

**The Theatres Trust**  
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Our Ref: VS/49 & 49a  
Please contact: Ms Vicky Simon

31 August 2010

For the attention of Mr Jonathan Woolmer

Mr Les Brown  
Divisional Director, Planning  
Regeneration and Housing Department  
Lambeth Borough Council  
Phoenix House  
10 Wandsworth Road  
London SW8 2LL

Dear Mr Brown,

**Royal National Theatre, South Bank, London SE1 9PX**  
**Application Ref: 10/02040/FUL and 10/02260/LB**

Thank you for consulting The Theatres Trust on the above planning and listed building applications for extensive works to the *Royal National Theatre* including: new entrance lobby and bookshop; reconfiguration of foyers; new education centre and refurbished Cottesloe auditorium; relocation of existing service yard; new catering and cafe areas; new four-storey rear extension providing workshop space. The Theatres 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 supports the application in principle because it will make the *National Theatre* more accessible and easier to navigate, offer enhanced facilities to audiences and staff and improve the building's energy efficiency. Theatres need substantial development if they are to keep pace with the public's expectations and the needs of performers and producers and we are keen to help theatre owners do more to improve, adapt and sustain their building stock to attract new audiences. The scheme reflects the need for the theatre to respond to the changing nature of the South Bank and improve the practical functioning of parts of the building. The application proposes extensive works to the main entrance and riverside elevation, remodelling of the Cottesloe foyer and a new extension facing the Upper Ground. Overall the works will make the theatre more open and permeable, allowing it to engage more effectively with the larger cultural audience around the South Bank.

The scheme has been informed by the detailed Conservation Management Plan and is sensitive to Denys Lasdun's original vision for the *National* whilst addressing some areas which have proved practically less successful. The alterations to the entrance are largely a reversal of remodelling works in

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the 1990s and will help to make the main entrance to the theatre more immediately obvious. Relocating the bookshop to the rear of the main foyer will open up the original views through the entrance to the river and give the bookshop more space. Plans to rationalise the theatre signage and make it more consistent will make the interior of the theatre easier to navigate.

The internal alterations are dependent upon the construction of the new building, which will free up space within the existing building envelope. This has been sensitively designed in terms of materials and massing to complement the existing *National Theatre* complex while clearly being read as a separate extension. It is a permeable and lively addition to the *National's* rather forbidding rear aspect onto Upper Ground and will help to animate this elevation. It also supports the *National's* aim of making its backstage workshops more visible to the public.

The Trust welcomes the proposals to relocate the service yard and open up the north-east corner of the building to the public with a new restaurant and café. The South Bank has changed considerably since the building was designed and these alterations will make this area of the building more inviting to pedestrians passing along the Queen's Walk. Ancillary functions such as these provide valuable additional income and help to attract visitors to the building.

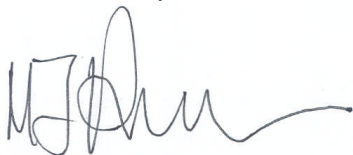
The Trust is also pleased to see the proposed remodelling of the Cottesloe foyer, which will help to address long-standing visibility and circulation problems. The extensive refurbishment of the auditorium will substantially improve the theatre's facilities whilst maintaining its special personality. The Discovery spaces will also give much-needed space for the National to pursue its educational aims.

The Trust supports the measures taken to make the building more sustainable and reduce its energy consumption. The *National* was designed at a time when energy efficiency was not a priority and consequently its consumption is high. The works incorporate attempts to reduce the building's energy use, including the introduction of double glazing into secondary elevations, insulation into cavity walls and the installation of a ground source heat pump in the new extension. The scheme also includes plans to enliven the currently under-used terraces with extensive planting, including areas of sedum roofing over the Lyttelton auditorium and workshops, which will make the terraces more welcoming and enhance local biodiversity.

This is an impressive scheme which will enable the *National* to substantially improve its facilities and practical functioning, ensuring that it continues to remain a centre of theatrical excellence. Furthermore, the proposed works will not adversely harm the special architectural significance and historic value of this cultural heritage asset. We would therefore urge you to **grant planning permission and listed building consent**.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MJP', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark J Price MRTPI, IHBC  
Planning and Heritage Adviser

cc John Langley, NT