

STUDIO DJL

King's Theatre, Glasgow - Wireless Access Point  
Installation  
*Design + Access + Heritage Statement*  
November 2023



# STUDIO DJL

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# Executive Summary

Project: King's Theatre, Glasgow, Wireless Access Point Installation

Address: The King's Theatre, 297 Bath St, Glasgow, G2 4JN

Project Ref.: 2334-06

This report has been prepared to accompany the listed building consent application relating to the installation of wireless access points at the King's Theatre, Glasgow.

The proposal has fully taken into consideration the important historical and architectural significance of the Theatre. It is a venue that holds an important place in the history of Glasgow and continues to play a vital role in the cultural life of the city. The theatre requires careful development to preserve the building for both its special architectural qualities and the memorable events that have taken place within.

The proposal seeks to improve access to wireless data for patrons, staff and visitors. The upgrades to the existing wireless data infrastructure will facilitate better experiences for audience members and ensure that the King's Theatre remains an important and successful performance venue.

The following report identifies the relevant heritage value of the building and the wider context, notes relevant planning history, sets out the reasoning behind the design choices made, and finally states why the proposal is considered to be in accordance with listed building consent.

To be read in conjunction with:

2334-06-DJL-00-P-011 Site Location Plan

Wireless Survey Report - Kings Theatre Glasgow - 15 August 2022

Meraki MR42 Data Sheet

Meraki MR45 Data Sheet

Meraki MR46 Data Sheet



*Early Postcard of the Theatre*

# Heritage Assessment

## Overview

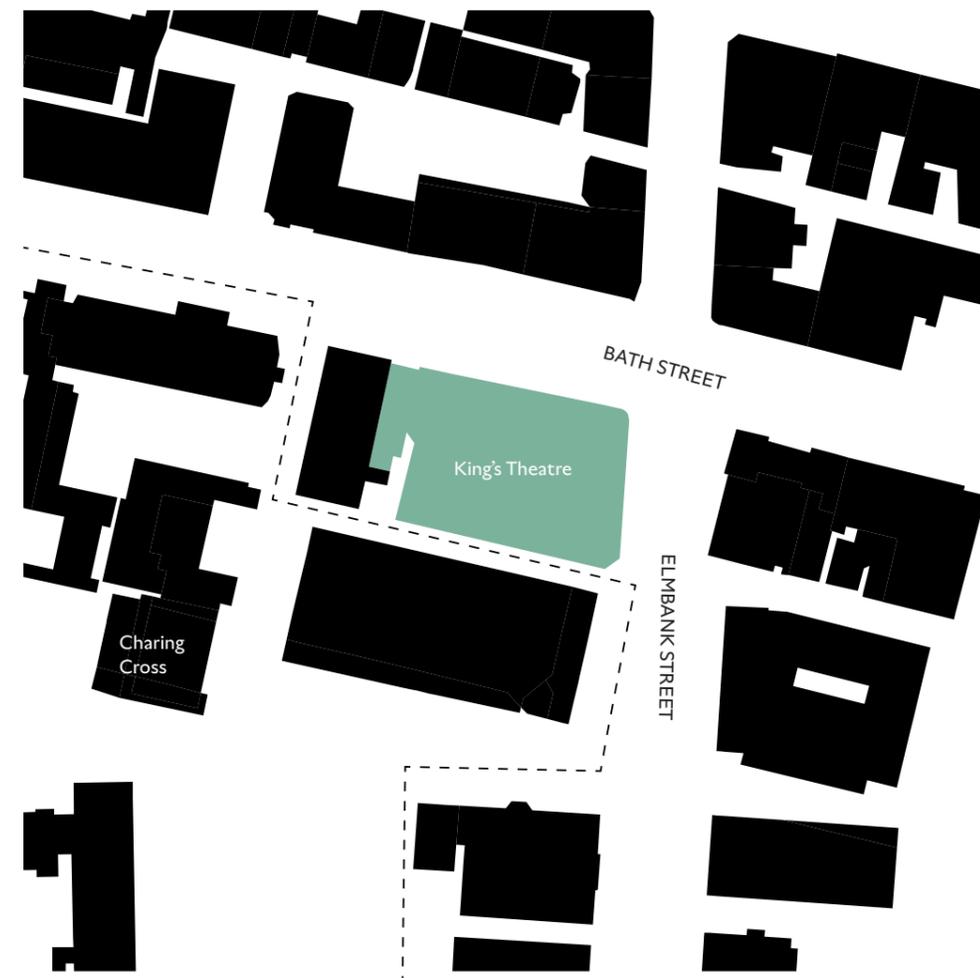
The applicant site is officially listed as 'King's Theatre' and located on the corner of Bath Street and Elmbank Street to the west of central Glasgow, near Charing Cross.

The Theatre was listed on 15 December 1970 and is a Category A building. The listing states:

*The King's Theatre opened on 12 September 1904 at a cost of around £50,000 and it is an important example of an Edwardian theatre by the renowned theatre architect, Frank Matcham. It was commissioned by the famous theatre owning and production company, Howard & Wyndham Ltd. It remains largely intact and it is one of the finest examples of a Matcham theatre in Scotland. The imposing street elevation was designed to attract an audience and was built in high quality materials in a style compatible with any large civic building now that in the Edwardian period theatregoing was a respectable entertainment. Comfort for the audience was a priority as was maximising audience numbers. At the King's in Glasgow there is a lavish marble lined entrance foyer with a barrel-vaulted coffered ceiling and this leads onto the highly decorative auditorium. The plasterwork in the auditorium is modelled in fibrous plaster, a Matcham speciality which allowed for more sculptural three dimensional forms to be created. The three tiers of horseshoe-shaped balconies are cutting edge in their cantilevered construction method as this allowed for an unobstructed view of the stage and also created more space for paying customers. When built the King's had seating capacity for 1841. Buildings of Scotland notes that the Adam-style ceilings on the Grand Circle staircase and in its crush bar date from 1914 and are by William Beattie Brown, Howard & Wyndham's architect.*

*The King's Theatre was sold by Howard & Wyndham in 1967 to the then Glasgow Corporation. Today it is managed by the Ambassador Theatre Group and it remains in the ownership of Glasgow City Council. A programme of refurbishment and restoration is currently underway.*

The theatre sits along the western boundary of the Glasgow Central Conservation Area, within the 2010 addition. This conservation area comprises the majority of central Glasgow, characterized by the gridded street plan, stock of well preserved heritage buildings and open spaces.



Location of the Kings theatre near the Western boundary of the Glasgow Central Conservation Area



## Cultural Heritage

Designed by perhaps the most well renowned theatre architect of his age, Frank Matcham, the theatre was opened in 1904 for Howard and Wyndham Ltd. The theatre prospered as one of the main venues in the city with variety shows and films. The 1930's saw the introduction of the *Half Past Eight* shows. These rivalled the summer shows of seaside resort towns by combining a variety of performances and were hugely successful.

Later in its history the theatre became well known for pantomimes, starting in 1964 with *A Wish For Jamie*. These became more popular following the closure of the Glasgow Alhambra and continue to this day as one of the best known annual events at both the theatre and the city. The theatre is also used extensively for amateur shows on a large stage.

With a capacity of 1815, The Ambassador Theatre Group now operate the theatre. Under their ownership it has seen a series of renovation works to ensure it remains one of the primary receiving houses in Glasgow and Scotland.

## Architectural Heritage

Occupying a corner plot, the theatre is unusual in featuring 2 principal elevations. The red sandstone facades are a potent mixture of architectural styles, as is common for many Matcham Theatres. Described as Edwardian Baroque by Historic Environment Scotland, the Theatres Trust notes elements of Art Nouveau in what it describes as a truly enigmatic style. Overall, the Theatre's exterior is expressive of a prominent public building in the city.

Architecturally, the interior of the building is equally significant. The auditorium, described as designed in a free mix of baroque and rococo style, is opulent in its ornamentation and well preserved. Features include fibrous plaster mouldings to the proscenium and balcony fronts. Columns, pediments and a 12 panelled ceiling all contribute to an delicately decorated playhouse.

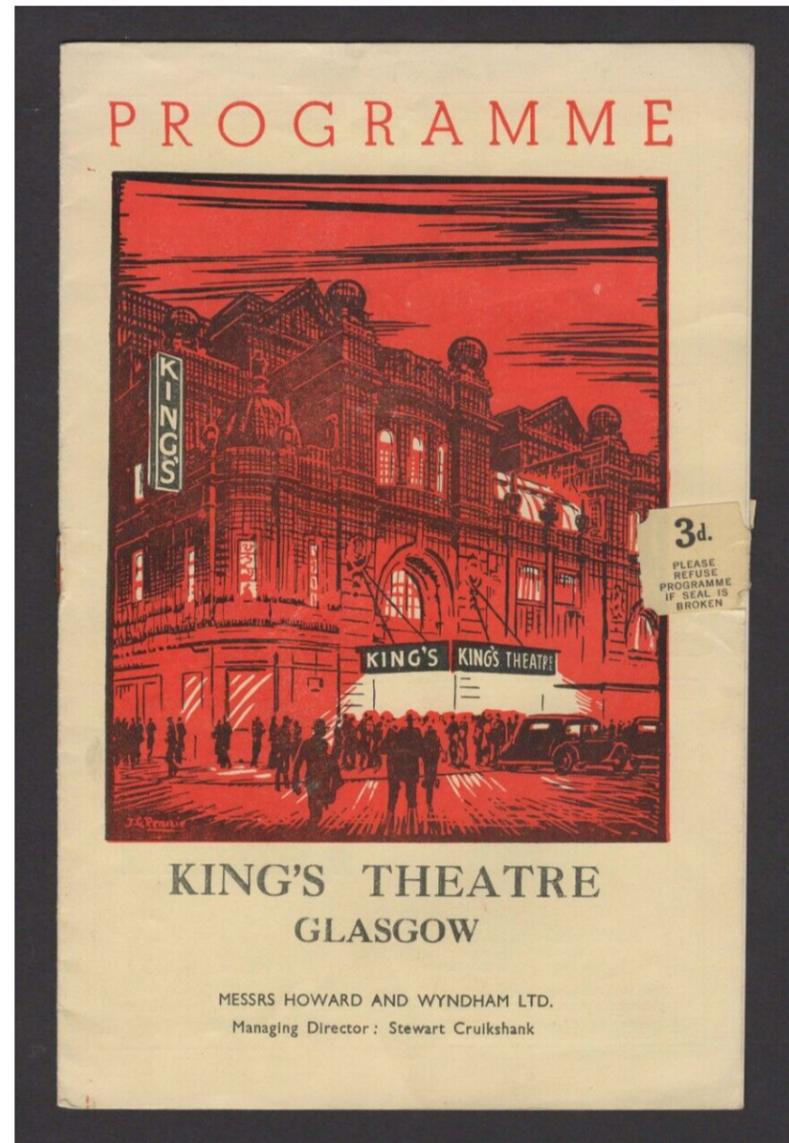
The auditorium features 3 cantilevered balconies, avoiding columns to improve sightlines. Between the tiers and the proscenium are pairs of boxes with a colonnade of shell niches meeting the gallery level.

The foyer and public spaces feature similar architectural flourishes that have been preserved to varying degrees. The listing states in relation to the foyer: *marble lined, coffered barrel-vaulted ceiling, pilasters to stairway, balcony with caryatids.*

The category A listing demonstrates the theatre's importance as such a well preserved example of a Matcham Theatre. The opulent design of the exterior and interior are of historical importance. All work proposed will need to be planned carefully so as to preserve and enhance its significance.



View of the auditorium from the stage



1954 programme

## Relevant Planning History

Given the scale and importance of the theatre, many planning and listed building consent applications have been made. Below is a summary of key applications that are relevant to the proposal:

June 2004

Listed building consent ref: 04/01156/DC

Permission was granted for removal of the front entrance canopy.

July 2010

Listed building consent ref: 09/02270/DC

Permission was granted for internal and external alterations to listed building

February 2016

Listed building consent ref: 15/02086/DC

Permission was granted for installation of replacement architectural lighting scheme

June 2019

Listed building consent ref: 19/00409/LBA

Permission was granted for internal alterations

# Design + Access

## Overview

The design proposes to upgrade the existing wireless data access throughout the theatre for patrons, staff and visitors. The key reasons for this programme of work are as follows:

- To facilitate the rollout of a reliable and standardized hearing assistance technology that will improve accessibility and inclusivity for all patrons of the theatre. This will ensure that all patrons including those with hearing and vision impairments can enjoy the performances with amplified sound and audio description from anywhere within the auditorium, an upgrade on the current offering which relies on line of sight to be operational. This will further ensure that the venue fulfils their duty as a service provider under the Equality Act 2010, providing an auxiliary aid to those who would otherwise be unable to enjoy the performance for reasons pertaining to disability.
- The new installation will also allow the use of ‘Gala Pro’. An app with on demand captioning and audio description for those who require access to this, meaning that they will be able to attend any performance rather than only being able to attend the specific Audio Described/Captioned performance. In addition, the on demand captioning service may be beneficial to those who speak English as a second language, so that they may be able to follow the dialogue for further understanding.
- Improve access to WiFi for patrons in a time of ever increasing use of smart devices. This includes access to social media that helps promote the venue, access to online services such as programmes, ticket booking, ordering food and drinks from within the auditorium and also audience participation during certain performances (for example casting votes in a talent show).
- Facilitate electronic point of sale (EPoS) terminals in the auditorium to take payments using wireless PDQs
- Improve WiFi performance for staff and visitors to the building who require high speed Internet access for a range of typical activities required to run a theatre.

These works are crucial to ensure the theatre can remain a primary venue in the city and help broaden the demographic of patrons including those who were deterred from visiting in the past due to hearing impairments.

## Current Installation

The current installation of wireless access points include a number of units installed throughout both the front and back of house areas. The coverage can be sporadic and will be unable to handle the future demands of wireless data commensurate with expected use. Nor can it facilitate the requirements for the new hearing assistance technology or EPoS use in the auditorium.

Generally speaking, the current units have been installed in a sensitive manner, making use of clusters of other surface mounted electrical hardware and set out neatly in front of house areas where original or important architectural details are present. By being surface mounted, including surface mounted trunking where required, these units have not made a permanent impact on the theatre’s historical fabric.

## Proposed Installation

A comprehensive survey of the current wireless installation has been undertaken, identifying the upgrades necessary to provide the required coverage. Please refer to the report included in the application for the full summary of this survey. The report has proposed suitable locations for the wireless access points to ensure good coverage. Studio DJL have worked with Node4 to identify locations that meet both the technical requirements of the theatre, but also preserve and enhance the architectural quality of the building.

Many of the access points are located in back of house areas where there is little evidence of important architectural features. These are mostly perfunctory spaces with

modern finishes and feature many different exposed services. Whilst these spaces are less architecturally significant than the public areas, it is still important that all works are installed sensitively and in a way that does not interfere with the original fabric of the building.

Areas of more careful and precise installation include the front of house circulation areas, bars and the auditorium. The primary objective of the upgrade works is to provide adequate coverage during a performance and so it will be necessary to install wireless access points within the auditorium. As the heritage assessment describes, the auditorium is of particularly special importance. So it is crucial that the installation of the units does not detract from the architectural character of the space.

### Method of Installation

Where ever new wireless access points are to be installed, this will be done as sensitively and discreetly as possible with the utmost care taken to preserve the original fabric and overall appearance of the building's interior. This is particularly important in the front of house spaces and the auditorium. The following methods will be utilized during the installation of the works.

- Wherever possible, new hardware will be installed adjacent to existing clusters of electrical units. This will reduce the overall impact of technical infrastructure.
- New units will be installed in discrete locations whenever possible. Given the nature of the technology, it is sometimes necessary to install the units at high level for maximum coverage. This also minimizes the number of units required. Where units are visible, they are to be fixed sensitively and in proportion with the surrounding architectural features such as paneling, mouldings and timber work. They should be set out carefully and in such a way that does not detract from the overall elegance of the interior.

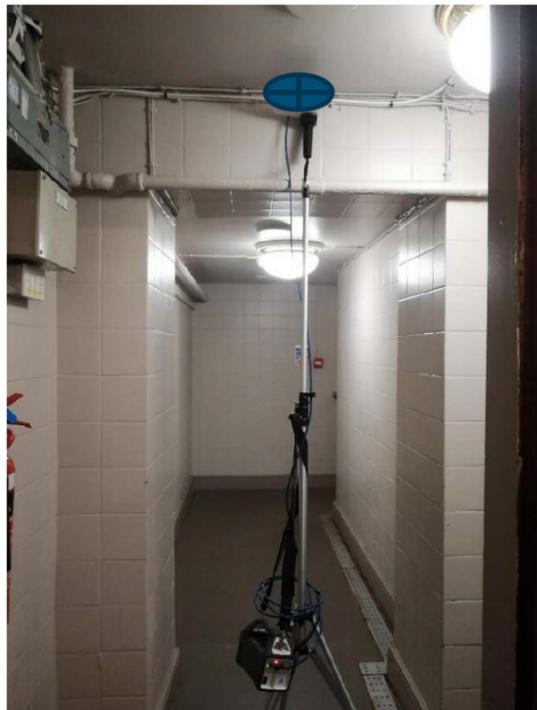
- Existing conduit for running cables will be utilized for new installations wherever this is practical.
- Where re-use of existing conduit is not possible, new surface mounted conduit will be used. This will be installed discretely, be as narrow as possible and run along existing architectural features such as dado rails to reduce the visual impact on the interior. Conduit should be of high quality durable material, finished to blend into the finishes, and fixed in a way that minimizes damage to the fabric of the building and allows for easy removal and replacement in the future.
- In limited situations where it is not practical to use surface mounted conduit or where it would have an adverse effect on the special character of the building (such as long exposed run across a blank wall or ceiling), penetrations in the existing walls and ceilings will need to be made. These should be as small as possible and be prioritized to non-original elements of the building. Cables should make use of existing voids wherever possible to avoid needing to chase into any surfaces.
- All wireless access point units should be fixed in a way that minimizes damage to the fabric of the building and allows for easy removal and replacement in the future.

# Heritage Impact Assessment

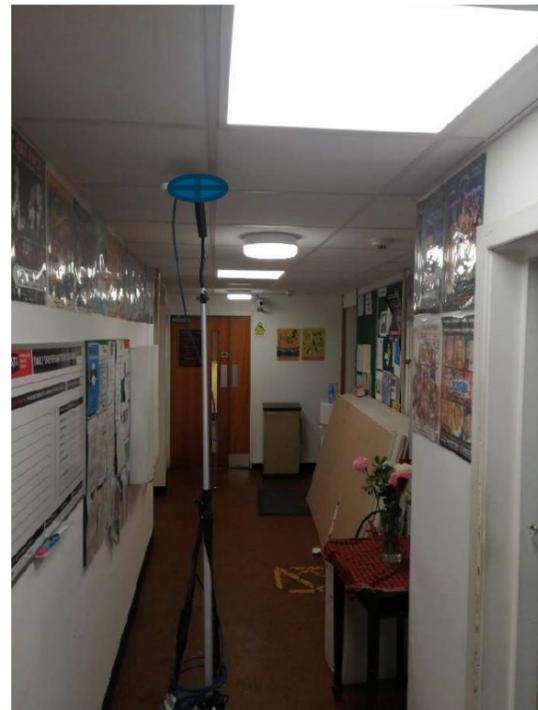
## Overview

To demonstrate how the design has taken into consideration the impact of the architectural and historical heritage of the theatre, a selection of proposed wireless access point locations have been presented below. Please refer to the wireless survey report for plans and images showing the location of all proposed points.

## Back of House Spaces



Location AP 4 - Substage - Unit installed at high level utilizing existing cabling run, space contains little original building fabric or significant architectural elements



Location AP 6 - Ground Floor/ Stalls Level - Unit fixed at high level onto modern suspended ceiling tile system, space contains little original building fabric or significant architectural elements

## Front of House Spaces



Location AP 13 - Ground Floor/ Stalls Level - adjacent to existing cable routes



Location AP 25 - Grand Circle - Unit will be centered on door



Location AP 36 - Upper Circle - unit installed at high level with other equipment and in close proximity to existing conduit.

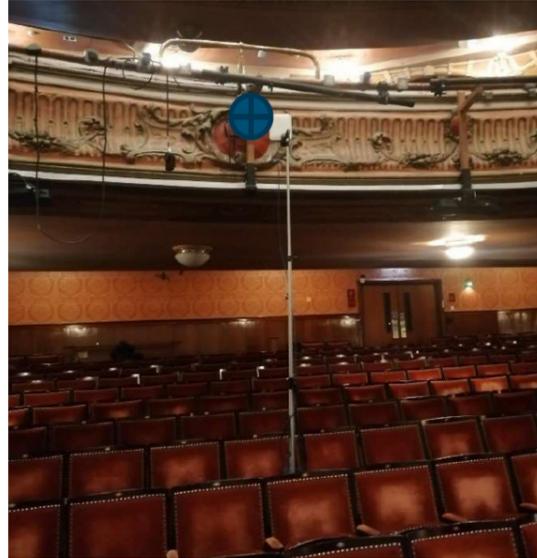


Location AP 41 - Gallery Level 3 - unit installed at high level centered on door and close to existing services

## Auditorium



Location AP A4 - Stalls level - unit installed at high level close to existing cabling



Location AP A4 - Stalls level - unit installed to existing lighting rail making use of existing infrastructure



Location AP A6 - Stalls level - unit to be fixed above door in close proximity to existing wall mounted services and cabling



Location AP A11 - Stalls level - unit installed at high level close to existing cabling

# Conclusion

Having identified the elements of the theatre that constitute the historic and special architectural character of the building, this report concludes that those elements have been protected:

- The external appearance and setting of the building will be unaffected
- The impact on the historic elements of architectural significance affected by the proposal are minimal and are not considered to detract from the heritage value of the building. Moreover, they will enhance the experience of visitors and improve the functionality of the venue.
- The installation of wireless access points will be undertaken in a way that will minimize impact on the fabric of the building and in accordance with the method statement included in this report.

Planning policy documents and guidance considered for this application:

- *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*
- *Glasgow City Development Plan 2017*
- *Glasgow Central Conservation Area Appraisal*



Thank You

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