

# Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC

08 December 2021

Julia Asghar  
Pending Applications  
Development Planning  
City of Westminster  
PO Box 732  
Redhill,  
RH1 9FL

By e-mail: [southplanningteam@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:southplanningteam@westminster.gov.uk)

**Application:** 21/07866/FULL

**Site:** 6 Catherine Street London WC2B 5JY

**Proposal:** Use of basement and ground floor as flexible arts centre and installation of extract ducts to ground floor rear roof.

## **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:**

This application has come to the attention of the Trust because it is proposing performance use at a space associated with Theatre Royal Drury Lane.

The unit is within the ownership of the theatre's operator and adjoins its 'The Garden' venue, an all-day cafe and bar. It was previously an office let by a third party. The upper levels contain office accommodation for the operator. The application covers the ground and basement levels. There has previously been consent for this unit to have been converted into a restaurant, prior to changes to use classes.

The proposed venue will further add to the diversity of performance spaces within the West End, facilitating a range of small-scale and intimate performances alongside events, functions and exhibitions within a 120-seat studio space. It can also host additional rehearsal space, something for which there is clear need. To the basement level will be a further smaller flexible space.

## **Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL  
T 020 7836 8591 E [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk) W [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk)

Interim Chair Paddy Dillon Director Jon Morgan

Trustees Richard Baldwin, Paul Cartwright, Annie Hampson, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Jane Spiers, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

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

## Protecting theatres for everyone



We welcome these proposals. Paragraph 7.5.4 under Policy HC5 of the London Plan (2021) cites loss of space for cultural production in London and a struggle for creative businesses and artists to find sufficient venues. This proposal will help alleviate that pressure. The Policy itself supports growth of cultural facilities. Policy E8.C supports availability of theatre and studio capacity. Spatial Development Priority 2 of the Westminster City Plan 2019-2040 (2021) supports an enhanced cultural offer within the West End Retail and Leisure Special Policy Area. Policy 15 supports new arts and cultural uses. Therefore there is strong policy basis to support the proposed change of use.

Externally there will be new entrances created directly between The Garden and this venue along with a revised bar location. This will help reinforce the relationship between the respective venues and add to the flexibility in terms of how they can be used to supplement each other. To the rear will be the insertion of an air vent. There is little change to the front elevation other than the indicative addition of modest signage above what will be the venue's entrance, although the applicant's statement suggests a further application for signage will be submitted subsequently. These alterations are relatively minor and do not impact on the wider setting and significance of Theatre Royal Drury Lane.

Both venues are accessible, although it should be ensured that the accessible WC at basement level is Part M compliant and that wheelchair users can manoeuvre effectively with there being two sets of doors and a turn.

To conclude we welcome this proposal and are supportive of the granting of planning permission for change of use and necessary alterations.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or should you wish to discuss these comments further.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T Clarke".

Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser

### **Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL  
T 020 7836 8591 E [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk) W [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk)

Interim Chair Paddy Dillon Director Jon Morgan

Trustees Richard Baldwin, Paul Cartwright, Annie Hampson, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Jane Spiers, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

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