

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/3087

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Applications: 2020/2470/P & 2020/2481/L

Site: Lethaby Building, Former Cochrane Theatre, 12-42 Southampton Row & 1-4 Red Lion Square
(Former University Of Westminster Central St Martins College Campus) London WC1B

Proposals: Redevelopment of the site including refurbishment of the Lethaby Building, partial demolition, external alterations, basement excavations and extensions to the existing buildings to form a hotel (Use Class C1), with flexible ground floor and basement uses including retail/restaurant/drinking establishment (Use Class A1/A3/A4), office (Use Class B1), exhibition and lecture halls (Use Class D1/D2/C1). Bar/restaurant spaces (Use Class A3/A4) at first, and upper floor levels with associated roof terrace. Erection of standalone block comprising a cultural use (Use Class D1) at ground and first floor level with affordable residential housing (Use Class C3) above with provision of balconies, terraces and a roof terrace. Re-instatement of former Orange Street, together with highway improvements, public realm, landscaping, cycling parking, waste storage and other associated works. (For consultation purposes only: Red Lion Building is proposed 26m - 49.5m high (15 storeys max.) and Theobalds Road Building is 29.9m (10 storeys max.). 34 affordable housing residential units proposed (comprising: 2 x studios, 11 x 1 beds, 9 x 2 beds, 12 x 3 beds). 427 hotel bedrooms proposed across the Lethaby and Red Lion Buildings); and

External refurbishment and restoration including window repair/replacement and installation of secondary glazing, façade stone repairs, repair and reinstatement of roof form, new lift overruns and installation of 2no. skylights. Internal refurbishment and repair of stair cores, demolition of existing lift shaft, refurbishment and amendments to doors and openings, installation of new mechanical ventilation and service routes, installation of new riser access, removal of modern partitions and installation of new partitions, refurbishment and waterproofing of vaults and other associated works. Works in association with conversion of the Lethaby Building into a hotel (Use Class C1), with flexible ground floor and basement uses (retail/restaurant/drinking establishment (Use Class A1/A3/A4), office (Use Class B1), exhibition and lecture halls (Use Class D1/D2),

Theatres Trust

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Chair Tim Eyles **Director** Jon Morgan

Trustees Richard Baldwin, David Blyth, Pam Bone, Paul Cartwright, Paddy Dillon, David Ian, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Simon Ricketts, Truda Spruyt

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along with works to the wider site including erection of standalone block comprising a cultural use (Use Class D1) at ground and first floor level with affordable residential housing (Use Class C3) above with provision of balconies, terraces and a roof terrace. Re-instatement of former Orange Street, together with highway improvements, public realm, landscaping, cycling parking, bin storage and other associated works. Works in association with conversion of the Lethaby Building into a hotel (Use Class C1), with flexible ground floor and basement uses (retail/restaurant/drinking establishment (Use Class A1/A3/A4), office (Use Class B1), exhibition and lecture halls (Use Class D1/D2), along with works to the wider site including erection of standalone block comprising a cultural use (Use Class D1) at ground and first floor level with affordable residential housing (Use Class C3) above with provision of balconies, terraces and a roof terrace. Re-instatement of former Orange Street, together with highway improvements, public realm, landscaping, cycling parking, bin storage and other associated works.

Remit:

The 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'.

Comment:

These applications for planning permission and listed building consent have been brought to the attention of the Trust because the site includes the Cochrane Theatre. We do not appear to have been formally consulted despite this proposal falling within our remit described above as a statutory consultee. The applicant is proposing a comprehensive redevelopment including the loss of the theatre in order to deliver a mixed-use scheme featuring a hotel, retail, leisure and commercial space and exhibition and lecture halls.

The Cochrane Theatre opened in 1963 as part of the Central School of Art and Design, and was used by students of the college as well as receiving external and touring productions. It was fully fitted with a traditional proscenium arch, fly tower and orchestra pit. It later became independently operated, eventually becoming used as a filming studio. The Central School (by that point re-named Central St Martin's) had moved to a new site in King's Cross which featured a replacement theatre.

We appreciate there is some sensitivity around this proposal as a whole by virtue of the site's partial statutory Grade II* listing; our comments relate specifically to the theatre and the principle of its change of use. The theatre is not statutorily listed, and we note that part of the site including the adjoining Red Lion Square building have been issued with a Certificate of Immunity and has been assessed as not possessing "the necessary special architectural or historic interest to warrant listing".

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We raise no objection to the loss of theatre use at this site because it was adequately re-provided within the college's new development in around 2012 and has now been successfully operating there for a number of years. Neither are we raising any objection to the loss of the building, although it does possess some interest by virtue of its 1960s design. However, we understand the theatre contains back stage facilities and machinery which is of good quality and interest. Therefore should the Council be minded to grant permission for these applications we would strongly recommend insertion of a condition requiring submission of a full photographic and recording report. We consider that such a condition would meet the six tests set out in paragraph 3 of the Government's guidance on the use of planning conditions (updated 2019) and accord with paragraph 55 of the NPPF (2019).

We would also strongly encourage that such machinery along with other fixtures are salvaged and offered to the Association of British Theatre Technicians (ABTT) or other theatres – particularly smaller charity or voluntary operated venues – for re-use.

In conclusion we do not object to the loss of the Cochrane Theatre although we urge implementation of a recording condition as outlined above.

Please contact us should you wish to discuss this representation further.

Yours sincerely,



Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

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