

Response: City Plan 2040

David Ralf [REDACTED]

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To: Planning Policy Consultations <PlanningPolicyConsultations@cityoflondon.gov.uk>

THIS IS AN EXTERNAL EMAIL

Dear Planning Policy Consultations,

As Executive Director and CEO of Theatre Deli, I am writing to respond to the City Corporation's consultation on the City Plan 2040.

Based in the heart of the City of London at 107 Leadenhall Street and occupying additional meanwhile-use space on Leaman Street, Theatre Deli exists to develop and grow people's cultural and creative lives through a wide variety of activities and unique spaces. Our incredible venue has quickly become a cultural hub and we are proud to host some of the UK's most exciting artists and creatives of today and the future.

As well as our seven years of meanwhile-use experience in the City of London, we are also currently tendering with developers to become a cultural anchor tenant as part of an upcoming development so we are highly focused on the extent to which City Plans may impact (sufficiently or otherwise) on the nature of current prospective developments.

At Theatre Deli, we feel it is vitally important that the City Plan 2040 has a distinct focus on making the City a seven-day-a-week cultural destination where everyone feels welcome. As evidenced by organisations such as ours, there is a growing cohort of cultural organisations and experiences in the City which should be built upon and enhanced where possible.

With Theatre Deli's dual focus on culture and meanwhile use of empty spaces, we welcome several commitments of the City Plan 2040, as follows.

- OF2's commitment to accept 'fast track retrofit' approaches which may involve change of use to (one or a mix of) hotel use, cultural uses, and/or educational use.
- OF3's commitment to encourage temporary meanwhile use of vacant commercial, business and service buildings or sites to ensure the vitality and vibrancy of the City is maintained
- RE2's commitment to encourage active frontage uses at ground floor level and to resist the loss of existing active frontage uses.
- S6's commitments, including:
 - developing a wide range of cultural, leisure and recreation facilities across the City that offer unique experiences at different times of the day and week
 - supporting the development of creative industries and encouraging appropriate workspace and digital infrastructure to facilitate their development
 - enabling a vibrant evening and night-time economy

-- maintaining and enhancing the City's open spaces and public realm to accommodate cultural events and activities that are inclusive and accessible to all City communities
encouraging the temporary use of vacant buildings for creative and cultural activities

Given our present locations, we additionally welcome the plans for development of S20 Aldgate, Tower & Portsoken and S21 City Cluster, which reflect their differing needs and priorities. Particularly, we are excited to hear more about "encouraging cultural events, arts and play in public spaces" in Aldgate, and the development of this area as a "mixed use area" by "utilising a range of funding sources to: maximise training, education and employment opportunities for residents; [and] maximise opportunities for delivering health, community and educational services and facilities for residents, particularly in the Aldgate Square area".

However, with all of this in mind, we feel that CV1: Protection of Existing Visitor, Arts and Cultural Facilities has an important weakness: Prospective developers demonstrating "that there is no realistic prospect of the premises being used for a similar purpose in the foreseeable future" is not a sufficient reason for the City to permit the loss of visitor, arts and cultural facilities, and runs the risk of pitting precious visitor, arts and cultural facilities, which often have multiple benefits and interests (and which are a key part of Destination City objectives), against commercial interests on a purely commercial footing - demand at a particular market rate. If there is "no realistic prospect of the premises being used for a similar purpose in the foreseeable future", this is rather a good reason to demand the provision of *alternate* visitor, arts and cultural facilities and the creation of *alternate* realistic prospects for their use. This is a good opportunity to create a backstop, enforceable by s106 planning obligations (as have been referenced in many other sections of the City Plan) against the erosion of visitor, arts and cultural facilities, and for developers to become meaningfully involved in assessing true demand for these kinds of facilities, and imaginatively contributing to the creation of inclusive and excellent visitor, arts and cultural outcomes.

I am very happy to elaborate further on this concern, and provide our experience of working with developers who are exploring their cultural obligations.

With this in mind, we nevertheless consider the City Plan 2040 to represent an exciting vision of the future of the City, and - with regard to our areas of expertise - a sound and appropriate methodology for achieving it at local authority level.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond. I would be delighted to provide additional evidence and perspective on our success with meanwhile-use cultural venues in the City, and we would welcome the opportunity to engage with you further on cultural and creative opportunities in the City of London.

Kind regards,

All best,
David

David Ralf (he)

Executive Director & CEO | Theatre Deli



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[Virtual Deli Drop-ins every Thursday with members of the Theatre Deli team - Book online!](#)



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