

Conservation Officer comments for: 26/00700/FUL

Proposal: Planning and conservation area consent sought for the refurbishment and remodelling of the Hinckley Concordia Theatre building complex including 254m² nett new floor area. Upward extension and rearward expansion of stagehouse, new external ambulatories and fire escapes, main building roof (with pv) replacement, remodelled gable end facade, removal of render to expose brickwork and replacement of windows to Stockwell Head building. Enhanced public realm including new public forecourt space and site wide accessibility improvements.

Site: Concordia Theatre, Stockwell Head, Hinckley

Date Submitted: 30/09/2026

Site context and significance

This proposal seeks planning permission for the refurbishment, remodelling and extensions to the Concordia Theatre in addition to public realm improvements.

The Theatre is located within a collection of buildings situated to the north of Hinckley town centre at the junction of Council Road and Stockwell Head. The Theatre and the surrounding ancillary land is located within the Hinckley Town Centre Conservation Area.

The Theatre was opened in 1972 within the former late 19th to early 20th century hosiery factory of Moore, Eady & Murcott Goode. The factory consisted of rectangular plan and dual pitched roof buildings of red brick and slate located close to the back edge of Council Road and Stockwell Head respectively, with a further building and yard in between. To facilitate the function of the site as a Theatre a large extension to house an auditorium and ancillary areas was erected to the side of the courtyard building, projecting eastwards along and set back from Stockwell Head. This extension to the theatre is of a large scale and predominantly of a metal sheet construction which means it has the appearance of a modern industrial unit so it sits uncomfortably against the original buildings. The gable end of the auditorium building facing the Council Road and Stockwell Head junction has been refurbished and provided with a rendered finish. The Stockwell Head building functions as the theatre bar and also has an applied render to all elevations covering the original brickwork, in addition to a replacement roof covering of concrete tiles, and replacement timber framed windows of a simple casement style installed in the original openings. The impact of these alterations is noted within the Hinckley Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal (HTCCAA) (2013) which states that the 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 materiality and character of the Council Road building is maintained however, as this building retains its original brick walls, slate roof covering, and numerous industrial style cast iron and steel framed windows.

Despite the aforementioned alterations to provide a key social and cultural social facility for the town, the industrial character of the original late 19th and early 20th century buildings remains discernible which ensures they remain of historic interest. As such these buildings make a positive contribution to the character and heritage significance of the conservation

area with them identified as important local buildings within the HTCCAA. The yard in between is also identified in the HTCAA as a historic yard and jitty. However, there are considerable opportunities to enhance the appearance of the auditorium and bar buildings and the public realm surrounding the theatre, which currently comprises of poor boundary treatments including dilapidated timber fencing, modern brick walls and concrete bollards.

Relevant Acts, National and Local Policies and Guidance

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on the local planning authority when determining applications for development which affects a listed building or its setting to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural and historic interest which it possesses. Section 72 of the Act places a general duty in the exercise of planning functions stating that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Chapter 20 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2026) provides the national policy on conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Policies HE4, HE5 and HE6 of the NPPF require substantial weight to be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset when considering the impact of a proposed development on its significance, for any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset to have clear and convincing justification, and for that harm to be weighed against the public benefits of a proposal.

Policy HE9 of the NPPF provides guidance on conservation areas and (of relevance to this proposal) states that:

HE9 (1): Development proposals within or affecting the significance of conservation areas should:

- a. Retain and conserve buildings and other features which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area where possible; and
- b. Consider the area's special architectural or historic interest (as identified as part of the designation of the conservation area) in the design of development

HE9 (3): Proposals which conserve those elements of a conservation area that make a positive contribution to the area (or which better reveal its significance) should be supported.

Also of relevance is Chapter 14 of the NPPF (2026) which provides the national policy on achieving well-designed places. Policy DP3 provides the key-principles for well-designed places in decision-making with paragraph 1 stating:

Development proposals should respond to their context (the history, character and features of their site and its setting), so that they integrate with and enhance their surroundings; such as through the arrangement of development plots and buildings, the use of materials and architectural features, and the restoration, reuse and integration of heritage assets.

The Planning Practice Guide (PPG) and Historic England Advice Note 2 (HEAN2) Making Changes to Heritage Assets sets out how the policies of the NPPF are expected to be applied and includes guidance on the conservation of and making changes to the historic environment.

Policies DM11 and DM12 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (SADMP) DPD seek to protect and enhance the historic environment. All proposals for development affecting the setting of listed buildings will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that the proposals are compatible with the significance of the building and its setting. Development proposals should also ensure the significance of a conservation area is preserved and enhanced.

The proposal and its impact upon the significance of affected heritage assets

The proposal for the refurbishment and remodelling of the theatre buildings and the wider site can be broken down into the following elements:

- An upward extension and rearward expansion of the auditorium building
- New external ambulatories (covered walkways) and fire escapes to the auditorium building
- A replacement roof to the auditorium building
- Altered finishes to the elevational walls of the auditorium building including a remodelled gable end façade
- Removal of the render and replacement windows to the bar building
- Public realm alterations across the wider site

The upward extension is located towards the eastern end of the auditorium and would extend the fly tower. The extension would further increase the scale and height of the fly tower, but it is required for a functional purpose and has a simple flat form which reduces its mass. The rear extension to the auditorium is to be made wider but remains subservient in scale. Similarly, the walkways and spiral stairs extend only a minor distance beyond the walls of the building and generally only extend up to first floor level. Overall, the amount of increased floorspace proposed is relatively modest in amount and scale.

The elevations of the auditorium building are to have the render removed from all elevations with facing side walls to have their original red brickwork revealed and where required rebuilt with sections of red brick. The proposed fly tower extension, existing north and south projections, and proposed walkways and staircases are all to be clad in insulated metal panels (or be a metal construction) of a dark brown colour. The current sheeted roof to the auditorium is also to be replaced with a standing seam metal roof of the same dark brown colour as the elevational cladding. The simple choice of the red brick and dark brown cladding provides a coherence to the appearance and materiality of the existing buildings and proposed extension, which would result in a considerable enhancement to their character compared to the rather ad hoc nature of the alterations that have taken place to date. This coherent design continues and includes the remodelled gable end of the auditorium which would include a new accessible entrance at ground floor level with perforated metal cladding of a similar dark colour to that proposed on the wider building, with the cladding also incorporating lettering and graphics advertising the use of the building. The gable end would also have an appropriate appearance and design, whilst adding activity and interest to the western elevation of the theatre.

On the bar building the existing render on all elevations is to be removed to reveal the original red brickwork finish and the existing windows are to be replaced with double glazed window with multiple glazing bars. These alterations would reinstate and reflect the original

historic industrial character of the building and complement the appearance and materiality of the remodelled and extended auditorium building. To compliment the auditorium gable end remodelling it is proposed to install signage and electronic display to the gable end of the bar building to advertise performances (etc.) at the theatre. This proposal would also add further interest to the western elevation and is considered acceptable in principle, although advertisement consent will be required in due course.

The construction materials proposed for the elevations of the auditorium and bar buildings (red brick, metal cladding, replacement industrial style windows) are considered to be acceptable in principle, however samples and/or further details should be provided to confirm the final specification and appearance prior to their installation, with such details secured via a planning condition.

There are a small number of listed buildings within the locality of the theatre, namely the grade II listed Atkins Building and the grade II* listed Unitarian Chapel located to the north-west. There are limited instances of intervisibility between these buildings and the theatre, however the enhancements to the appearance of the theatre including through reinstating its traditional materiality of red brick would provide a measure of visual consolidation, ensuring that the buildings are complementary and that the theatre would be a positive presence within the wider setting of these listed buildings.

It is also considered that the raising of the overall height of the fly tower does not have a major impact on the distant views of the site as the theatre buildings sit in a dip in the landscape so that the top of the fly tower will be only as tall as some of the existing buildings nearby. There is also a partial screening effect offered by the presence of the tall trees immediately to the east located within the Stockwell Head public car park.

The tallest and most significant listed building in the wider area is the grade II* listed Church of St Mary. Given the distance, location of intervening built form and the aforementioned topography there is no visibility of the existing theatre buildings from the church and churchyard and this would not change following the proposal to increase the height of the fly tower. There is a view of the top section of the church spire when looking southwards from the staff car park of the theatre in between intervening built form. From this view a limited appreciation of the heritage significance of the church can be observed and given the siting of the proposed development being behind the observer this view would not be affected. As such it is considered that the proposal would have no adverse impact upon the heritage significance of the church with it being a negligible component of its wider setting.

The proposed public realm enhancements include a new public forecourt in front of the remodelled façade of the auditorium building, consisting of removal of the modern brick wall and delapidated fencing around the corner of Council Road and Stockwell Head and laying of a paved area with stepped and gradient ramped routes to the public footway on the two roads. This would be complemented by seating, tree planting and soft landscaped banks. It is considered these works would provide a more welcoming and open environment and greatly enhance the character and appearance of this section of the conservation area.

The area of car parking on Stockwell Head is used primarily for staff parking with patrons and performers expected to park elsewhere. It is consequently controlled by barrier to restrict access and on the whole this will be preserved as is. However, the presentation of

this area of hardstanding is poor towards Stockwell Head and inefficient in its layout. The proposal includes alterations to this arrangement which will increase the area allocated to public realm, particularly close to the current main entrance and stage door. This will help better present the Concordia complex to the public and provide a more attractive edge to Stockwell Head.

The intention to secure public realm improvements to the forecourt and staff parking area are welcomed and should form part of a comprehensive landscaping design, the details of which should be secured via a planning condition.

Summary

In my opinion the proposal would result in a greatly improved theatre facility with the scale, form, design, architectural detailing and construction materials of the development both preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the important local buildings and historic yard within the Hinckley Town Centre Conservation Area. The public realm proposals would also result in an enhancement to the character of the conservation area. The proposal would also result in no adverse impact upon listed buildings within the vicinity of the site. For these reasons it is considered that the proposal would preserve and enhance the heritage significance of the Hinckley Town Conservation Area and affected listed buildings, so consequently the proposal complies with Policies DM11 and DM12 of SADMP, Chapter 20 of the NPPF and the statutory duties of Sections 66 and 72 of the of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

To ensure that the development has a satisfactory appearance and that the heritage significance of the conservation area is preserved, please note the requirement for planning conditions (with a suitable trigger point) to provide details for approval concerning:

- Construction materials for the development and remodelling of the auditorium and bar buildings
- A landscaping plan (soft and hard landscaping and boundary treatments) for the wider site and including the forecourt and staff car parking areas

It is noted that “conservation area consent” is referenced in the description of this application. Conservation Area Consent has been abolished as a consent regime so is not relevant to this proposed development and should not be referenced in the description. Planning permission is solely required. Please can the development description be amended accordingly.