

Protecting theatres for **everyone**



Our Ref.:1876

20 April 2017

For the attention of Andrew Cornfoot

Planning and Development
Coventry City Council
Much Park Street
Coventry CV1 2PY

Dear Mr Cornfoot,

Warwick Arts Centre, Gibbet Hill Road, Coventry

Application Ref: FUL/2017/0530

I write regarding the above planning application for part demolition and redevelopment of the Warwick Arts Centre. The Trust supports the application. Please note that we were not consulted, as per our statutory remit.

Remit: The Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. We were established through the Theatres Trust Act 1976 'to promote the better protection of theatres' and provide statutory planning advice through The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, requiring the Trust to be consulted on planning applications which include 'development involving any land on which there is a theatre'.

Comment: The Theatres Trust actively encourages theatre owners and operators to invest in their facilities to ensure they meet building and accessibility standards, and the needs and expectations of modern audiences, performers, producers and staff. The Trust therefore supports this application for the partial redevelopment and refurbishment of the Warwick Arts Centre to ensure it is fit for purpose into the future.

From our interpretation of the plans, the proposal is to demolish and rebuild the current Mead Gallery, cinema, bookshop and atrium, while retaining the theatre, studio and Butterworth Hall. The new extension will include a new main entrance and an extended lobby and foyer area, with a new café and bar opening out onto the entry plaza and activating this frontage. We are pleased the plans have considered and improved circulation through the foyer and its connectivity with the theatre, and include measures such as the new large capacity lifts to provide full access around the wider Centre.

The new Mead Gallery will be relocated to the ground floor to maximise its visibility and accessibility, and additional toilets, storage, and back of house facilities will also be provided. The three new cinema auditoria are to be located on the first floor and linked to the Arts Centre upper foyer level. A plant room and chiller compound is proposed within the service yard to service both

Theatres Trust

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The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

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the existing Arts Centre and proposed extension. The new extension also introduces a new main elevation for the Arts Centre that wraps around the bus station frontage and opens up and enhances the buildings appearance within the public realm. Overall, these new and revitalised facilities complement and support activity within the theatre and wider Arts Centre, will help attract new audiences, and make it more sustainable in the long term.

We also welcome the refurbishment of the theatre and other spaces in the Arts Centre to ensure they feel integrated and connected with the new facilities. The majority of the proposed works for the theatre spaces are 'behind the scenes' and involve the upgrade and replacement of the wiring, security, communication, lighting and technical production, and the ventilation and cooling systems. Most of these systems have reached the end of their useful life and we support their modernisation and upgrade to improve the safety, environmental performance, technical capabilities, and operation of each venue. We also welcome the general refreshing and refurbishment of the worn fittings, wall and floor coverings, and seats, and the proposed improvements to the acoustics in the studio theatre and the dressing rooms.

We note that it is intended that a temporary theatre space will be created adjacent to the Arts Centre during the construction of the proposed development, permission for which will be sought under a separate planning application and we request that we are consulted when that is submitted.

Overall, this proposal will improve accessibility, facilities, audience and performer conditions, and modernise the Centre to ensure that it can support a wide range of culture and arts into the future. We would therefore recommend granting planning permission and attach any appropriate conditions accordingly.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ross Anthony', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ross Anthony
Planning Adviser