

Greg Cooper Dip.TP, Dip. UD, MRTPI
Theatre and Cinema Planning & Conservation Specialism

I am a Chartered Town Planner and Urban Designer with over 30 years' experience advising on the planning and conservation of theatres, cinemas, and entertainment venues across the UK. My career has included leadership roles in architectural practice and specialist consultancy on complex heritage projects, particularly involving listed buildings.

Experience in Theatres and Cinemas

My involvement in theatre and cinema work began in 1992, when I was engaged in a hotel proposal that involved the potential demolition of the Dominion Theatre on Tottenham Court Road. Fortuitously, I transitioned to work on its restoration in partnership with Apollo Leisure and Nederlander, marking the beginning of a long-term specialism in entertainment venues.

Following this, I worked extensively with Apollo Leisure as they acquired a portfolio of large, historic theatres in need of modernisation. I led on the listed building and planning approvals for significant restoration and alteration projects at, inter alia, the **Dominion Theatre**, Tottenham Court Road, the **Hammersmith Odeon (now Eventim Apollo)**, the **Apollo Victoria**, London and **Manchester Opera House**.

In 1994–95, I directed the planning and conservation strategy for the **complete restoration of the Lyceum Theatre**, transforming it from a semi-derelict ballroom back to a working repertory theatre. This involved negotiation with Westminster City Council, English Heritage, and the Royal Fine Art Commission.

Over the years, I have also advised on the planning implications of theatrical productions and promotional installations in historic venues. I have enabled a rather large Beast to cross the stage for *Beauty and the Beast*, for Paul Schofield to ride a giant pink moth around the auditorium at the Hammersmith Odeon and for Freddie Mercury to stand on the Dominion canopy for 12 years

I have provided long-term consultancy to **Odeon Cinemas**, advising on their portfolio of historic sites. Recent work includes the **restoration of Holloway Road Odeon** and the **refurbishment of Odeon Leicester Square**, where I also led the planning process for installing large-format LED signage on the Leicester Square façade.

I continue to be retained by **Academy Music Group**, supporting their work on listed venues such as the **Shepherd's Bush Empire** and **Brixton Academy**.

I have also advised on new-build theatres and cinemas, and large conference and exhibition venues.

Approach to Theatre Conservation

Theatres are unique listed buildings; they are not buildings accommodating a separate activity but are, in effect, part of the machine for a performance. Their viability depends on adapting them sensitively to meet the evolving demands of contemporary productions and audiences and their continued use is the only guarantee of their survival because they have proven themselves to be virtually useless for anything else.

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