

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/2028

29 January 2019

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Pending Applications
Development Planning
City of Westminster
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Application: 18/10917/FULL

Site: Development Site (Nova) At Bressenden Place Victoria Street Allington Street And Buckingham Palace Road London SW1E 5EF

Proposal: Construction of a ground floor plus part four, six and seven storey building (Building 7b/7c) with new basement fronting Allington Street, Bressenden Place and Victoria Street for use as offices (Class B1), flexible retail (Class A1/A2/B1), flexible office/library (Class B1/D1) and flexible retail/library/office (Class A1/A2/B1/D1) and associated works, hard landscaping, highway, utilities and ancillary works with servicing from Bressenden Place. Reinstating elements of the retained facade and interiors of Sutton House (previously at 156-158 Victoria Street). The application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement (ES) which may be viewed with the application documents. (Site also known as Nova Place).

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'.

Comment:

Thank you for consulting the Theatres Trust on the above application which relates to a proposed development bounding the Grade II* listed Victoria Palace Theatre. Included within the proposals are allowance for a new lift and means of escape for the theatre.

As noted within our response to a previous EIA Scoping request in November 2018 we have no objections to the principle of this development or to the proposed uses. We are supportive of the delivery of a new library for Westminster, and generally consider offices and retail to be compatible neighbours for theatres with which mutual benefits can be achieved.

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

While we welcome efforts to provide improved public realm and enhanced pedestrian/cycle connectivity through the site which contributes to the wider masterplan for the Nova developments, we object to proposals as currently presented. This is because it would result in the theatre being unable to facilitate get-ins and get-outs (the delivery and removal of sets and stage equipment) along with any other activities requiring the handling of large vehicles, for example those associated with outside broadcasts. Fundamentally this would prevent the theatre from being able to operate. This issue would potentially be further exacerbated by alterations to the surrounding highway network.

Clearly, maintaining the theatre must be a priority. Aside from its huge cultural value and significance as a heritage asset there is great weight placed on supporting and protecting cultural facilities through paragraphs 8 and 92 of the NPPF (2018) and policies within the existing and proposed versions of both the London Plan and Westminster's City Plan. The theatre is a major attractor of people into the local area which helps support surrounding businesses including those within earlier phases of the Nova development. It is therefore essential that any conflict is resolved before permission for this scheme is granted.

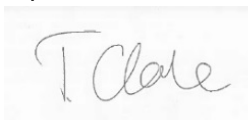
Our suggestion would be to replace the proposed trees shown on plans along the northern section of the former Allington Street with removable planting or other such activation that could be easily moved as required. This would enable the space to be cleared of obstruction and utilised as a vehicle route and set-down for the occasional large vehicles required to keep the theatre operational.

It is also important that the theatre is able to handle and receive more general deliveries on a day-to-day basis, and we suggest this can be achieved by making the western side of the former Allington Street a shared surface with controlled vehicle access. The direct engagement of the theatre will be essential.

We would also note the potential for noise and vibrations to impact on performances during construction works but this can be managed by way of condition requiring a construction plan to be agreed between the applicant/developer and the theatre.

In conclusion, currently we **object** to this proposal on the basis that the proposed public realm works would prevent the theatre from being able to operate. However we believe this issue can be resolved and as such we would be keen to work with the applicant, the theatre and the Council to achieve a positive outcome.

Please continue to engage with the Trust regarding this site and any further revisions to proposals.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser