

Our Ref.: RA/3907

2 October 2017

Jill Nixon  
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council  
Archway Road  
Huyton  
L36 9FB

Dear Ms Nixon,

**Proposed Theatre, Shakespeare North, Land at Mill Street, Prescot L34 5QA**  
**Application Ref.: 17/00577/FULL**

I write regarding the above planning application for construction of a new theatre and education centre in Prescot. The Theatres 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 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 Trust welcomes this application for the development of the Shakespeare North Playhouse, including the creation of an Elizabethan style theatre at the heart of a new education facility. The Trust actively encourages local authorities to support cultural led regeneration projects, and this proposal, which celebrates the historic connection between Shakespeare and Prescot, will help drive wider cultural, social and economic aspirations in the borough.

Theatres are technically complex buildings that need to be carefully planned both inside and out to ensure the building will function efficiently and effectively, particularly when adapting a replica layout to modern performance and building regulations. The Trust met with the project design team in 2016 following the submission of the application for the previous approved scheme (15/00838/FULL). At that time the technical requirements for the theatre i.e. ventilation, acoustics, lighting systems, sound equipment, etc. had yet to be determined, and we also discussed a range of design and construction issues, such as access and the theatre's get-in/loading dock, for further consideration as the plans were refined.

The Trust is pleased these matters have largely been incorporated into this new revised

**Theatres Trust**

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**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

scheme. We welcome moving the main auditorium up one level and eliminating the basement, which together with the larger ground floor foyer and café, will greatly improve the flow and circulation of the audience around the building, improve way finding, and make the theatre much more accessible. Significantly it also allows for the creation of a scene dock and loading zone to the rear of the theatre that is separate from the other functions in the building and has direct access to the rear of the stage. Though the applicant should ensure the doors between the stage and scene dock are aligned to ensure sets and equipment can be manoeuvred between the two spaces.

We support the reorganisation of the back of house facilities, including the provision of the rear stage crossover, storage areas, larger and more accessible dressing rooms, and sound lobbies to the performance spaces. The larger and foyer and café provide the theatre with a stronger and active street frontage, and the larger café will be an important source of income to support the viability of the wider venue. Externally, we support the rationalisation of the materials and fittings which will make the building easier to maintain in the long term.

Over all the Theatres Trust supports this new revised scheme for the theatre and education centre. The improvements to the public spaces and audience circulation, together with the reorganisation of the back of house and support areas, will make the building much more efficient to operate and manage, and recommends granting planning permission.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance.

Regards,

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

Ross Anthony  
Planning Adviser