

LONDON

REVIEW PANEL

██████████
National Youth Theatre
443-445 Holloway Road,
London,
N7 6LW

May 2019

Dear ██████████

London Review Panel: National Youth Theatre

Please find enclosed the London Review Panel report following the review of the proposals for the National Youth Theatre on 23rd April 2019. On behalf of the Panel, I would like to thank you for your participation in the review and offer the Panel's ongoing support as the scheme's design develops.

Yours sincerely,



Daisy Froud
Mayor's Design Advocate

cc.

All meeting attendees

Jules Pipe, Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills

Debbie Jackson, Executive Director of Development, Enterprise and Environment, GLA

Patrick Dubeck, Head of Regeneration, GLA

LONDON REVIEW PANEL

Report of London Review Panel meeting National Youth Theatre

Tuesday 23rd April 2019

Review held at: National Youth Theatre, 443-445 Holloway Road, London, N7 6LW

London Review Panel

Daisy Froud Chair
Russell Curtis MDA
Paloma Strelitz MDA
Rory Hyde MDA

Attendees

[REDACTED] GLA Regeneration
[REDACTED] GLA Regeneration
[REDACTED] National Youth Theatre
[REDACTED] National Youth Theatre
[REDACTED] National Youth Theatre
[REDACTED] National Youth Theatre
[REDACTED] DSDHA
[REDACTED] DSDHA
[REDACTED] Gardiner Theobald

Apologies / report copied to

[REDACTED] GLA Regeneration
[REDACTED] GLA Regeneration

Report copied to

Jules Pipe Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills
Debbie Jackson GLA
Patrick Dubeck GLA

Confidentiality

Please note that while schemes not yet in the public domain, for example at a pre-application stage, will be treated as confidential, as a public organisation the GLA is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) and in the case of an FOI request may be obliged to release project information submitted for review.

Project name and site address

National Youth Theatre, 443-445 Holloway Road, London, N7 6LW

Presenting team

██████████	National Youth Theatre
██████████	National Youth Theatre
██████████████████	National Youth Theatre
██████████	DSDHA

National Youth Theatre introduction

The presenting team gave a detailed description of the history of the National Youth Theatre (NYT) and described the organisation's focus on participation and engagement. The objectives of the project were outlined, which aim to dramatically increase use of the building. The ambition to create more useable space, to allow more young Londoners to engage with the NYT and to provide more activity for young people to experience, underpin the design process and development project. For the NYT to have a sustainable future, an overhaul of the existing premises which unlocks the programming potential of the spaces and offers more flexibility of use is required.

The NYT acts as a production space for all aspects of theatre. By providing an accessible route for thousands of young people into the many roles available within the industry, (from actors and directors, through to lighting technicians and prop builders etc.) the NYT simultaneously supports a key element of London's cultural offer, while also broadening access to sector. The presenting team described strong long-term partnerships with West End theatres which generate an income for NYT (through space rentals) and increasingly training, placements, and employment opportunities for NYT members.

Design Review Panel's views

Summary

The London Review Panel are deeply impressed by the National Youth Theatre as an organisation and wish them well in their project development. The Panel offer thanks to the team for the clarity of the presentation and praised the excellent design team and deserving client. The Panel fully support the ambition and overall vision of the project and consider the proposals to make sense spatially; the proposed key moves of the project are endorsed by the Panel.

In general, the Panel finds the feasibility work encouraging and is confident that the work is leading to an interesting architectural response. The Panel had some concerns over the closing or filling-in of the North façade of the pavilion extension and queried the use of the arch as motif in this location. Whilst the Panel have mixed opinions on this element of the design, they agree the 'arch' could become a controlling, rather than enabling element and urge the team to allow themselves to be challenged by this aspect.

The Panel note the NYT's commendable aims to engage with the local community and observe an opportunity for design engagement and consultation to align with the community outreach programme. The Panel endorse the ambition of an improved pedestrian access and the proposal to introduce a pedestrian crossing to Holloway Road, and encourage LB Islington to continue to engage with the project and the great work of the NYT. The Panel recognise the extraordinary opportunities the NYT offers to young people and suggest the architectural language of the scheme should be truly celebratory and reflect the important work the organisation delivers. The Panel would welcome plans for the materiality of the pavilion and design of the public realm to be explored and developed playfully in line with this language.

Entrance and Arrival

- The Panel recognise the building is required to operate in different modes, representing a national organisation whilst strengthening relationships with and supporting the local community. The architectural language used to communicate this is of interest to the Panel, who accept the public gesture of a pavilion with reservation.
- The Panel commend the intention of having an active programme on the public threshold, yet suggest the current programming, layout and façade treatment may to some degree work against the aspiration to welcome, engage and invite. A more permeable façade and entrance experience is favoured by the Panel.
- The Panel note the conflict of programme requirements versus public facing 'shopfront' and question the need to host the 'Playing Up' workshops in rehearsal space in the public-facing zone of the building.
- Whilst the importance of safeguarding and privacy is acknowledged by the Panel, the team are encouraged to consider ways in which the design can be altered or adapted flexibly to overcome constraints.
- The Panel commend the idea of an activated courtyard, adding layers of permeability to the entrance and arrival experience, however the Panel query how public the courtyard would feel and the ways in which it could link to the businesses next door.

Access and Layout

- The Panel commend the provision to isolate areas for weekend and public use, to safely extend and maximise the programming. The Panel queried if the proposed toilet use and access to the circulation core could be improved to alleviate potential security issues.
- The Panel acknowledge that Phase I of the project offers restricted space for the expected capacity and is reassured by the unlocking of additional space in future phases.
- The design team is encouraged to further consider the programme allocation to the pavilion extension.
- The Panel fully endorse the intention of the 'co-working' space as a place of orientation and exchange and support the expansion of this type of space in later phases of the development.
- The Panel note the design team have successfully rationalised a challenging existing layout and circulation route which can now accommodate the future needs of the NYT. The Panel endorse the eminently sensible and pragmatic amended layout.

- The Panel note the challenging environment of Holloway Road in terms of noise and air pollution and heavily trafficked through route. Proposals for an improved pedestrian access to the NYT are commended by the Panel as a necessary and long-overdue intervention.

Architectural Language and Identity

- The Panel note the boldness of the proposed pavilion extension, projecting into the street with a predominantly blank façade. The Panel welcome the use of windows and applaud the proposed long view through the extension.
- The Panel suggest this gesture could be taken further to mitigate the development and give something back to the streetscape and public realm.
- The Panel likened the existing building to a stage set, with a grand and detailed façade concealing a more practical production space behind. The Panel are yet to be convinced by the proposed language of the pavilion which needs to address both the pedestrian approach to the building and the experience of passing-by on Holloway Road in different ways.
- The arch motif is considered by the Panel to be potentially restrictive rather than helpful when used as a device and filled in to suit internal programming. The design should respond to the condition of each space with appropriate expression.
- A metaphor was illustrated by the Panel, of pulling a drawer out of the existing building. The Panel questioned if the sides of the drawer should be treated in the same way as the front and suggest the design could be resolved if the pavilion responded more to the north/ south axis or oblique view.
- The Panel consider the arch to make sense on the primary elevation and offers an opportunity to ‘peak behind’ the ‘red theatre curtain’ to reveal the activity within. Developing the design of the arch to outwardly express the playfulness of the NYT is encouraged by the Panel.
- The Panel urge the design team to reveal the experience of the theatre through the architectural response, embedding improvisation, production and theatrical delight throughout the building.
- Holloway Road tube station is considered a potentially useful reference for the project, where the architectural language and materiality expresses a robustness and acts as a beacon.

Engagement and Inclusion

- The Panel recognise a real opportunity for design engagement and public consultation to align with the existing community outreach programme, devoting the same resource to facilitate this and give confidence to the scheme going forward.
- Utilising trained NYT members to conduct engagement workshops would offer additional insight and perspective and would be supported by the Panel. The inclusion of members as participants at these workshops is also encouraged, given the varied backgrounds and experiences of NYT members.
- The Panel queried how community engagement and inclusion can be enhanced during the planned part-closure and phased works.
- The Panel welcome a design in which the workings of the NYT are revealed and exposed, to integrate and include the local community rather than reinforce barriers through a predominantly closed façade.

- The Panel note the identified opportunity to utilise the construction hoardings, to both maximise visibility and communicate the aims and objectives of the development project in a creative way. Involving NYT members in the design process of the hoardings would be supported by the Panel.