

**The Theatres Trust**  
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Our Ref: RA/3115

2 December 2015



For the attention of Ms Rachel English

Development Control  
London Borough of Camden  
Town Hall  
Argyll Street  
London WC1H 8ND

Dear Ms English,

**Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, 16 – 18 Chénies Street, London, WC1E 7PA**  
Application Ref.: 15/2015/5759/P and 2015/5984/L

Thank you for consulting The Theatres Trust on the above planning and listed building applications for the extension and refurbishment of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA). The proposal includes alterations to the Richard Attenborough Theatre at 16 Chénies Street and construction of student accommodation at 18 Chénies Street. The Theatres Trust supports the applications. Please see our comments below.

**Remit:** The Theatres Trust is The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres. Established by The Theatres Trust Act 1976 *'to promote the better protection of theatres'*, the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 requires the Trust to be consulted on planning applications which include *'development involving any land on which there is a theatre.'*

**Advice:** The Theatres Trust supports the overall proposal to refurbish and upgrade RADA's Chénies Street campus to improve the educational and theatre facilities for both students and audiences. As one of the UK's leading drama schools, RADA needs to make certain its buildings are fit-for-purpose to continue its training programme, address student needs, and meet the expectations of audiences. The current facilities are in need of rationalisation as well as repair and the refurbishment is essential in order for RADA to expand and provide greater access to the public.

We support the reorganisation of the main theatre to increase capacity and flexibility. The present side-on arrangement no longer meets their needs and we welcome the re-orientation of the auditorium which allows greater flexibility in staging, including end-on, thrust, and in-the-round formats. The flexible rostra, new stage lift and additional entry points for actors will also contribute to the provision of a much improved performance space. The addition of a new mezzanine level balcony increases the number of seats to 300 with clear sight lines to the stage. The technical capacity of the venue will also be upgraded with new lighting and sound systems, a new grid, and new control box to the rear of the auditorium behind the balcony.

The Trust had a number of concerns with previous versions of the plans, and are pleased the current plans seek to retain and restore much of the historic character of the former Drill Hall. We particularly welcome the redesign of balcony structure so the roof and lantern structure can be retained in situ without the need to raise it. The proposal no longer causes unnecessary harm to the historic and architectural significance of the Grade II listed heritage asset.

Regarding the original stage house, whilst the loss of historic fabric is always regrettable, it was significantly altered, walled-off and subdivided when the theatre was formed in the early 1980s, and its

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restoration for theatre use would not provide the flexibility needed to make this theatre sustainable. Therefore we have no objection to its demolition to allow construction of the new library and office facilities at the rear of the auditorium.

However, as access to the library is via the corridors surrounding the auditorium, we do recommend additional doors are installed to create sound locks around the two doors at the rear of the auditorium to ensure noise in the corridors do not affect performances. We also recommend consideration of an additional door between the green room and the western side corridor to increase access for actors around the auditorium.

In addition, the Trust welcomes the refurbishment of the front of house facilities, including creation of a ramped and more efficient get-in area, new box office and reception, and increased number of dressing rooms and actor facilities. Whilst the Trust does not have any specific comments or objections to the construction of student accommodation to the rear of the adjoining building at 18 Chenies Street, the Trust does recommend that the applicant ensures suitable noise mitigation is provided between the student rooms and common areas and the performance spaces.

The Theatres Trust supports the proposals and would recommend, once the above issues are considered, granting planning and listed building consent.

Please do contact us if we may be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Ross Anthony.

Ross Anthony  
Planning Adviser