

Regeneration and Planning
London Borough of Camden
Town Hall
Judd Street
London
WC1H 9JE

7th July 2021

Dear Sir/Madam,

THE WELL WALK THEATRE

We write in our capacity as Specialist Theatre Consultants working on the Well Walk Theatre, in support of the latest Planning Application associated with this project.

Plann is a project design and delivery consultancy specialising in the cultural capital projects sector, with a particular emphasis on the creation of buildings for the presentation of live performance. In the ten years since Plann was formed, it has been instrumental in the delivery of over thirty projects of this type around the world. Prior to joining Plann, the Well Walk Theatre Project Lead was the Studio Principal for Charcoalblue Theatre Consultants, where he was instrumental in the delivery of another forty buildings of this type and his expertise is widely regarded in the sector. Plann's current portfolio of work can be viewed on our company website at www.plann.co.

In March of this year, we were delighted to be invited to join the team tasked with the design and delivery of the above project. It was clear at the outset that the expertise, enthusiasm and clarity of vision demonstrated by client, together with the location of the proposed theatre in the centre of bustling and child-friendly Hampstead, strongly suggested the potential for success.

At the time of our appointment, whilst the intent to deliver an exceptional theatre with a children's bookshop and small ancillary café was clear, the practicalities of achieving that vision had not been totally resolved as the constraints of the building were not yet fully understood. In the intervening months, as the building has revealed itself, the functional planning of the interior of the theatre has evolved, resulting in a venue able to realise the potential described above.

Necessity has driven the evolution of the theatre design and, in order to deliver a theatre that is fit for purpose and shall remain so for years to come, the design and functionality of the ground floor has developed, resulting in the need to revisit the previously consented scheme.

At ground floor level the site offers an historic display frontage, opening into an accessible shop area offering a curated range of vintage children's books and toys. The carefully curated offer in this area shall draw families into the site in a much more creative and engaging way than would a more standard theatre entrance, as well as offering the flexibility to accommodate a range of intimate events such as storytelling or reading groups.

The unique nature of the bookshop is extremely important in setting the tone for the theatrical offer and drawing in an audience.

The necessity for an appropriately themed entrance can be clearly seen at successful comparative venues such as the Polka Children's Theatre, the Little Angel Theatre and the Unicorn Theatre.

In the centre of the ground floor plan, a revision to the previous scheme has enabled the theatre lobby to grow into a more appropriately sized theatre foyer. In a further revision to the theatre circulation, the main stair from the enhanced foyer has been widened and now leads down to a larger, secondary foyer located at lower ground. Together these revisions will significantly improve people-flow to and from the auditorium and as a result will be integral to delivering an easy, comfortable and safe theatre experience for the children attending performances. The foyers will allow theatre users to assemble in a safe, engaging, off-street environment before making their way into the auditorium.

In non-performance mode this ground floor foyer area, protected from the street by the bookshop, visible from throughout the ground floor and not directly accessible from any other area, shall offer a safe, secure area where children of all ages shall be able to congregate and play safely whilst their parents either make use of the shop or the small café to the rear of the site.

The small café shall comprise a kitchen area accompanied by a limited seating area and shall offer a range of healthy snacks and foods aimed at the pre-school or after-school markets. The café shall also offer parents the facility to heat up milk or food for their children in a staffed, safe environment. Now located at the rear of the building, the kitchen will allow a safe exit route and foyer space, necessary to avoid congestion and pinch-points.

Although the ground floor is very much a secondary offer after the theatre at lower ground, it is critical that the ground floor has sufficient stand-alone facilities to support the young family target demographic for the site. This area shall accommodate child-focussed events, small-scale performances and activities aimed at visitors to the site who may not be able to access the theatre, and as such the introduction of a fully accessible WC, baby changing area and pushchair/buggy park at this level is essential to complete the suite of accommodation necessary to ensure that parents with young or disabled children can safely and easily make use of the site.

The bookshop, the foyer and the café are key elements of the theatre, both operationally and financially and cannot be reduced in area without creating pinch-points and impacting upon people-flow. It is therefore our view that maximising the potential footprint of the ground floor is critical to delivering a safe and operational site, in order to unlock the functionality of this venue that seeks to benefit all members of the community.

We would be happy to provide any further information that may be required.

Kind regards,



Paul Crosbie
Plann Limited