

Our Ref.: MP/69

26 August 2010

Ms Sarah Ricketts  
Planning Officer  
London Borough of Islington  
Environment and Regeneration  
Public Protection and Development Management  
PO Box 3333  
222 Upper Street  
London N1 1YA



Dear Ms Ricketts,

**Laurel Leaf House, 11-13 Clifton Terrace, Islington, London N4 3JP**  
**Application ref: P101570**

Thank you for consulting The Theatres Trust on the above planning application for extensions, alterations and change of use from office (B1) to theatre (sui-generis) comprising flexible theatre/rehearsal space, cafe/ bar and ancillary facilities and a change of use/creation of 5 residential on the upper floors. The Trust **supports** the application. Please see our detailed advice below.

**Remit:** The Theatres Trust is The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres. The Town & Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995, Article 10, Para (v) requires the Trust to be consulted on planning applications which include '*development involving any land on which there is a theatre.*' It was established by The Theatres Trust Act 1976 '*to promote the better protection of theatres.*' This applies to all theatre buildings. Our main objective is to safeguard theatre use, or the potential for such use but we also provide expert advice on design, conservation, property and planning matters to theatre operators, local authorities and official bodies.

**Advice/comment:** The Trust is happy to support the application for a new 190-seat theatre, 80-seat studio and front and back-of-house facilities as well as the residential apartments. *The Park Theatre* in Finsbury will be privately owned and funded and is derived from a robust business plan to ensure the theatre is operationally successful and financially sustainable in the long-term. The Trust also supports the size and facilities proposed within the Finsbury Park catchment area. The theatre will deliver a program that will actively engage the local community in the work of theatre through a varied and challenging range of activities. This will include a broad artistic policy growing and depending on the needs of the local community. The theatre and studio will also be available for hire for theatre companies, youth groups, charities, community associations and local businesses.

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## Protecting theatres for everyone

**Director** Mhora Samuel **Chairman** Rob Dickins CBE  
**Trustees** Jason Barnes, Phil Clark, Marilyn Cutts, Venu Dhupa, Tim Foster, Penelope Keith CBE DL,  
Dr Pauleen Lane CBE, Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall, Anne McReynolds, Matthew Rooke,  
Chris Shepley CBE, Sam Shrouder, Ben Twist

The plans are accompanied by a sensible and realistic Design and Access Statement and it is clear that there has been extensive local community involvement. We support the design concept approach – providing a two-tier 190-seat main house designed around a thrust stage; 80-seat studio theatre/rehearsal space with bleacher seating; foyer/café/bar; main bar seating 45 and back-of-house facilities including three dressing rooms, green room, wardrobe, offices and prop stores.

The overall design, particularly the proposed bay window to the front elevation, has been carefully designed to advertise the theatre within the streetscape. The new extensions are also subordinate in nature and in keeping with the bulk of the existing building and the area. We support the contemporary glazed design approach for the bay window extension and also the simple rendered elevation which we consider enhances the appearance of the building and the street. We therefore assume that this will not cause any issues in terms of planning or for your design section.

The Trust is always keen to ensure that the proposed new theatre building will be fit for purpose. Theatre venues are technically complex buildings and do need to be carefully planned both inside and out. In terms of integral internal design we are pleased that experienced theatre consultants Charcoal Blue are involved with the scheme. We also note that architects Hughes Jones Farrell have prepared the design and are certainly capable of managing such a project. Furthermore, the Trust is pleased to see that works have made reference to the Association of British Theatre Technicians (ABTT) *Technical Standards for Places of Entertainment* (2009) and its *Theatre Buildings Design Guide* (2010), and that the works adhere to CABI's *Principles of inclusive design* (2006) which includes advice on upgraded buildings to Part M standards.

The Trust is committed to achieving sustainability for theatre buildings to protect theatre use. Following our successful Conference 08, *Building Sustainable Theatres* and helping to develop the Mayor of London's Green Theatre Plan in 2008, the Trust is running a three year project, Ecovue, providing environmental improvement advice to 48 London theatres. We have been in contact with the applicants and offered advice on renewable technology as well as reducing carbon emissions. We are satisfied that the applicant has produced a highly sustainable and carbon-efficient building which takes into account their financial position and the technical viability constraints of the technologies, thereby focuses on reducing carbon from efficient heating and cooling systems.

We are therefore pleased to support this proposal which will establish a 190-seat community theatre and 80-seat studio for Finsbury and urge Islington to grant Planning Permission.

I hope you find these comments useful. Do not hesitate to contact the Trust regarding any issues raised in this letter.

Yours sincerely,



Mark James Price, MRTPI, IHBC  
Planning and Heritage Adviser

cc Jez Bond, Director, The Park Theatre