

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/1924

06 May 2022

Barbara Kirkbride
Development Control Division
Liverpool City Council
Cunard Building,
Water Street,
Liverpool,
L3 1AH

By e-mail: planningandbuildingcontrol@liverpool.gov.uk

Application: 21F/0117 & 21L/0118

Site: Empire Theatre Lime Street Liverpool L1 1JE

Proposal: Proposed extension to the Royal Court to create offices and changing facilities, including a side extension connecting the Royal Court to the Courtyard Bar and Restaurant and a roof extension above the existing Royal Court building; and

To carry out internal and external alterations in connection with proposed extensions (Appl No: 21F/0117) to Royal Court Theatre.

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:

These applications for planning permission and listed building consent have come to the attention of the Trust. They seek an extension to the Royal Court which will provide additional back of house facilities. We have not been formally notified despite this proposal falling within our statutory remit outlined above. We alerted the Council to this on 25th April but have received no response. Please ensure the Trust is notified of future applications related to theatres within the city.

The Royal Court Theatre is a statutorily listed heritage and cultural asset. It was built in 1938 in art deco style following the previous building having been destroyed by fire a few years previous. In 2012 there was a refurbishment programme which saw internal repainting, replacement of

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL
T 020 7836 8591 E info@theatrestrust.org.uk W theatrestrust.org.uk

Chair Dave Moutrey **Director** Jon Morgan

Trustees Paul Cartwright, James Dacre, Suba Das, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Lucy Osborne, 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

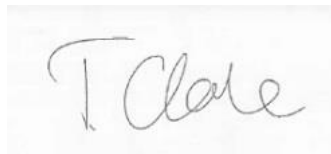
seating and cabaret-style layout in the stalls. The theatre was extended in 2015 to provide a new box office and additional bar space with the previous box office becoming a multi-purpose space. Alongside this was further improvements to front and back of house areas. A pub to the rear was acquired and converted into an externally-accessed bar and restaurant, opening around 2018. Internally the theatre has a nautical theme to reflect Liverpool's history with the basement lounge and bar said to be a replica of the main lounge of the Queen Mary. The auditorium is richly decorated with the ceiling curved in a series of arches with concealed lighting. The Royal Court is well regarded by local people and is a significant venue which forms a key part of Liverpool's renowned cultural offer. It produces its own works with a particular focus on locally-themed shows. Paragraph 93 of the NPPF seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities such as this.

This proposed extension is located to the rear of the theatre on the former pub site, and will wrap around the existing bar/restaurant and enclose the get-in. This is a sensitive location, not just because of the significance of the theatre itself but because of the Grade I listed St George's Hall being immediately opposite and the Grade II listed Lime Street Station and North Western Hotel within its wider setting. The extension will contain two additional dressing rooms to add to enhanced provision within the existing building as well as dedicated office accommodation and meeting rooms.

We consider that the design and scale of this extension responds well to its context. Operationally the enclosing of the get-in should result in reduced noise and disturbance to nearby properties which would be a further benefit. It provides the additional space the theatre requires taking account of the site's constraints with it adjoining the neighbouring shopping centre, needing to maintain the get-in and protecting safe means of escape. This extension will help the theatre to grow its team and capacity as a producer and to help it attract a wider range of touring shows. In turn this will enhance the city's arts and cultural offer. Policy EC4 of the Liverpool Local Plan 2013-2033 (2022) is supportive of proposals which enhance and expand Liverpool's cultural facilities. This scheme can also be considered to provide a public benefit which mitigates the impact of additional development at this designated heritage asset with reference to part 3.b of Policy HD1 and paragraph 202 of the NPPF.

We are supportive of this project and welcome the Royal Court's continued investment in its facilities. We therefore recommend the granting of planning permission and listed building consent.

Please do contact the Trust should you wish to discuss these comments further.



Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

Theatres Trust
22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL
T 020 7836 8591 E info@theatrestrust.org.uk W theatrestrust.org.uk

Chair Dave Moutrey **Director** Jon Morgan

Trustees Paul Cartwright, James Dacre, Suba Das, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Lucy Osborne, 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