

Mr Ben Farrant
Planning Officer
London Borough of Camden
5 Pancras Road
London N1C 4AG

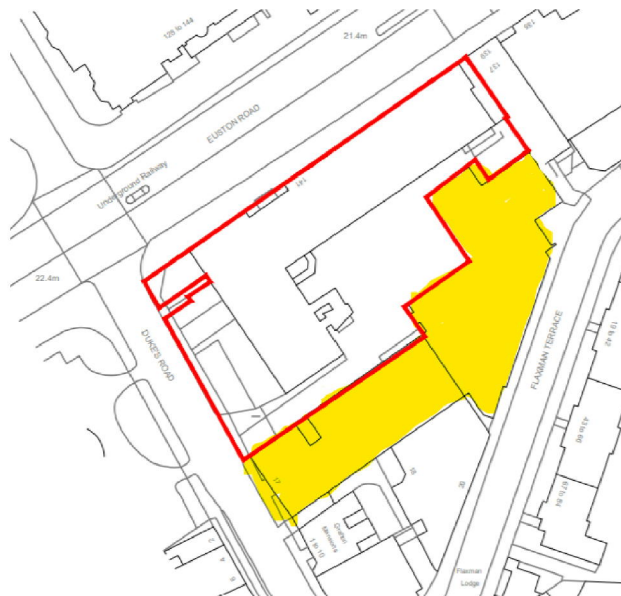
6th December 2019

Dear Mr Farrant

**The Place – Consultation response to Whitbread’s proposed Premier Inn Development,
Ref: 2019/5214/P**

I am writing, as Chief Executive of The Place, in response to the proposed extension in the car park of the Premier Inn at One Dukes Road.

The Place (Contemporary Dance Trust Ltd) has been based at the site adjoining what is now the Premier Inn for 44 years. Our site is highlighted in yellow below:



See Appendix 1 for more details about the organisation’s purpose and operations.

The Place, 17 Dukes Road, London, WC1H 9PY

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info@theplace.org.uk

theplace.org.uk

The Place is governed by Contemporary Dance Trust
Founder: Robin Howard CBE
Chief Executive: Clare Connor

Registered Charities Act 1960 250216
Vat Registration 233 7633 65
Registered Office: 17 Dukes Road, London, WC1H 9PY
Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England 883094

We have maintained a close working with Premier Inn for many years. We are very keen to continue that relationship however we have serious concerns about the potential disruption that the construction of the proposed Annexe will have on our reputation and the longer-term financial sustainability of our business over the next 5-10 years. The nature of our charitable business means that we do not have the financial resilience of a large organisation that can absorb a significant disruption to its operations.

We acknowledge that these concerns are the worst case scenario but we need clear articulation and assurances as to why our fears are unfounded. We have had some feedback on our initial concerns, but we still believe that there will be disruption that will pose a significant risk to the future to our organisation.

The Place

The Place is a registered charity and amongst a number of other activities runs a world class Contemporary Dance Conservatoire, the main focus of which is high levels of practical study for the students that attend our courses.

Our charitable objects are to foster, promote and increase the interest of the public in the knowledge, understanding and practice of the art of contemporary dance and to promote and assist presentation of contemporary dance and the training of contemporary dance practitioners.

We welcome people to our building from all ages, ability and backgrounds, including many residents from Camden, from babies to seniors for classes and courses and theatre performances.

We receive substantial grant funding and as a result we are accountable to the Department of Culture Media and Sport via Arts Council England and Department for Education, Office for Students (Higher Education regulator) and to the Charities Commission. We are run by a board of independent Trustees.

The Place runs a 7 day a week operation from 8.30am to 10pm. We have 11 studios in total, 10 studios in the Flaxman Terrace side of the building, 1 in Dukes Road, a 288 seat theatre plus adjoining bar, lecture room, body conditioning and treatment room, café, library and offices. There are also dressing rooms for students and artists.

The studios are a specialist dance environment, enabling free movement in a vibration, dust free and acoustically sensitive space.

8 studios, lecture room, body conditioning, library, theatre, café and some offices are situated next to the Premier Inn car park where the development will take place.

See Appendix 1 for more information about our operation and income

Key Concerns

We have several concerns about proposed development by Premier Inn. More detail follows but in summary:

Planning aspects

- **Noise pollution:** We use live and recorded music in our studios and theatre which is managed to agreed decibel levels, but we are concerned that there will be noise complaints, particularly in the evening, resulting from our core business due to the proximity of the bedrooms in the annexe to our studios and theatre. Additional complaints could curtail our

business. We do not have the resources to conduct an independent assessment at this time so would request that Premier Inn conduct a specific analysis of the possible impact.

- **Daylight/Sunlight:** there will be reduced light to our studios with the build of the annexe. As per the noise assessment, we do not have the resources to conduct an independent light assessment so would request that Premier Inn conduct a specific analysis of our studio spaces.
- **Fire Safety:** the proximity of the annexe is going to restrict the fire exits of the building and there is concern that these will not be properly maintained and kept clear
- **Road Safety:** The space for delivery vehicles to turn in the space by the annexe will be insufficient and this will cause a risk to health and safety with vehicles being required to reverse back up the ramp onto Dukes Road, right by the main public pedestrian entrance to our theatre
- **Future developments at The Place:** The proximity of the annexe could jeopardise any aspiration that we might have to expand or develop our property. The current design puts hotel bedrooms close to our building which could result in objections, particularly if we were to expand upwards. We would like to seek assurance that this design would not impact our own ability to expand.

Construction period impact

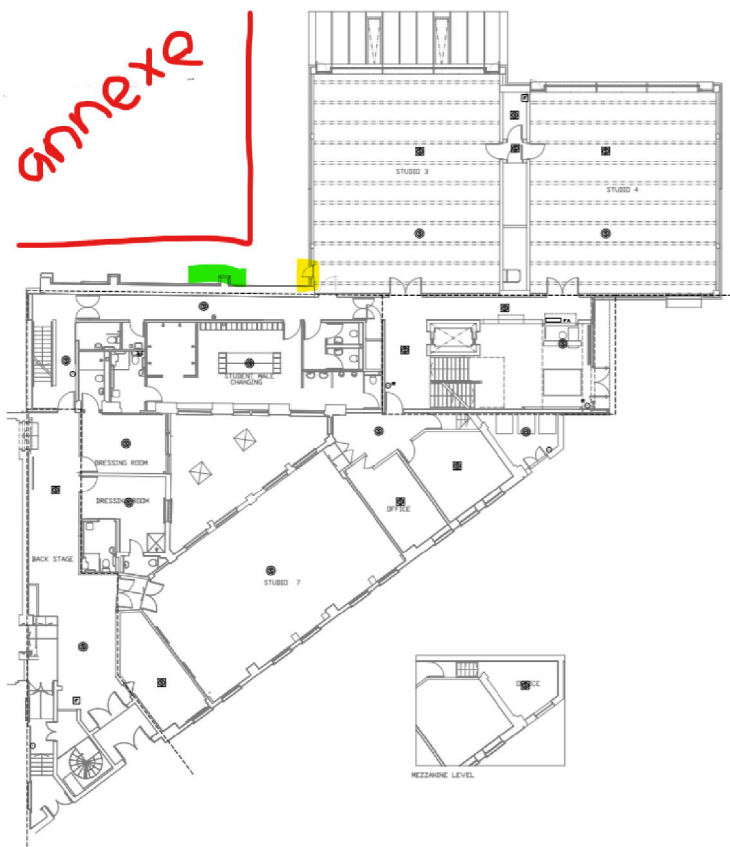
- **Construction Noise and Vibration:** The construction noise and vibration will seriously impact the working environment in these studios and in effect make the spaces unfit for purpose. This will result in severe and ongoing financial and reputational damage to our core business, putting the organisation's future in jeopardy and potential loss of jobs. Working next to the noise of a building site for 15 months is also going to have an impact on the mental health and wellbeing of our staff and students.
- **Fire Safety:** Our fire exit from the studios leads into the Premier Inn car park. We will require reassurance that this exit will always be accessible and safe for our staff and students during the construction period.

Impact of the completed development

Noise pollution: As noted above, we have not commissioned a noise study at this time because we do not have the money to do so, but we have serious concerns that the proximity of the bedrooms to our studios and theatre will result in noise complaints from the guests. Music, both live and recorded, is played regularly during the day and evening. Whilst it is limited to agreed decibels as per our entertainment licence, if we were to receive additional complaints from the hotel as a result of the annexe this will have a negative ongoing consequence on our ability to deliver our core business.

Daylight/Sunlight: We have not commissioned a specialist rights of light report from surveyors but we have no doubt that light to our studios will be impacted by the annexe. The yellow highlighted section in the plan below shows a window in the corner of the studios, we have these on every floor.

The green highlight is the location of an extractor fan for our server room air conditioning unit. We expect that this will need relocating due to the proximity of the annexe walls.



Fire safety: One of our key fire exits from the studios is through the car park of the hotel. We have talked through the exit plans with the Premier Inn project manager. They have confirmed that the development has considered our fire exit and a dedicated pathway would remain around the extension.

We have concerns about how Premier Inn will ensure that pathway is kept clear to ensure that there is no risk to our staff and students in the instance of a fire.

Following the fire at the Student Accommodation in Bolton in November, we are required to prove to The Secretary of State for Education that our building and fire safety plans are compliant. We will need to be able to prove that the pathway will always be kept clear and we need evidence of what steps Premier Inn will put in place to maintain this level of compliance. The Met police have also raised this as an area of concern in their consultation response.

Road Safety – The building of the annexe will reduce the ability for delivery trucks to turn in the car park. There are many deliveries daily which will increase with the new restaurant and bedrooms. If there is more than one truck in the car park at a time, they will be unable to turn, and it will be necessary for them to reverse up the ramp onto the main road. This is going to cause significant health and safety risks to our staff, customers, students, local residents and the general public.

Impact of the Premier Inn Construction Period

Construction noise and vibration

We have been advised that the construction period for the development of the Annexe, the extension to the roof and the new restaurant will take approximately 65 weeks.

The annexe is a new 7 storey building which will require significant foundations and steel work along with construction traffic, deliveries and building staff, all of which will cause considerable noise and vibrations.

We have raised these concerns with Premier Inn and they have responded advising that they will be driving the piles with a rotary driven technique which will cause less noise and vibration, and that a carefully planned and monitored noise and vibration plan will be developed when contractors are appointed.

The construction deliveries and noise of the build for 15 months will be a constant disruption to our business. We do not have air conditioning and rely on windows to ventilate our dance studios and offices. The dust and noise from a building site will make this impossible and during the summer months the studios could become unusable. The theatre is directly next to the ramp where the trucks will be entering the site and it is not well insulated. The additional noise from the deliveries and the building will be heard within the theatre, making rehearsals and matinee performances unworkable.

Breaking of the ground and percussive techniques for drilling the steel will impact on the music and rhythm that is essential for our students and artists while training and rehearsing. Each of our studios have floor to ceiling mirrored walls which are essential for dance training and rehearsal. We were advised by the Premier Inn project manager that they are at risk of breakage during the build. This will cause a health and safety risk and could make the studios unusable.

The theatre has a considerable amount of filament lighting which will also be vulnerable to breakage from consistent vibrations which would damage our reputation should this happen during a matinee performance, or we were not able to have lights for our evening performances.

Premier Inn have confirmed that the construction will be kept to the core hours of 8am to 6pm weekdays and 8am to 1pm on a Saturday. The construction hours have been designed to minimise the effects on the Premier Inn hotel guests and local residents but do not take into account the hours our students and artists are working, or our commercial hirers who are paying to access the studios for their business.

We have 250 students and 100 staff spending approximately 40 hours per week in the building during the core construction hours. We have concerns about how the noise and vibrations will affect their mental health and well-being during such a long construction period.

Our students are paying considerable amounts of money (between £9,250 and £20,000 per annum) to receive specialist training which will be disrupted daily by the building noise, additional traffic and the general noise of a building site as a result of the planning permission being given.

If this build were to go ahead, we would need to have agreed dates where no building work or noisy operations could occur, particularly during matinee performances, theatre rehearsals, assessments and audition periods. We would welcome a discussion with the Council and Premier Inn about specific wording to be included in the Construction plan.

We are aware that the construction issues will be covered in a construction management plan, but we will want to understand the following:

1. How our concerns have been addressed in the construction management plan
2. How we can be assured that construction is being undertaken in accordance with the plan
3. What happens if construction is being undertaken within the plan guidelines, but it still impacts our operation
4. What to do if we have an immediate complaint or longer-term complaint
5. What is the process for engaging with us?

Financial implication

Should we lose, for example even 20 students as a result of withdrawal or deferral of their course in 2020/21 (assuming that the work wouldn't start until September 2020) due to the ongoing disruption to their studies, this could **reduce our income by between £185,000 and £400,000 in that year**. It is likely that this would also impact on future years revenue (our undergraduate course is three years long) as these students would find alternative providers for their training and the reputational damage could mean it would be harder to recruit new students, especially from overseas. It could also mean we are unable to meet our obligations to the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama and the Office for Students to provide a high quality educational environment for learning.

This lost revenue would not result in saved costs as the classes would still need to run and even if they were to be cancelled we would continue to incur staff costs.

There is also a high probability that commercial studio hires will be reduced as clients that pay to deliver a class or rehearse a piece of work which is disrupted by noise. This is likely to result in them finding studio hire elsewhere and not all of them would return after the work has completed. It will take us time to rebuild the client base and the associated income. We generate c£260,000 per annum from this income source.

We are in negotiations to recruit a long-term high-profile client to use our space for West end rehearsals. We cannot do this if the studios will not be quiet. This would result in a further **loss of c£85k per annum**.

The classes and courses on a Saturday morning and the pre-vocational training for 14-18 year olds will be impacted by the construction noise, as will the work we do with 9 Camden Schools. We have a high expectation that this would result in the loss of class participants at the time, and ongoing business as they find alternative courses and training.

We believe that the **negative financial impact of the construction period could at best be between £300k and £500k per annum**. For a charity of our size this would prevent us from being able to meet our charitable objectives, our responsibilities to our students and to our customers and staff. This level of financial loss will result in us **no longer being a going concern**, which means that we

may have to reduce the scale of operation resulting in job losses. In addition, there is a significant loss to our reputation as key cultural venue in the Kings Cross cultural quarter in Camden

Conclusion

We hope that the Council carefully consider the points that we have raised, and we look forward to an ongoing dialogue with both the Council and Premier Inn before any decision is taken in respect of the application.

At present we would like to reserve our right to speak at any meeting of the Planning Committee where this application is considered.

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Clare Connor.

Clare Connor
Chief Executive

Appendix 1 : About The Place

The Place (Contemporary Dance Trust Ltd), London's creative powerhouse for dance development, has been leading the way in dance education, creation and performance for 50 years.

In 2018/19;

- We trained 372 young people in our vocational and pre-vocational dance programmes
- We provided conservatoire higher education to 240 under and post graduate students
- We supported 233 artists to make and develop work
- 43,000 audience members worldwide saw our dance productions
- 2,172 primary and secondary school children participated in 165 creative sessions, mostly from the Camden area
- 35,920 adults and young people participated in 2,061 recreational dance sessions

We are setting out to build upon our unique ecosystem as a pioneering force for dance and a world-class centre of artistic excellence.

The next five years will see the biggest shift in The Place's history to date. To achieve our mission and vision, we have five clear strategic aims.

1. Secure The Place for the next 50 years
2. Support dance artists and dance makers to make dance happen
3. Enable more young people to make, perform, watch and respond to dance
4. Be better known as world leaders in dance development and training and widen our reach
5. Create the best possible learning environment for dance

Our Business

The Place is a registered charity and our charitable objects are to foster, promote and increase the interest of the public in the knowledge, understanding and practice of the art of contemporary dance and to promote and assist presentation of Contemporary dance and the training of contemporary dance practitioners, to promote and establish schools or colleges of contemporary dance.

We are accountable to Department of Culture Media and Sport via Arts Council England and Department for Education, Office for Students (Higher Education regulator) and to the Charities Commission. We are run by a board of independent Trustees.

The Place runs a 7 day a week operation and has done so on this site for 44 years

Our core business hours are:

- Monday to Friday 8.30am to 10pm
- Saturday and Sunday 8.30am to 8pm

We have 11 dance studios in total, 10 studios in the Flaxman Terrace side of the building, 1 in Dukes Road, a 288 seater theatre plus adjoining bar, lecture room, body conditioning and treatment room, café, library and offices. There are also dressing rooms for students and artists.

8 studios, lecture room, body conditioning, library, theatre, café and some offices are situated next to the Premier Inn car park where the development will take place.

The 8 studios, body conditioning room and café have windows that directly adjoin the car park, they do not have air conditioning and rely on the windows to be opened for ventilation.

Every studio and the Body Conditioning room has at least one floor to ceiling mirrored wall

Income

Our annual turnover is £7,305k per annum. And our main income sources are:

- Student Fees - £2,562k
- Grants -Education and Arts Council England: £2,722k
- Development fundraising - £488k
- Studio hire and theatre income - £607k
- Classes and Courses – £485k
- Other income - £438k

In 2019/20 we expect to finish the year with a deficit of £242k

Many of our costs are fixed, with 60% being staff costs. As a result, much of our cost base is not sensitive to changes in income.

Studio usage:

In term time every studio has on average 85% occupancy during opening hours. This is made up of the following usage:

- Students 45%
- External hire 24%
- Classes and Courses and Theatre/Artists development 24%

External hire generates over £260,000 income every year.

We also run a programme of Classes and courses to children, adults and professional adults which generates £476,000 per annum. These courses run first thing in the morning (8.30am), evenings and weekends and intensive programmes during the holidays

Students – we have approximately 250 students across BA Undergraduate and Post graduate programmes. 200 of these are home/EU students paying c£9,250 per annum and 50 are overseas paying c£19,000 (dependent on UG or PG)

Undergraduates receive conservatoire level training which involves 35 hours a week of specialist studio-based training. We receive grants from the Office for Students to allow us to deliver this level of intensive teaching.

We also run a Pre-vocational course for 120 young people aged 14 -18 which takes place on a Wednesday evening and Saturday. Their training is held in the studios.

Theatre programme – We are subsidised by Arts Council England to support developing dance artists through our Choreodrome and Resolution programmes. These programmes rely on access to the studios for rehearsal and development. We also produce new work for performance and touring nationally and internationally, the studios and theatre are an integral part of their development. Our substantial funding from Arts Council England relies on us delivering our agreed programme to a high standard and reaching enough artists and audience members.