

Protecting theatres  
for **everyone**



Ref.: TC/2384

26 May 2023

Planning Department  
The Woolwich Centre  
35 Wellington Street  
London  
SE18 6HQ

By e-mail: [planning-consultation@greenwich.gov.uk](mailto:planning-consultation@greenwich.gov.uk)

**Application:** 22/1754/F

**Site:** ALPHA MERIDIAN COLLEGE, 148 GREENWICH HIGH ROAD, LONDON, SE10 8NN

**Proposal:** Construction of a part 1, part 2, part 3-storey rooftop build-to rent residential extension (Use Class C3) including rooftop amenity area, alongside a refurbishment and change of use of the existing building from education to a mix of residential (Use Class C3) and flexible employment/community/retail floorspace (within Use Classes E and F), together with hard and soft landscaping, refuse and recycling storage, cycle parking, disabled car parking, and all ancillary works and associated development.

### **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'.

### **Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

**Telephone** 020 7836 8591 **Email** [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk) **Website** [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk) **Twitter** @TheatresTrust

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**Chair** Dave Moutrey OBE

**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

**Comment:**

Thank you for consulting Theatres Trust on this application. We have been notified because the proposed development is a direct neighbour to Borough Hall within the Greenwich Town Hall complex. Borough Hall, although currently closed, is a theatre and performance venue as well as being a Grade II listed heritage asset.

There is potential for Borough Hall to be negatively impacted by new development should it not be sensitively designed thus harming the venue's future viability and conservation, and in turn for amenity and living standards of future occupants of Meridian House to be sub-optimal. We responded to the pre-application public consultation urging the applicant to engage with us, but no approach has been received.

Borough Hall is a significant theatre and performance venue for the borough. It is currently on the Trust's national Theatres at Risk register as it is currently closed, nonetheless it is in lawful performance use with realistic potential and recent operator interest for return to use. Proposals for alternative use would be strongly resisted, and in the likely absence of evidence it is surplus to requirements would also be contrary to local, London and national policy seeking to protect such facilities. Therefore new development in the vicinity of Borough Halls such as this scheme must preserve its ability to function including considering potential acoustic and vibrational impacts on incoming uses and occupants and maintaining existing access and servicing arrangements. Paragraph 187 of the NPPF (2021) and Policy D13 of the London Plan (2021) are key material considerations in this regard.

Proposed plans show proposed residential units directly adjoining Borough Hall at upper ground level and above. Therefore noise transfer cited above is a legitimate concern. An Environmental Noise Survey has been submitted, but this appears not to take account of potential noise generated from Borough Hall. We recommend that access to Borough Hall is sought so that noise from shows and events can be replicated to more reliably measure impacts on sensitive receptors. This has been undertaken elsewhere where the venue had not been operational at the time. Any necessary mitigations could therefore be identified, if it is possible to mitigate. An alternative approach is to alter the layout of the proposed development so that there is separation between residential units and Borough Hall, creating a buffer.

It must also be considered that activities within the auditorium would not be the sole means of potential disturbance to occupants of the development. There would also potentially be large numbers of people arriving and departing from shows and events

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and delivery and removal of sets and equipment could potentially be required late at night or early in the morning including at weekends. Again, new restrictions on operating hours not currently in place would affect the range of shows Borough Hall could accept which would have a resultant impact on its viability and cultural offer. This could affect a broader range of proposed units than just those directly adjoining Borough Hall. Furthermore activities within the auditorium would not be restricted to performance times in the evening (and matinees) as there would also be rehearsals and other daytime hires and activities.

Therefore we urge further consideration and re-design of this scheme, along with amendment to the acoustic report as suggested. We would otherwise object to the granting of planning permission.

Should this application be recommended for approval, we recommend insertion of planning conditions relating to submission of details of acoustic measures and implementation prior to occupation. We can advise the Council on wording. We are also keen to engage positively with the applicant on these matters.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or should you wish to discuss this representation in greater detail.

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

Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Adviser

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