

Our Ref.: RA/1037

9 January 2018

Panyun Chow
Lambeth Planning
London Borough of Lambeth
10 Wandsworth Road
London SW8 2LL

Dear Miss Chow,

The Old Vic Theatre, The Cut, London

Application ref: 17/06083/FUL and 17/06084/LB

I write regarding the above planning and listed building applications for alterations to The Old Vic Theatre to improve access, circulation and WC facilities. The Theatres Trust supports the applications. Please see our remit and comments 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 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'.

Comments: The Theatres Trust actively encourages theatre owners and operators to invest in their theatres to ensure they meet current building and safety standards, and meet the needs and expectations of the people who use the theatre. The Trust provided pre-application feedback to the applicant, and welcomes and supports this scheme to improve disabled access and seating, audience circulation, the use and operation of the theatre's main entry foyer and bar, and to increase toilet provision.

We welcome the proposals to improve disabled access to the building and support the creation of a new accessible entrance from Waterloo Road. The reorganisation of the rear area of the stalls under the balcony creates the additional space needed to provide a new box office and a foyer linked to the new secondary entrance and basement bar via a new platform lift and stair. Locating the box office on the central axis of the building allows visibility from both the existing main entrance of the building and this new entrance. Whilst it is considered best practice that disabled patrons use the same entrance as other patrons to the theatre, we understand the limitations of this theatre's historic fabric which necessitate this secondary entrance, though it is our expectation that the existing main entrance will continue to be used by the majority of the audience, given its prominence.

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

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The creation of this 'inner foyer' are also involves the installation of ramps to deal with level changes and new sound and light lobbies/locks before entering the auditorium. Careful design of the doors opening onto these ramps will be needed for the acoustic control to ensure the doors are a tight fit and are effective.

We note the lift only provides access to basement and stalls level only, though we recognise the difficulties of extending the lift to the upper levels in this building, and agree the proposal is a significant improvement to accessibility which is also sympathetic to the historical significance of the building.

The existing ground floor foyer is to be refitted to provide a new bar in the location of the existing box office. The increase in bar provision related to the stalls level is welcomed as is the opportunity for the theatre to open the foyer as a daytime café / bar thereby providing the organisation with additional revenue.

We also support the reorganisation of the basement level and upper circle level foyer to greatly improve toilet provision, particularly the increase in the number of ladies WCs and a new accessible WC. Whilst the space allocation for the Penny Bar has slightly decreased this will be offset by the increase in foyer / bar space at ground floor level. These alterations do increase the number of WCs under the stalls floor and adjoining the rear wall of the stalls, and acoustic separation measures will be vital to avoid any noise or vibration impacts in the auditorium.

Overall the Trust agrees with the conclusions in the Heritage Statement by Alan Baxter (December 2017) that the scheme introduces significant benefits to the operation and function of the theatre, and as the alterations generally affect areas that have been much altered in the past, it will have relatively little impact on the theatres key historic building fabric and areas of highest historic and architectural significance.

Our comments 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'.

The Trust would therefore recommend granting planning and listed building consent. Please contact us if we may be of further assistance.

Regards,

Ross Anthony

Planning Consultant

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