

# Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/3597

01 October 2018

Emma Fitzgerald  
Planning & Strategy  
City Development  
The City of Edinburgh Council  
Business Centre G2  
Waverley Court  
4 East Market Street  
Edinburgh EH8 8BG

By e-mail: [planning@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:planning@edinburgh.gov.uk)

**Applications:** 18/04657/FUL, 18/07127/LBC & 18/07730/LBC

**Site:** 35 - 36 St Andrew Square Edinburgh EH2 2AD

**Proposals:** Erection of music and performing arts venue with licensed café/restaurant and bar facilities, and related arrangements for infrastructure, demolitions, and other works. (See Cover Letter for full statutory description); &

Demolition of boundary wall, modern basement kitchen, rear extension, and outbuilding within existing rear garden; regrading of land, erection of new boundary features and public realm. (see Paper Apart for full description); &

Proposed demolitions, alterations and remodeling, remedial works, and erection of extension to listed building.

## **Remit:**

The Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. We were established through the Theatres Trust Act 1978 'to promote the better protection of theatres' and provide statutory planning advice on theatre buildings and theatre use in Scotland through The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulation 2013, 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** these proposals which seek to deliver a significant new concert hall and smaller studio for International Music & Performing Arts Charitable Trust (IMPACT) Scotland, serving as a home for the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and additional venue for the Edinburgh International Festival. We consider that a venue of this scale will positively contribute to the cultural offer of not just Edinburgh, but of Scotland, helping to attract visitors which will benefit

## **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

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the wider economy. As such, it would be in conformity with Policy Ret 1 of the Edinburgh Local Development Plan which seeks to grant permission for uses including cultural facilities which generate significant footfall within the city centre.

The site is within a sensitive location, forming part of the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh UNESCO World Heritage Site, and includes Dundas House which is a Category A listed building. It impacts on the setting of several other heritage assets. We consider that the design and form of the proposal is of sufficient quality that, along with the public benefits arising from this scheme, alteration and demolition of existing structures is justified. We also consider that the design would positively contribute towards the character and setting of the World Heritage Site and Conservation Area. Such integration and safeguard of existing character, along with good accessibility, mean the requirements of Policy Ret 7 are also met.

In terms of internal layouts, we are supportive of what has been proposed. Generally the building appears open and welcoming with good visibility and permeability to and through the site, creating a new destination for Edinburgh. The 'Crown' and café/restaurant provide a reason to visit and engage with the building outside of performance times, and the overall sustainability and viability of the facility will be further enhanced through the provision of its function spaces. There is a good provision of toilets at different levels throughout the building for the public, although possibly backstage areas may benefit from additional facilities.

There appears to be a good level of provision and access for audience members and performers with disabilities, including the welcome inclusion of a Changing Places WC. It is regrettable that the Control Room doesn't appear to be accessible, although other backstage services such as the Sound & Communication Room are and lift access extends to the top level. We would also note the Changing Places WC appears to be backstage rather than a location that is more easily accessed by the public. We assume that some Principles Rooms could be used as additional changing rooms for disabled performers should it be required, particularly as within the main performance space there is no disabled changing room at stage level.

We would caution that there will need to be appropriate management and control of backstage areas and access, as there appear to be areas of cross-over with the public although possibly these may become locked around performance times. Around the studio the backstage area appears to be a means of escape, therefore it is important this is kept clear of obstacles and clutter created by the storage of instruments, sets and other equipment. There will also need to be careful management of loading/deliveries particularly during the day as there seems potential for the public to pass through this area.

Overall, this proposal appears to be well designed both internally and externally and will bring something new to Edinburgh's cultural provision. Where we have identified areas of potential challenge, this can be managed either operationally or through minor amendments to the final scheme. We **welcome** this proposal and **recommend the granting of planning permission and listed building consent.**

## Protecting theatres for **everyone**



Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or should you wish to discuss this representation in greater detail.

Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser

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