

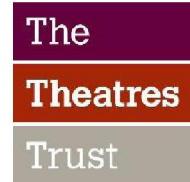
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Our Ref.: RA/445

17 September 2014

For the attention of Mr Niall Sheehan

London Borough of Camden  
Planning Services, Development Management  
Culture & Environment Directorate  
Town Hall  
Argyll Street  
London WC1H 8ND



Dear Sir,

**Dominion Theatre, 268 Tottenham Court Road, London, W1T 7AQ**

Application Refs.: 2014/5544/L, 2014/5533/A, 2014/5532/L, 2014/5531/A, 2014/5529/L, 2014/5219/P,  
2014/5218/P & 2014/5217/P

I am writing regarding the above advertising, planning and listed building applications for the removal and replacement of existing signs and structures on the Dominion Theatre's Tottenham Court Road elevation, including the installation of new lettering detailing the theatre's name, new facade feature lighting, and a new static illuminated LED projection sign. Given the size and role of the Dominion Theatre within London's 'Theatreland', The Theatres Trust is concerned that it was not consulted on the previous applications. Please see our remit and comments below.

**Remit:** The Theatres Trust is The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres, safeguarding theatre use or the potential for such use; we provide expert advice on theatre buildings including, new design, heritage, property and planning. Established by The Theatres Trust Act 1976, the Trust delivers statutory planning advice on theatre buildings and theatre use in England through The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 (DMPO), requiring the Trust to be consulted on planning applications 'involving any land on which there is a theatre'. We are also a consultee for Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders, and encourage local authorities, parish councils and local groups to consult the Trust on Local and Neighbourhood Development Plans where they involve a theatre.

**Advice/comment:** The Theatres Trust supports the application because it aims to strengthen the theatre's visibility within the streetscape while revealing the building's façade to promote the architectural significance of the Grade II listed Dominion Theatre. Signs are an essential part of a theatre buildings character and the replacement signage proposed is of an established and typical appearance for theatre buildings and has been carefully designed and located to complement the proportions and integrity of the façade on which it is to be located. In our opinion, the rationalisation of the signage and lighting scheme is in keeping with the character and appearance of the building, the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, and development along New Oxford Street/ Tottenham Court Road.

As The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres within the UK, we are familiar with applications of this nature. Indeed, most local planning authorities have similar stringent policies for signage to Camden's Policy CS14 'Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage' and DP 25 'Conserving Camden's Heritage'. These policies 'expect the design of buildings and places to respond to the local area and its defining characteristics and reinforce, or if appropriate, create local distinctiveness', and Planning Guidance 8 'Advertisements, signs and hoardings' suggests 'quality advertisements respect the architectural features of the host building'. Most local authorities take a positive view when it comes to signage on theatre buildings because they recognise the unique and special role theatres play in supporting the character of local areas and the cultural value and economic contribution theatres makes to the local economy, particularly those in London's 'Theatreland'.

### Protecting theatres for everyone

Director Mhora Samuel Chairman Rob Dickins CBE  
Trustees Nick Allott OBE, Dara O Brian, Ruth Eastwood, Tim Foster, Oliver Goodwin, Prof Gavin Henderson CBE,  
Jerry Katzman, Dame Penelope Keith DL, Judith Mellor OBE, Peter Roberts, Matthew Rooke, Simon Ruddick,  
Ann Skippers, Anna Stapleton

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: 274557

Signs of this nature are essential to advertise the venue and are an established traditional feature on theatre buildings across the country having always been used to attract theatregoers. This was optimised in the 1920s and 30s when the use of neon signs became popular, and in the 1960s and 70s with the use of internally illuminated light boxes. However, modern signs, using up-to-date lighting techniques, such as low energy voltage sources, LED lighting and discreet wiring, can be very successful, whilst not interfering with neighbouring properties or harming the significance of listed buildings. Innovations in lighting, electronic signage, and flat panel technology have rendered the bulk of many old-fashioned light boxes unnecessary.


Theatres have to be more than merely visible if they are to compete and survive. The ways in which theatres advertise their presence and their 'offer' are varied and it is true that no sign can be completely free from architectural impact. However, it is difficult to suggest a less obtrusive way in which the theatre could draw attention to itself without the sign being of benefit. In particular in this case where the bill board style sign that has covered the façade of the building for almost continuously since it opened in 1929, will be removed to permanently expose the building's art deco architectural features, which will be further highlighted with the proposed new lighting scheme. The 2011 Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal notes (Section 5.50) that hoarding style signs are not considered acceptable, and this application reflects that guidance.


There are many examples of listed theatre buildings in conservation areas that use projecting signs, notably the nearby Queens, Gielgud, Apollo, and Lyric Theatres group on Shaftesbury Avenue in Westminster's Soho Conservation Area; and the Vaudeville, Adelphi, Noel Coward, and Duke of York's Theatres in the Covent Garden Conservation Area, which are all Grade II listed theatres. Their lighting schemes and signage add to the character and vibrancy of these areas and the wider 'Theatreland' and Westminster's 'Theatreland Strategy' and guide to theatre lighting and signage promotes and encourages the type of signage being proposed in these applications. While this strategy does not apply in Camden, the Council was very much an active member of the steering group together with The Theatres Trust and English Heritage.

The Dominion is a particularly large theatre with over 2000 seats to fill and the signage needs to ensure a high level of visibility to be able to attract audiences and this will be even more important with the opening of Cross Rail and proposed changes to Tottenham Court Road. We believe the projecting sign proposed for the Dominion Theatre is entirely necessary and has been sensitively handled in relation to the scale and proportions of the façade, while still reflecting and promoting its theatrical character and use.

Performing arts venues such as this are important elements of a sustainable community, providing social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits as well as encouraging regeneration. They make a major contribution to the vitality of our economic centres and are a significant element of a Council's cultural infrastructure. Visiting audiences enliven the surrounding area in the evening, and provide regular custom for local bars and restaurants outside normal working and shopping hours and we believe that Council should be supporting the ongoing viability of these cultural facilities.

We therefore recommend **granting advertising, planning and listed building consent**, attaching any conditions accordingly. We would be happy to discuss this matter with you further and please do not hesitate to contact us if we may be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely, 

  
Ross Anthony  
Planning Adviser