

Our Ref.: RA/9006026

2 May 2017

Mr Tony Mitchell  
Planning Services  
Manchester City Council  
Manchester M60 2LA

Dear Mr Mitchell,

**New Arts and Media Building, Cavendish Street, Manchester, M15 6BG**

Application Ref: 115648/FO/2017 & 115649/LO/2017

I write regarding the above planning and listed building applications for the erection of new arts and media building for Manchester Metropolitan University, to provide a theatre, poetry library, exhibition and performance space, cafe / restaurant / bar, office accommodation and associated operational floorspace, incorporating the retained former Town Hall facade. The Trust supports the application. Please see our advice below.

**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 on theatre buildings and theatre use in England through The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (DMPO), requiring the Trust to be consulted by local authorities on planning applications which include 'development involving any land on which there is a theatre'.

**Comment:** The Trust welcomes this application and supports the development of new cultural facilities as part of the regeneration of this site for the purposes of creating a new arts and media building for Manchester Metropolitan University. We recognise the primary purpose of this building is an education facility, rather than a commercially operated or community theatre, nevertheless, we do make the following observations about the design that warrant further consideration by the applicant to maximise its flexibility and to facilitate wider community use:

- Acoustic separation between the auditorium, public areas, and other facilities is vital for the successful operation of the theatre. Measures such as the sound locks to each entrance are supported, but it is assumed that adequate sound insulation has been incorporated into the design to prevent noise transfer.
- We note the building reception area will also serve as a box office for public facing events, so this should be clearly signposted.
- The main back of house access for disabled and less mobile people between the basement level dressing rooms and stage appears to be via the goods lift, which may

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The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

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not always be readily available, given it also serves the rest of the building. It might be useful to provide an accessible dressing room on the ground level, perhaps expanding the accessible WC or by creating an additional dressing room adjacent to the green room in the area designated as foyer lounge space.

- The applicant should confirm the dressing room capacity (for 12 people) is suitable for student and community performances, as they do tend to have larger casts and ensembles.
- We recommend a sightlines/ view analysis for the seating on the balcony, particularly for the second row of seating proposed which may need to be raised to ensure a clear view of the stage.
- There is relatively little wing space, and the applicant may like to consider leaving the two lobby spaces on either side of the stage open (or even with moveable panels) to maximise flexibility for staging shows. Likewise, it may be useful to provide direct access from back stage to the two balconies on either side of the stage.

Overall, we support the proposal, and note the theatre is complemented by a generous front of house, albeit jointly use foyer and lounge area, and good range of back of house facilities for a theatre of this size, including the wardrobe, workshop, storage areas, and there is good clear and level access for deliveries. If the applicant is satisfied the above issues have been considered within the context of operating the wider arts and media facility, we would recommend granting planning and listed building consent, attaching conditions, as appropriate.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely,



Ross Anthony  
Planning Adviser