

Oldham Coliseum Building Condition Survey Independent Assessment

Commissioned by
Oldham Coliseum Theatre Ltd

Oldham Coliseum Building Condition Survey – Independent Assessment

Thank you for appointing Plann to carry out this assessment. Our report contains the following four sections:

- The qualifications of the assessor
- The terms of reference for this report
- Executive summary
- Detailed assessment

1. Plann's qualifications to undertake this assessment.

Jack Tilbury has over thirty years' experience in both the theatre and construction industries. Jack, started as a Production Manager on theatre tours, new writing and large-scale events before co-founding theatre consultancy Charcoalblue in 2004. Jack founded Plann in 2011 with an aspiration to help theatres set up and manage Capital Projects, offering Project Director, Project Management, Client Rep and Theatre Consultancy services for clients including the National Theatre, The Old Vic, The Bridge, Bristol Old Vic, The Yard, Theatr Clwyd, Punchdrunk, ATG and Nimax.

Jack brings extensive experience of the operational requirements of theatres, knowledge of capital works and an understanding of the relevant legal and statutory regulations that apply to theatre buildings.

2. Terms of Reference

Oldham Coliseum Trust have provided us with the following brief for this report:

While Oldham Coliseum Trust lament the passing of this historic building, they are committed to working with the council to focus energies on a new venue scheduled to open in 2026. However, if this timeline feels optimistic, it is important to know whether reactivating the Coliseum in the short-term is an option. We believe it's critical that venue-based theatre isn't allowed to disappear in Oldham, and the longer the gap between venues, the more likely this is to happen.

We are requesting an independent assessment into the cost and complexity of once again reopening the venue as a working theatre. This will be by reviewing existing documents and carrying out an independent site visit.

3. Executive Summary

Plann has reviewed the report “Oldham Coliseum Theatre – Building Condition Survey & Statutory Assessment (2023)” dated 1st February 2023, and we carried out a site visit on Friday 5th May.

In summary, our findings are as follows:

- 1) The Council’s report was compiled by the Council’s Technical Delivery team of professional surveyors, engineers, and safety experts. It also references the contents of a previous condition survey carried out in February 2019 by Unity Partnership. Both reports are detailed and thorough and, in our view, appear to offer a fair and reasonable picture of the condition of the building.
- 2) The report lists a wide range of defects, but most are relatively minor maintenance issues. Other than completing the recommended works to upgrade the fire doors, there is nothing we feel would fundamentally stop the building from reopening.
- 3) Some reported issues have obviously persisted for some time, which would suggest that investment has not been available from either the Landlord (Oldham Council) or the tenant (The Coliseum Trust) to fund maintenance and repair projects over several years. Given that the building has been scheduled for closure for some time however (pending the opening of the new theatre), this is perhaps unsurprising?
- 4) The Council’s report suggests that the capital investment required to keep the building open would have been £240,000 in this financial year, followed by a further £126,000 over the following two years. This seems to be a reasonable assessment if the aim were to maintain the theatre indefinitely going forwards. In this situation, works would be required to the heating system, pipework, electrics, lifts, structure, and roofs over the medium term as many of these are nearing the end of their useful lifespan or require significant repair.
- 5) Our brief however is to assess “*whether reactivating the Coliseum in the short-term is an option*”. While there are obvious operational and maintenance challenges that would ideally be improved, reopening the building for a limited period would only require the most urgent or statutory works to be carried out. The majority of the heating, ventilation and electrical systems are working satisfactorily and could be kept running for another two years without major replacements.
- 6) Our conclusion is that, using the costs provided within the Council’s report, the theatre could be reopened at a capital cost of **approximately £150,000**. This includes an additional 10% on the costs outlined below to allow for fees and contingency. The works could be specified, procured, and completed in around three months from instruction.

4. Detailed Assessment

To assess the cost of a temporary reopening of the building, we have reviewed each cost item suggested in the Council's report and provided a commentary as to how essential each would be. Our assessment follows their section headings, as follows:

Health & Safety

Most of these recommended tasks could be carried out by the in-house staff.

To provide additional H&S training, signage and equipment, we would recommend:

An allowance of £2,000

Building Services

We have provided a line-by-line review of the maintenance works recommended by the Council in the attached *Appendix A*. In summary, we have suggested that not all of these works would need to be undertaken if the building is only occupied for a further two years. We would recommend:

An allowance of £37,900

Water Quality

The Council recommends repair works and regulatory upgrades to various water pipes and services throughout the building. While none of these issues would prevent the building reopening, water safety in public buildings should be taken seriously. We agree with the Council's assessment and would recommend,

An allowance of £7,500

Building Fabric

The Council recommendations under this category fall into three main areas of cost:

a) Fire doors

The theatre fire doors were surveyed recently by an independent fire risk consultant, and many were found to need repair or upgrading to meet current building and fire safety regulations. This is a legal requirement, and these works should be undertaken prior to the building reopening. We agree with the Council's assessment and would recommend,

An allowance of £65,000

b) The auditorium

The report notes that remedial works are required to flooring and handrails in the auditorium. This work could be carried out by the in-house technical team. While a small handrail extension is required in two locations on the balcony, the height of the balcony handrail in front of the fixed seating does meet regulations and does not need to be altered.

No cost

c) Cracks, leaks and damp

The majority of the costs associated with these works relate to the two-storey office/ administration building, which suffers from damp. While the current working conditions are not ideal, this has been the situation for a number of years and could continue in the short-term following some remedial improvements. While the Council's recommendations are all very sensible, these assume a medium to long term use of the building and are not cost effective if the intended use is only to be for a short period. We would recommend instructing a structural survey to check that the cracks in the walls are not a safety issue, and carry out external maintenance and repair works to minimise further leaks. It is difficult to accurately estimate the cost of this, but we would recommend,

An allowance of £25,000

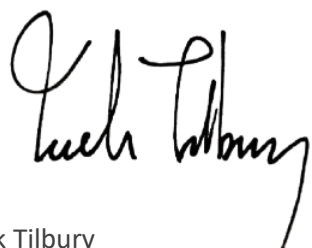
This provides a total cost of £137,400 + VAT + fees and contingency.

These costs are based on the following assumptions:

- That the costs suggested by the Council's surveyors are reasonably accurate. Plann has not attempted to verify these in any way.
- That the technical and maintenance staff of the theatre will still be in post to manage and oversee the contract works and to carry out their usual routine maintenance.
- That the venue will be secured during the closure period against any further deterioration such as flooding, vermin, vandalism, break-ins, or plant failures.

We trust that this report is useful. Please let me know if we can be of any further assistance.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jack Tilbury', written in a cursive style.

Jack Tilbury
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