

# Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/1074

03 November 2022

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**Application:** 22/00108/FULL

**Site:** Fourth Floor 43 Aldwych London WC2B 4DN

**Proposal:** Use of the fourth floor as a residential unit, installation of new glazed stair enclosure and glazed balustrade in connection with use of roof as a terrace.

## Remit:

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 Theatres Trust on this application for planning permission. We have been notified because this proposal seeks residential conversion within a building linked to the Aldwych Theatre and under their ownership. It was previously utilised as office space and has been vacant since May 2019.

The application site shares an address with the theatre and is part of a single block consisting of the Aldwych Theatre on the northern end, the Novello Theatre on the southern end and the Waldorf Hotel in between. This unit occupies the top floor of the corner of the building above the theatre's foyer but has independent access. It is in effect a neighbouring development.

The Trust's general position is to caution against such development because theatres (as well as other noise-generating venues) and residential uses are not necessarily compatible. This is due to the risk of noise and vibrations from theatres and associated activities which can take place late at night and can affect the amenity and living conditions of residents. In turn, there is a risk

## Theatres Trust

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**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

that noise-related complaints from new occupants can lead to detrimental restrictions on the ability of venues to operate, compromising their existence as important and valued cultural facilities. In examples such as this where the theatre is also a heritage asset there are additional implications on conservation should vacancy or change of use occur. This issue has necessitated policy protections coming forward within paragraph 187 of the NPPF (2021), Policy D13 of the London Plan (2021) and Policy 7 of the Westminster City Plan 2019-2040 (2021).

In this instance we acknowledge the two levels below this unit are already within residential use. We also believe there to be a small buffer between this unit and the auditorium by way of a void. Therefore in principle we would have no objection to this change of use on the condition that there would demonstrably be no unacceptable transfer of noise and vibrations between the theatre and this unit. There would also need to be sufficient glazing to the front where the noise of audiences arriving and departing could cause disturbance, although this may in any case be advisable with traffic and other noise at this location.

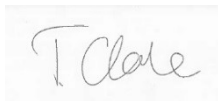
Having reviewed the Design & Access Statement/Heritage Statement there is no reference to design standards in terms of acoustic protection or assessment as to whether any such measures would be required. We urge that this is clarified, which could potentially be achieved by way of a condition requiring submission of an acoustic report prior to development and details of acoustic measures if they are required. Although the site is within the ownership of the theatre which may lessen the potential for conflict, this could change in the future so it is important that the same assurances and standards of design are sought for this site as would be expected of any other development of this nature.

If deemed necessary we would also recommend a legal agreement which would extinguish the right of occupants to make formal complaints on the basis of noise and disturbance from the theatre.

As this is a residential development we make no comment on the overall design and layout of this space, or whether the loss of commercial floorspace is acceptable.

Overall we raise no objection, subject to the conditions and clarifications requested.

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



Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser