

CONCORDIA THEATRE : Design and Access Statement

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Concordia Theatre from Stockwell Head showing proposed facade treatment and the new public forecourt

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TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS



Aerial View of Concordia Theatre from Stockwell Head note Upper (forecourt area) and lower (staff) car park areas and steep corner intersection

Provision Levels

As the Manual for Streets (MfS) and Local Transport Note 1/20 "Cycle Infrastructure Design" (LTN 1/20) emphasizes, providing well-located, safe and secure cycle parking is a major factor in encouraging people to cycle as an alternative to using the private car. As such, the parking standards in Table 27 below are the normal minimum requirements and are based on LTN 1/20. Where standards are not provided in Table 27 for a particular land use, the reader should refer to LTN 1/20 and, if not included there either, contact us for advice via the pre-application process.

Use class	Description of land use	Provision
E(a), E(b), some sui generis uses	Shops, cafes, restaurants, pubs and clubs	One long stay space per 500m ² gross floor area (GFA) for staff and operational use, parking to be secure and under cover. One short stay space for every 250m ² GFA for customer use to be in the form as shown in Figure 43, parking to be located in a prominent and convenient location.

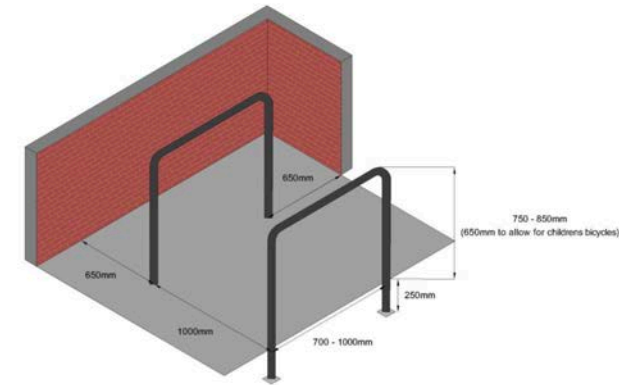


Figure 43: Sheffield stand - inset 'toast rack' type Sheffield stands can accommodate two cycles if they are placed 1m apart and at least 500mm from any wall

Leicestershire County Council highways cycle parking recommendations

SERVICING, PARKING & CYCLING

Currently there is enough on site parking for only a proportion of the staff with performers and patrons parking entirely off site. There are three parking spaces for disabled patrons although these are not ideally arranged being secured from general access by a barrier and utilising a separate public entrance to the building.

There is also a requirement for general servicing from Council Road for the collection of bins and other large scale deliveries to the Theatre. On occasion a truck wagon is parked for a period of time adjacent to the yard entrance.

The long term objective is to reconfigure these arrangement so that the majority of the "forecourt" area becomes open public space for pedestrians only. As a consequence, the three accessible parking spaces will be relocated to a barrier free location and the bins will be contained within a fenced or walled enclosure out of sight. Given the desire to restrict road traffic, the delivery of large scale objects whilst still possible in the current location will be redirected to the rear of the stage via the Stockwell Head car park.

To maintain the number of car parking spaces for staff the Stockwell Head car park will be adjusted to provide efficient parking for a similar number of cars as served today but some underutilised space will be made available to enhance the public realm and make a clearer route to the stage door area. When wagons need to be parked for a period of time this will be in the area indicated on plans to the rear of the stage, out of the way.

Currently there is no proposal to adjust the roadway crossover on Stockwell Head.

Approximate numbers of car parking spaces before and after the full implementation of proposals is as follows.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Existing Upper level car park | - 9 staff spaces and 3 accessible spaces |
| Proposed Upper level car park | - 0 staff spaces and 3 accessible spaces |

- | | |
|--|---|
| Existing staff (Lower) car park | - 15 staff spaces. |
| Proposed staff (Lower) car park | - 14 staff spaces : 1 accessible spaces |

To comply with Leicestershire County Council cycle parking provision guidance based on the overall floor area of the combined buildings the following will be provided:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Staff Cycle Spaces | - 8 covered spaces in the Workshop yard area. |
| Patron Cycle Spaces (Upper) | - 8 Sheffield stands near proposed entrance |
| Patron Cycle parking (Lower) | - 8 Sheffield stands near existing entrance |

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Trees protected in conservation unharmed by proposals

ENVIRONMENT- TREES AND ECOLOGY

Within the Heritage Strategy prepared by the Council, there is particular note of the fine avenue of trees towards the rear of the stage area which are on a raised area outside of the Concordia site boundary. There has also been some concern raised that bats may inhabit some parts of the site which may impact the nature of the proposals.

Aseparate reports have been prepared by Justin Hobbs of MHP Arboricultural Consultants outlining the approach required to ensure that existing trees are preserved and in no way compromised by the proposals. It should be noted that the existing retaining wall structures and previous works on the site will most likely have curtailed the root system of these trees where they lie within the Concordia site. Recommendations contained within this report will be adhered to going forward but appear to have little impact on the principal areas of work to be undertaken.

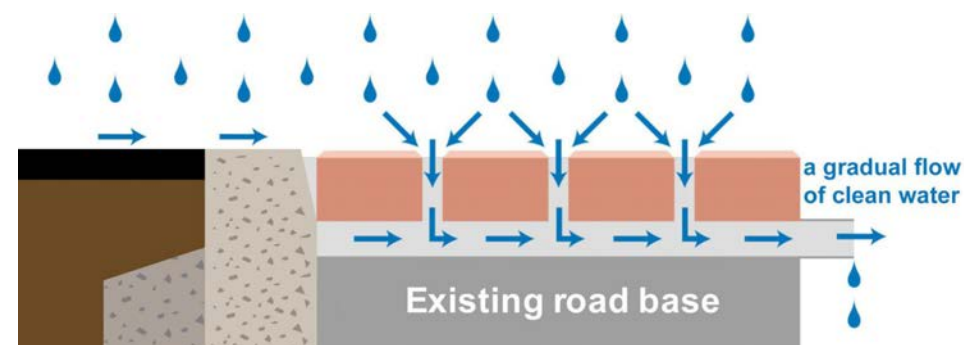
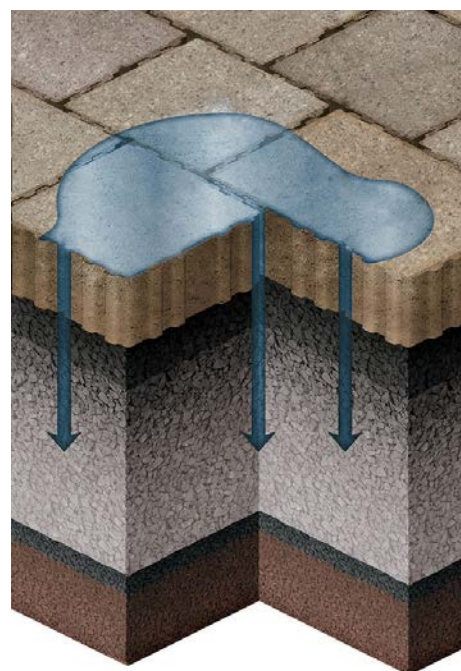
From an ecological standpoint there was no evidence of a bat population found during inspections by Molly McCann of Ecology by Design so the consideration is primarily what would constitute a nett gain in diversity for the site as a whole. In the short term there will be very little change as external works are limited but it is accepted that as the site develops full consideration of the types and locations of planting would offer a biodiversity gain. This will form part of detailed landscape proposals which will follow in due course.

FLOOD RISK

Reference has been made to Environment Agency Risk Maps and it has been determined that the site sits outside of any major flood risk area being Flood Zone 1. There is some note of localised low to medium surface water flooding which needs to be investigated as part of the technical development for the wider external works investigations.

SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE - SuDS

The proposals do not envisage any large scale addition to the building roof area so it is anticipated that the current site drainage arrangements will remain in place. The public realm improvements to Stockwell Head will include sustainable drainage solutions to be implemented. For the most part this will consist of converting areas of currently impermeable hardstanding to employ permeable surface treatments. Given the need for hard wearing vehicle bearing ground surfaces to the parking areas and yards, this would include slot drainage with integrated soakaways which might be an overlay to the existing hardstanding dependent upon levels.

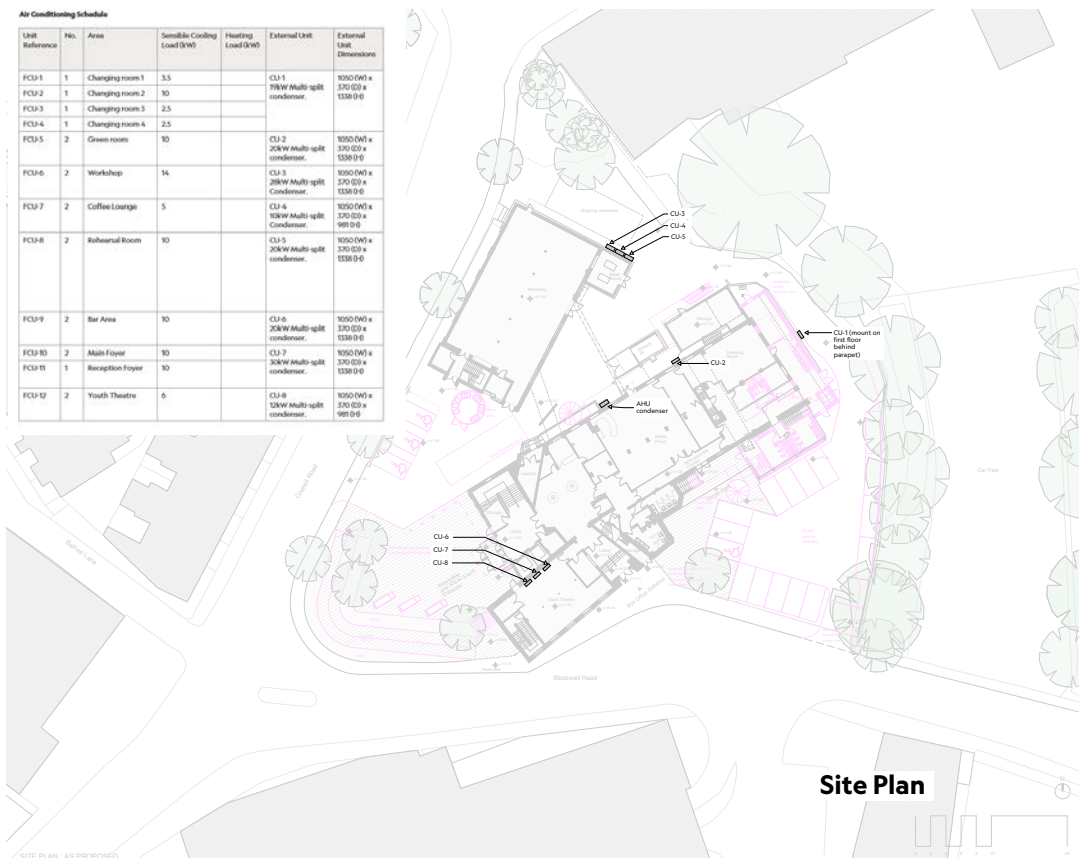


Options for sustainable ground drainage systems to be advanced as part of landscape proposals

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External plant elements concealed out of view from street



Given the heritage nature of the site these would need to be carefully integrated into the roof construction so as not to be detrimental to the buildings’ appearance in the townscape. In the first instance the auditorium roof, when replaced, will have integrated panels which will closely match the colour of the new roofing. Details of appropriate systems are provided with final approval will be reliant on submission of full details under condition.

Areas on the Building “B” and the workshop Building “W” require more careful consideration, but systems are available which integrate into tiled roofing and do not form part of this application.

NOISE

There is already a buzz of activity before and after shows but the level of this will not alter from current levels as the audience size will not increase appreciably (398 seats existing vs 400 proposed) as part of this proposal. Also, the theatre is a relatively stand-alone building so in that respect is distant from where it may cause nuisance to the residential population of the town through “break-out” noise.

However, it is true to say the fabric of the building as exists is not conducive to keeping sound during performances contained. It will be a by-product of the stagehouse and auditorium recladding that the level of sound attenuation will be improved through uprated thermal insulation and more robust construction absorbing sound energy.

When considering plant locations, it has been part of the evaluation process to assess the positioning of the external elements such as Condenser Units to be visually unobtrusive and away from acoustically sensitive areas. The specification of these units will include limits on the operational sound generation and methods of mounting to negate any disruption this may incur.

FUTURE LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS

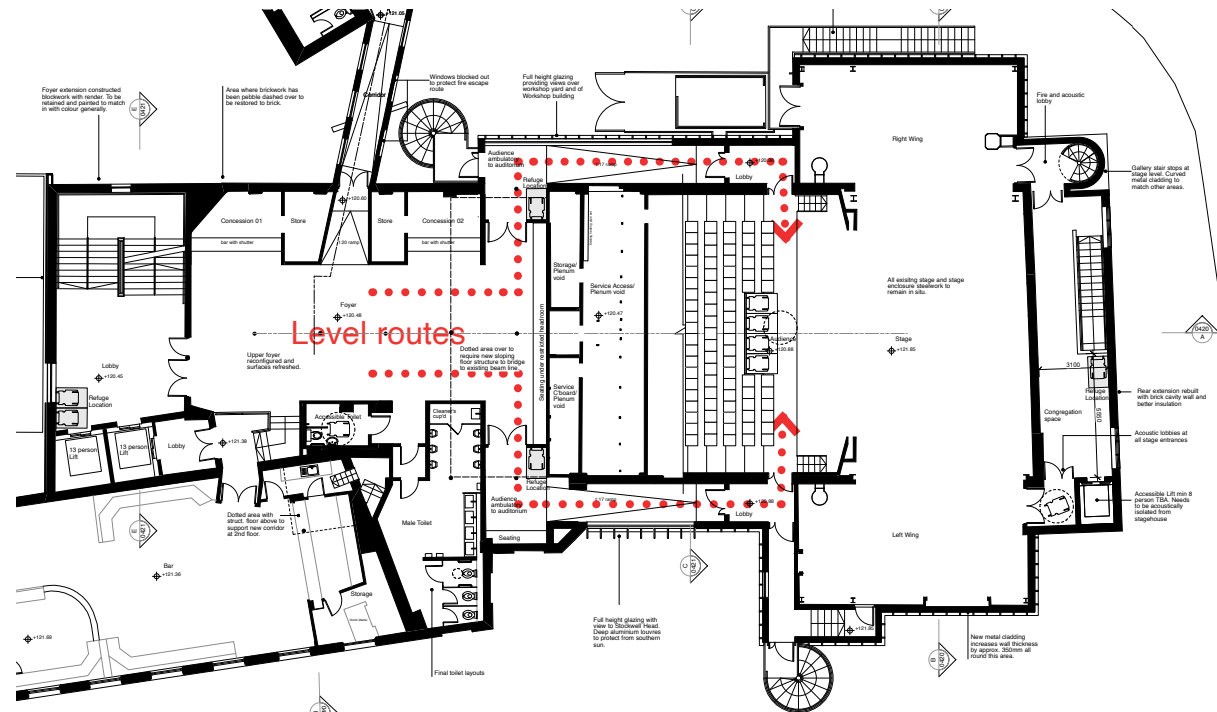
At this stage the application seeks to secure the general arrangement of the forecourt between Council Road and Stockwell Head as part of an overall long-term development. It is expected the final proposals would be a mixture of both hard and soft landscape albeit geared towards its use as a public congregation space. At this stage we have not sought to progress specific landscape proposals aside from the layout but would wish to evolve these when the implementation becomes more imminent.

In any case the proposals would retain existing trees on Council Road and add further trees where they do not obscure the theatre from distant views. Banking to the edge of the pedestrian access ramped areas is preferred to avoid defensive retaining walls, offering the potential to be landscaped in an inventive way.

Overall, it is accepted that any grant of approval would condition landscape design pending detailed proposals at a later stage.

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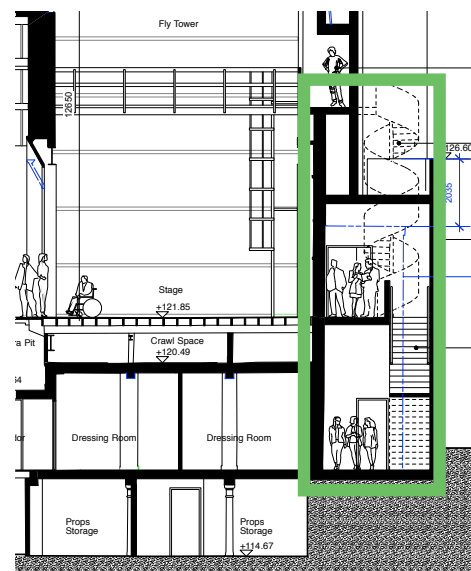
AMBULATORY ROUTES TO AUDITORIUM

Ambulatory routes direct to auditorium
- RED

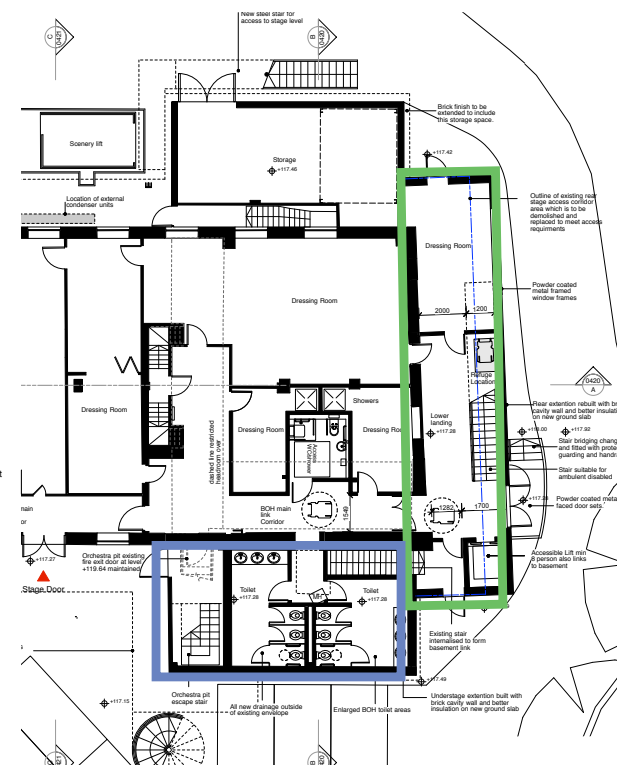
Rear extension to significantly improve
back of house access

Back of House vertical & horizontal
circulation - GREEN

Back of House Performers 'toilets -
VIOLET



SUB STAGE/GROUND FLOOR LEVEL ACCESS



ACCESSIBILITY

A key driver for many of the proposed changes is the desire to improve access to a building that requires both public access to an auditorium which is currently on the first floor, entered for the majority of users via a steep vomitorium access. Wheelchair users currently can only access the second floor rear space in the auditorium and are limited in number. These proposals include many improvements which will significantly improve the usability of the building by all. An accessibility report has been prepared by consultant Jane Toplis that responds to proposals and makes detailed recommendation.

In the front of house, the current lift access works well but the circulation into and around the auditorium is poor. To improve this the existing central vomitorium will be removed and replaced with two ambulatory spaces with ramped floors at 1:17. For the first time there will be a choice of wheelchair locations for patrons in the auditorium as there will now be an accessible route to the front edge of the auditorium on both sides. Also as a result of the re-raking of the seating the stairways will be less steep which will make the space more age friendly to navigate.

A single open and accessible main entrance off the forecourt will be provided with 1200mm canopy overhang and automated doors. This is close to the accessible parking and will tie up with the accessible entrance which exists today so that everybody arrives via the same entrance. Migrating the Box Office here would also allow wheelchair access during the day.

The rebuilding of the back of house stair, crossover and lift directly improves accessibility but also smaller changes in internal layout providing enlarged toilet areas and wider corridors and doorways will all assist. In technical work areas there will be additional provision made for staff in wheelchairs to access places such as the control room and sound desk for the first time.

Externally when landscape works are undertaken flush thresholds at all major doorways can be engineered by adjusting external paving levels. The planned forecourt area will include a generous 3m wide ramp 1:21 to enable not just patrons but all public users to more safely navigate the steep and narrow pavements at the junction of Council Road and Stockwell Head.



Fully accessible shared entrance for the first time

Application Pack

- Design and Access Statement including Heritage Statement (this document)
- Keith Williams Architects Drawings : As Proposed as noted in appendix
- Keith Williams Architects Drawings : As Existing as noted in appendix
- Preliminary Roost Assessment & Baseline BNG- Ecology by Design supplied separately
- Arboricultural Survey, Impact Assessment and Protection Plan - MHP supplied separately



Fully accessible shared entrance for the first time

APPENDICES

- Heritage Report
- Keith Williams Architects Drawings : As Proposed
- Keith Williams Architects Drawings : As Existing



Fully accessible shared entrance for the first time

HERITAGE REPORT

CONCORDIA THEATRE : Design and Access Statement HERITAGE REPORT

By 1923 we can see that the road connection through the area which is now Council Road has been formed, presumably as part of some larger desire by the council to connect to outlying areas of the expanding town. We can infer a more precise date for the building of the road from the dated plaque on the Edwardian houses opposite which states a completion of 1906. It is likely these appeared at the same time as the road between 1901 and 1906.



Image of Edwardian house plaque on buildings opposite site

The third significant building on the site, the “workshop” building, must have been completed after the road but prior to the 1923 map.

The site would also have reached its present size overall and landscape features which endure today such as the terraced line of trees at the rear of the site which is already formed albeit the boundary has been adjusted to provide access to the yard from Stockwell Head. The steep roads were dictated by the existing landscape without much thought for how pedestrians navigated it.

This period of rapid development than stops and the photographic record suggests the factory use began to diminish in the 1930's with the demolition of some structures including its iconic chimney and some peripheral building stock. It seems activity ceased on the site some significant time prior to the Concordia Theatre being established in 1972, the buildings having been empty since the second world war.

The site has as a consequence evolved again to be active and vibrant albeit in an incremental way not dissimilar to the origins of the factory site as noted above.

In the first instance the theatre inhabited the centre “auditorium” building, and this involved placing a stage house and auditorium seating construction within the volume of the largest building. Other buildings began to be inhabited with supporting facilities over time.

With the growth of the theatre and the ambition of its user groups the stage house element spilled out beyond the constraints of the original building with side stages and limited back of house facilities. Later additions include the construction of a front

of house extension which contains lifts and stairs to better give access to the auditorium for the public.

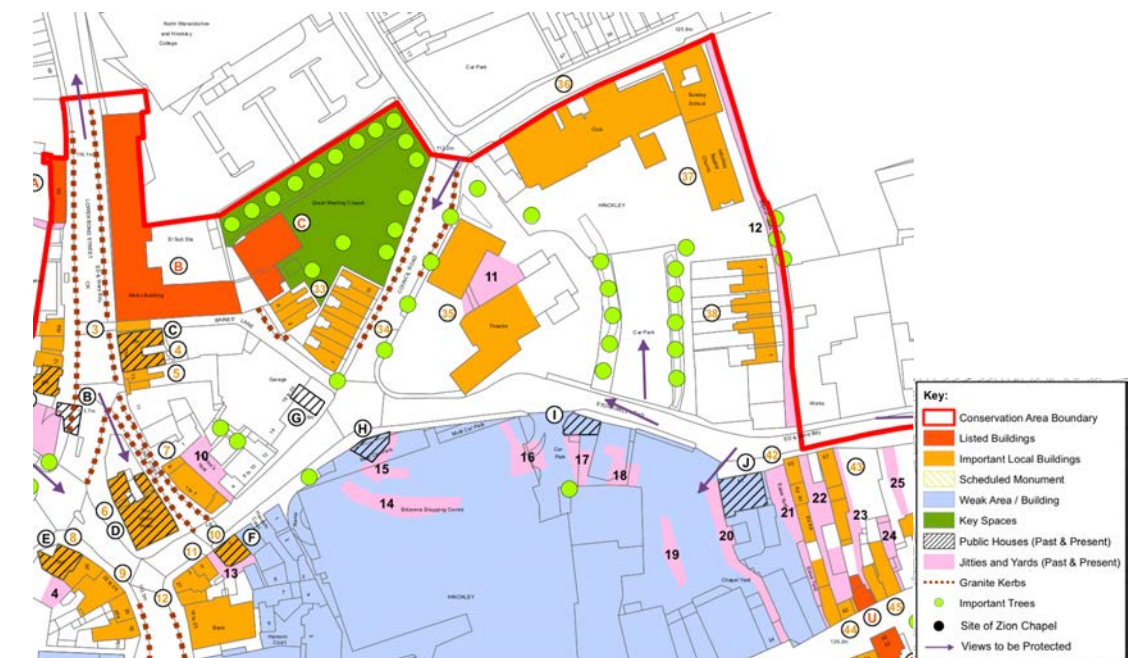
In this latest proposed layering the core ambition is to significantly enhance the original auditorium to improve visitor experience. It is also intended to provide better back of house facilities and provide for accessible routes to the stage to enhance inclusivity.

Whilst these are the core aims it is also apparent that the original theatre was completed to a budget and are now ending the end of their useful life due in part to the short term nature of the interventions made. The wider aim of the project is to consider more fully the future development which will enhance the quality of the theatre construction and best make use of the robust nature of the 19C buildings. Seeking to retain the character of these buildings and be respectful of the past can form a key part of the work now being considered.

Conservation Guidance and Individual Building Approaches.

Planning guidance

The site sits within the boundary of the of the Hinckley Town Centre conservation area and is located in close proximity to a couple of listed buildings although not listed itself. The area has been somewhat blighted by the modern shopping centre between it and the town centre and is generally underdeveloped.



Extract from conservation Area Appraisal Map

Oddly parts of the building are noted as being important and others not. This is expressly due to the impact of earlier theatre related interventions and the loss of some heritage value on the site due to practical constraints the theatre faces and noted in the extract below. A protected view is noted down the hill along Stockwell Head towards the site.

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HERITAGE REPORT

- 16.4 Towards the western end of Stockwell Head a large C19th former factory has been converted into Hinckley's Concordia theatre which visually closes the street. Recent changes to the appearance of the building including rendering elevations, and the sheet metal extension, have come close to destroying a very fine nineteenth century façade. The adjoining car park has a magnificent avenue of mature trees. These should be retained and could form part of an improved landscaped area incorporating car parking and other public facilities.

Site specific extract from conservation Area Appraisal

Listed Buildings

There are a couple of listed buildings nearby, namely the Atkins Building and the Unitarian Chapel, with many others designated as important local building as part of the conservation area. There are few direct visual connections to the listed buildings from the site but where they might occur the visual consolidation of the site is likely to improve and relationships to these heritage structures and cause no detrimental harm.

There is also the church of St Mary's which is a focal point in the town centre and should not be competed with in terms of scale.

Bar Building

This building appears to be one of the first significant structures on the site and the original springboard for the factory modern activity. It forms the terminus of a locally noted view down Stockwell Head which is noted the Council's heritage assessment. The over rendering of the building has been lamented in council planning guidance and the theatre agree that visually the render was not a great success but was instigated in part to present the building as the main face of the Theatre to the street.



Site photos of View from Stockwell Head.

The site as a whole would benefit from this building being returned to brick as a finish and ideally to include details which nod to its industrial past. To this end and to assist in improving the thermal performance of the building it is proposed to reinstall windows similar to the modular metal framed windows that would have once been in place and evident in other parts of the site.

This would allow the reunification of the building to be aligned by the same base expression of its industrial past to others on the site. However, it would be dependent on careful removal and restorative work to the brickwork behind which needs full assessment.

Auditorium Building

For the most part the centre building, used as the main auditorium and stage, has been the most heavily modified and in many respects has completely changed in character. The original fenestration has been lost and only a few original window openings remain within the courtyard space not visible from the street. There is however a significant amount of original structure retained internally and it would be desirable to reveal its robust character there.

One of the core objectives is to open up roof spaces and muscular structure in the interior of the auditorium concealed for many years behind lightweight cladding to give the auditorium a character which builds on the industrial past of its heritage.

Externally there is an opportunity to unite the new and old elements of the building function to allow the complex as a whole to be view for what it is as a theatre and have a more outward positive aspect towards the town centre. Where possible render could be stripped back to reveal brickwork and new brick be incorporated to unite the whole site and this reworking would have no detrimental impact on the original building.

The roof of this building is visible when viewed from higher approaches and is visually not consistent with the original slate of old. Reroofing is required for practical reasons, and this should be carried out in a sympathetic manner to the whole site. Photovoltaic panels are being considered to improve on site renewables and there are integrated systems where this can be achieved within the proposed industrial looking "standing seam" roof system.

Similarly, the stage house is of poor quality and showing its age and could be more purposely refined to integrate into the new elements of the development. This may include a fly tower height extension as described elsewhere.

CONCORDIA THEATRE : Design and Access Statement HERITAGE REPORT



Poor quality finish of stage house will be replaced.

Workshop Building

Whilst outside the scope of the project in many ways this building remains the most “complete” of those on the site as no attempt has been made to make external modifications other than some low level blocked windows. Much of the interior also remains in its pared back state as if the workers and equipment had recently been cleared. For the purposes of this application the intention is to do no harm and ensure the other buildings relate to its aesthetic.



Site photos of View from Council Road.

The gap between this building and the flank of the auditorium building retains the character of a working courtyard and this should be retained without unwarranted intervention.

Site boundaries

The external areas of the complex have remained very much as they would have been found without major improvement other than tarmacing over areas of demolished building for access and parking. Original features are lost such as boundary walls and really the site contributes little to the wider public realm. There does seem to be a long term opportunity to repurpose some of these areas to engage the public and connect the theatre with the wider townscape.



Tri-partite end gables as existing and of old.

The strong tri-partite end gable appearance of the three buildings facing the town still remains and could form the backdrop to a more animated public space. Once obscured from public view by a high boundary wall but now with potential to be more open and inviting as a collection space for the theatre and more outgoing entrance towards the town centre.

In summary

The site of the theatre is emblematic of that of Hinckley as a whole due to the Victorian industry which formed it. It has a history of rapid development within relatively short periods with comparatively long gaps with little change and now is an opportunity for reinvention. The site is of significant interest as a collection of buildings related to Hinckley and its past as defined by the hosiery industry. They sit on a key intersection site which does little for the wider townscape.

However, the theatre uses have the potential to reinvent the ensemble and place the organisation more in public view. This could be achieved by:

- Preserving the character of the industrial site as a whole and maintaining common material threads across the site. Restoring where necessary. For example, brick and window detailing of the Bar building.
- Ensuring that the contemporary additions for theatre use are added in a consistent “overlay” of modern sustainable interventions which are distinct, but remain sympathetic to, the functional expression of the past.
- Preserving and enhancing the visual impact of the three gable ends to the three existing blocks facing the town centre whilst emphasizing the newer theatrical use.
- Providing a longer term direction of travel that would open the public realm to be more permeable and make the theatre more accessible to all.