

Ref.: RA/3520

21 September 2017

Mr James Hughes  
Planning Service  
Haringey Council  
Wood Green  
London N22 8LE

Dear Mr Hughes,

**Hornsey Town Hall, The Broadway, N8 9JJ**

Application Ref.: HGY/2017/2220 and HGY/2017/2222

I write regarding the above listed building and planning applications for refurbishment, alterations and the change of use of the Hornsey Town Hall. The Theatres Trust supports the application, though please note our comments only relate to the theatre/ Assembly Hall aspects of the proposal. Please see our advice 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 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'.

**Advice:** The Theatres Trust is pleased to support this proposal to repair, refurbish and bring the Hornsey Town Hall back in to sustainable and publically accessible new uses, including a range of community facilities. The Grade II\* Town Hall complex is currently on Historic England's 'Heritage at Risk' Register and the Trust has engaged with the design team during both the design development and planning application phases to ensure the proposal respects the building's historic and cultural significance.

Overall the Trust welcomes the 'light touch' repairs approach (rather than full restoration) and the reorganisation of the Assembly Hall to create a number of flexible and adaptable performance and entertainment spaces, which could be used for theatre, cinema, live music, conferences, weddings, banquets, film shoots, etc. We agree with the justification outlined in the submitted documentation for the alterations, and acknowledge acoustics, the length of the hall and the distance of the balcony from the stage limit the effective use of the rear areas. We therefore support the shortening of the main hall, the creation of a bar/ front of house function space under the balcony and the conversion of the balcony into separate secondary

**Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

**T** 020 7836 8591

**F** 020 7836 3302

**E** [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk)

**W** [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk)

**Chair** Tim Eyles **Director** Jon Morgan

**Trustees** Richard Baldwin, David Blyth, Pam Bone, Paul Cartwright, Paddy Dillon, Ruth Eastwood, David Ian, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Dara Ó Briain, Simon Ricketts, Peter Roberts, Ann Skippers, Anna Stapleton

The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund co-operates with Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697

performance space. We appreciate the efforts to reuse the wood paneling and other original features, such as the clocks, in these new spaces. Other insertions, such as the lift and the connection between the new balcony space and the F.49 Committee Room corridor, are significant, but are necessary to make the building fully accessible and to improve circulation between these new spaces. The lift has been carefully located to maintain the symmetry of the foyer and hall and to minimize the impact on the main hall itself, and the overall benefits do outweigh the harm caused.

At our recent meeting with the project architects, the Trust raised the following design and operational issues for further consideration as the plans are refined:

#### *Stage and Back of House*

- The rear delivery road shows swept paths for vehicles 11m long. The applicant should confirm with the new theatre operators if this will be suitable for the types of sets and props they will need, or if access is required for larger 16.5m articulated vehicles.
- Confirm if the stage/ goods lift (LF.06) is also large enough for the required deliveries.
- Ensure there is enough room in the lift landing (G.60a) at stage level for props to be maneuvered out of the lift and on to the stage. It would be useful to have doors directly on to the stage from the landing, rather than going through the Green Room (G.61).
- The flying system has to be removed or reduced in size to allow for a new access point to the lift landing (G.60a). The operator may be satisfied with a reduced flying system, otherwise, consider 'flipping' the system so the pulley/ ropes are relocated to the opposite wing (G.63).
- The location of the disabled lavatory in the Green Room (G.61) means the loss of the rear stage cross over. An additional door should be provided to access stage right (wing G.63) to maintain flexibility for performances.
- Access to the ladies dressing room (F.51) has two steps, so is not wheel chair accessible. If access can't be provided without the loss of historic features, it would be useful to reorganise the disabled lavatory in the Green Room so it is a fully accessible dressing room.
- Safety laws require separate dressing rooms for adults and children. For shows with large casts, consider how the large dressing rooms may be sectioned off to accommodate this.
- Consider the installation of a shower(s) in the dressing rooms.

#### *Auditorium*

- Good acoustics will be vital to the success of the venue. We note that sound insulation to protect the adjoining uses will be largely addressed with the replacement roof, new ceiling, and the double glazing to the windows. But is also important that further consideration is given to the acoustics for a performance in the hall, particularly as the new rear wall and the bleacher seating will change how noise projects around the room. Additional baffles on the walls, or hanging from the ceiling, etc. may be needed and we would recommend an

acoustic study is undertaken to determine the best approach.

- We welcome the use of bleacher seating which retains the flexible flat floor use. However, bleacher seating may be heavy and it will be important to ensure the structure underneath can support the additional loading. We also recommend reviewing how the bleacher structure will affect the effectiveness of the sprung floor.
- Identify how to sensitively blackout the windows and roof lanterns, if needed by the operator, for day time performances.
- There is no dedicated dressing room/ performer space for the new balcony studio (F.50). We strongly recommend at least one is provided to support the use of this room as a live performance space and, depending on levels, suggest the plant next to stair ST.14 be relocated to provide this space.

## *Foyers*

- While we welcome the reinstatement of the original layout and doors of the vestibule (G.49), we recommend further consideration be given to how a draught lobby, or alternative, could be sensitively installed to maintain the conditions within the foyer during the winter months.
- The new box office in the former cloak room (g.50) will become a pinch point with only one door in and out, particularly as it is directly next to the front entrance doors where queues may block the entry. We strongly recommend keeping the existing corridor through the cloak room to allow the audience to circulate past the box office and out the second door to maintain a suitable flow of people. This will mean reorganisation of the accessible toilets in G.50a.
- Additional toilets, particularly for the Supper Room (LG.40) would be beneficial, as provision (mainly female facilities) is under the recommended guidelines for performance venues.
- The shared foyer and public spaces with the adjoining hotel, café and restaurant will have to be carefully managed and the various operators will need to coordinate their activities to avoid conflicts between each use.

Apart from the benefits of the building's reuse and restoration, the Trust hopes this revitalised and expanded venue will become a highly valued local facility which will expand cultural provision and opportunities within Crouch End. The Trust therefore recommends granting listed building and planning permission, attaching conditions as appropriate. Please contact us if we may be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely,



Ross Anthony  
Planning Adviser

## **Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

**T** 020 7836 8591

**F** 020 7836 3302

**E** [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk)

**W** [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk)

**Chair** Tim Eyles **Director** Jon Morgan

**Trustees** Richard Baldwin, David Blyth, Pam Bone, Paul Cartwright, Paddy Dillon, Ruth Eastwood, David Ian, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Dara Ó Briain, Simon Ricketts, Peter Roberts, Ann Skippers, Anna Stapleton

The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund co-operates with Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697