the venue. The scheme therefore helps with the upgrade of the building and helps maintain its viability and continued use as a theatre venue.