

Ref.: TC/3633

16 October 2026

Adam Hussain  
Development Management  
London Borough of Tower Hamlets  
Mulberry Place  
Clove Crescent  
E14 2BG

**Application:** PA/26/01534/A1

**Site:** 70-86 Chisenhale Road, London, E3 5RT

**Proposal:** Demolition of the existing building except for the retained southern, eastern and western facades. Construction of a 6-storey building and single-storey rooftop extension, to provide 33 new social rent residential units (Class C3). Reprovision of the Chisenhale Dance Space (Class E(d)) at ground floor level, together with associated amenity and play space, servicing, car parking, landscaping and ancillary works.

## **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)

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## **Comment:**

This application came to the attention of Theatres Trust because it is demolition of the building containing Chisenhale Dance Space and redevelopment for a mixed-use scheme including re-provision and new residential units. We have not been formally notified despite the site containing a theatre.

Chisenhale Dance Space started in 1976 as the 'X6 Collective', a group of five alternative counter-culture dance artists who sought to work outside of already established and mainstream dance companies and organisations. It was notable and has social significance for its feminist and queer works and inspirations. They started out in Butlers Wharf and moved to its current site, then a derelict varnish factory, in 1980. Alterations were undertaken to provide two studios with sprung dance floors, one of which was a theatre for public dance performances. It remains an independent charity under a wider Chisenhale Art Space banner, which includes a gallery and creative studios and workspaces within the neighbouring building. Chisenhale Dance Space remains an important theatre and cultural facility within London's ecosystem, as well as having a vital role within the borough supporting local people.

There is a policy emphasis on protecting and supporting venues and facilities such as this, at borough, London and national level. Policy S.CF1 of the Tower Hamlets Local Plan 2031(2020) seeks development to protect, maintain and enhance existing community facilities. Policy D.CF2 states that existing facilities must be retained, unless there is no longer a need or there is re-provision which would better meet the needs of existing users. Policy HC6 of the London Plan (2021) seeks planning decisions to protect and support cultural venues including theatres and other arts venues. Policy HC6 of the NPPF (2026) states development should not result in the loss of facilities unless replaced by equivalent or better provision, in a location which offers comparable or improved accessibility for the community it serves.

Given that Chisenhale Dance Space remains an active and highly-valued facility, it is evident that its loss would be unacceptable. We therefore welcome the principle that redevelopment of this site will provide a new space.

Our comments are entirely related to matters concerning Chisenhale Dance Space. We make no comment on the overall design and scale of development, or its proposed unit mix and standard of accommodation.

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Having reviewed the proposed floorplans, we are satisfied that the replacement venue can be functional as a theatre space and has the potential to operate successfully and sustainably. A ground floor location provides some operational and social benefit over the current upper-level location, because it offers greater accessibility and inclusivity.

As a comment on external design, we note the residential element includes a canopy above its main entrance with individual-lettered signage whereas the Dance Space has more of a standard 'shopfront' with fascia signage. We suggest there would be great merit in replicating the residential approach for the Dance Space as this would afford it greater visibility and prominence.

A critical consideration is the successful integration and co-location of residential uses with the Dance Space, given there is potential for acoustic and vibrational transfer to affect the amenity and living conditions of future residents. In turn, restrictions placed on the venue would undermine its continued operation. Policy P4.1 of the NPPF states that existing facilities should not have "unreasonable restrictions" placed on them as a result of new development. Part 2 of that policy seeks identification of impacts and for it to be demonstrated that suitable mitigation can be provided before first occupation of the development. This is reflected within the Noise Impact Assessment submitted by the applicant, which identifies mitigation through construction to make development acceptable. Whilst broadly in agreement with the report, paragraph 5.4.5 references measurement in "comparable dance studio environments". This should be clarified further, given that Chisenhale Dance Space operates as a public performance venue, which may not be the case for other dance studios, and has a more alternative and experimental programme. Levels from orchestral and rock music for example could reach beyond the 105 dB(A) captured by the study. The methodology for construction may still be sufficient, but this should be tested.

The existing and proposed use class of Chisenhale Dance Space requires revision. It is incorrectly identified as Class E(d) which is 'indoor sport, recreation or fitness'. We consider this facility to be a theatre (Sui Generis), in fact Theatres Trust awarded it a grant for equipment upgrades in 2024. It would otherwise be a mixed use theatre/performance venue and dance studio with a community offer, also Sui Generis. This is a long-standing use which could demonstrably be established through a Lawful Development Certificate if required. Designating this venue as

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Class E would not safeguard its ongoing occupation within the development, neither would it safeguard community and cultural use more broadly.

Chisenhale Dance Space will by necessity be displaced during development. It is essential that it is able to continue operating in the meantime at alternative premises which have been secured for the duration of development with the support of the applicant, this must be secured by way of condition and legal agreement.

Completion and handover of the replacement facility must also be secured, for the current operator. We recommend this is made available prior to first occupation of the residential units. This must also be secured by condition and legal agreement, for which we have set out an existing example below:

*“The Freeholder undertakes not to permit the Occupation of the residential units and/or other commercial elements of the development until the Theatre Space is Ready for Theatre Use and the Theatre Lease has been granted to Chisenhale Dance Space and evidence has been submitted to the Council to confirm such grant to Chisenhale Dance Space.”*

Alongside this, there must also be robust legal agreement securing the affordability and continuance of the facility as a cultural space in perpetuity, unless subsequently agreed otherwise by way of formal variation or equivalent future process. We can provide the council with further advice on wording.

Subject to those revisions and conditions outlined above, we can support the granting of planning permission.

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

Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Manager

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