

planning@camden.gov.uk

To Whom It May Concern:
Dear Planning,

Letter of Support - Planning Application Reference 2024/0993/P - 135-149 Shaftesbury Avenue London WC2H 8AH - Part demolition, restoration and refurbishment of the existing Grade II listed building, roof extension, and excavation of basement space, to provide a theatre at lower levels, with ancillary restaurant / bar space (Sui Generis) at ground floor level; and hotel (Class C1) at upper levels; provision of ancillary cycle parking, servicing and rooftop plant, and other associated works.

On behalf of the Board of the Soho Business Alliance, I wish to register our strong support for the above-mentioned application for Planning Permission, plus the associated application for Listed Building Consent.

The Soho Business Alliance (SBA) provides a unified voice for all businesses in Soho, with the aim of protecting and growing the economic diversity of the area in which we do business, through engaging with each other, our residents, other amenity groups and Westminster City Council. The SBA currently represent over 150+ businesses in the Soho area, with hospitality, retail and property being our current focus.

We understand that Yoo Capital acquired 135 Shaftesbury Avenue in October 2021 and that the application proposals submitted include a new 350-400 seat theatre (to replace the former Cinema) and restaurant designed for Cirque du Soleil and a 200+ room hotel for Citizen M.

The designs include a basement extension for the new theatre and a 6 storey addition to the top of the building to house the new hotel, with additional space on top for mechanical plant.

We consider the proposal to be well considered in terms of its overall design, with the new 'top' being distinct from the existing Grade 2 listed building below, and the full retention of the Grade 2 Listed structure and its return to beneficial use as a Theatre and permanent home for the Cirque do Soleil is to be applauded.

We consider that if it were not for the upward extension, there would be a significant question mark over whether the viable re-use and retention of the Grade 2 listed structure would be possible.

Indeed, when taken together with the new hotel above, it will form a significant new attraction within London's West End and, as such, will have a significant positive economic impact, both during the construction and operational phases, drawing significant numbers of new visitors to the area.

We acknowledge that the upward extension of the building will have an impact upon the significance of the heritage asset and its setting, but we consider this impact to be 'less than

substantial' and most likely at the mid-point of the less than substantial scale – i.e. the proposal seeks to fully retain the existing building and extend it to enable a viable scheme.

In such cases the NPPF advises at Paragraph 208 that:

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

As well as returning a historic building to its intended use and providing Cirque du Soleil's first permanent show space in Europe, the application documentation confirms that the project will deliver:

- Restored elements of the historic building, currently suffering from the corrosion of the steel frames within the masonry
- Additional security and entrances from New Compton Street, reducing anti-social behaviour
- Hotel lounge space open to residents to work from
- Free and discounted Cirque du Soleil tickets for local people and organisations
- Programmes of engagement with young people and schools
- Performances outside of the theatre, in hospitals and schools
- Partnerships with schools to upskill teachers and educational providers
- 125 permanent full time jobs
- £12.6m Gross Annual Value Added generated within the Greater London Economy
- £23m potential linked trip spend by theatre goers per annum
- £1.4m in anticipated value to the London Borough of Camden

The public benefits of the scheme are very substantial indeed, and in accordance with the advice contained within NPPF Paragraph 208, the SBA consider that, in this case, the public benefits of the scheme significantly outweigh any heritage harm identified.

As such, we would wish to lend our support to the grant of full planning permission and listed building consent.

Yours Faithfully

Jo May

For and upon behalf of The Board of the Soho Business Alliance