

Protecting theatres for **everyone**



Our Ref.: RA/1924

2 June 2017

Barbara Kirkbride
Planning and Building Control
Liverpool City Council
Municipal Buildings
Dale Street
Liverpool L2 2DH

Dear Ms Kirkbride,

Royal Court Theatre, Roe Street, Liverpool L1 1HL
Application Ref: 17L/1134

I write regarding the above listed building application for internal alterations to the Royal Court Theatre, known as Act III. The Theatres Trust supports the application. Please see our comments below.

Remit: The Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. We champion the past, present and future of live theatre, by protecting the buildings and what goes on inside. 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, 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 supports this scheme to create a new 150 seat basement performance venue, improve access, and to provide upgraded back and front of house facilities to sustain and support the ongoing viability of the Royal Court Theatre. The alterations will ensure the theatre meets current building standards and the needs and expectations of modern audiences, performers and producers.

The Trust has been closely involved in the development of the wider refurbishment scheme for the theatre, including Acts I and II, which have now mostly been implemented. To help develop the proposals for Act III, which are the subject of this listed building application, the Theatres Trust facilitated an independent peer-based Advisory Review of the proposal with a panel of theatre design, operation, and conservation experts in July 2016. The purpose of the Advisory Review was to consider how the proposed scheme improved income generation and the way the building functions as a theatre, whilst respecting the building's historic significance. The feedback provided by our Advisory Review Panel was mostly positive and the observations made have largely been incorporated into the submitted plans.

The Theatres Trust therefore supports the proposed works and alterations and agrees with the

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The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

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rationale and justifications provided in the Design and Access and Heritage Statements. We particularly welcome the alterations to the upper balcony and creation of a new access point to the new bar, facilities and foyer on level 3. This makes effective use of this space and creates a more accessible and useable balcony area. We also welcome the alterations to the basement bar to create a secondary performance space, and given the alterations required to install the new structural beams, we are pleased with the efforts to retain the look and feel of the existing bar and the reuse of key features such as the panelling and glazed doors.

Overall we agree the alterations will enhance the theatre's facilities, create a vibrant and more accessible venue, and sustain this important listed building as a key cultural asset for Liverpool. Having been through the Advisory Review process to refine the scheme, we are highly supportive and recommend granting listed building consent.

This advice reflect guidance in Paragraph 70 of the NPPF which states that in 'promoting healthy communities', planning decisions should '*plan positively for cultural buildings*' and ensure that such facilities '*are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable, and retained for the benefit of the community*'.

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