

# STEPHEN FRY

Licensing Team  
Public Protection and Licensing Department  
Westminster City Council  
Portland House  
Bressenden House  
London  
SW1E 5RS

31<sup>st</sup> October, 2019

Dear Sirs

**Reference no: 19/04038/LIPN**

I have written to you previously in my capacity as Chairman of Save Soho and Chairman of the Criterion Theatre Trust to express my support for the licensing of creative venues in Westminster. I'd like to take the opportunity to do so again in both a professional and personal entreaty in favour of a much-loved and much-missed Soho institution: Madame Jojo's.

I am aware that Soho Estates have submitted a licensing application for the development in Walkers Court to align the scheme permitted under the existing licence and I wish to add my voice in support for granting the licence in the strongest terms.

I would venture that no other council in the United Kingdom (and most probably the world) can have as profound an appreciation of the vital importance of preserving urban heritage as Westminster City Council. What would London be without the enduring glory of Westminster? What would Westminster be without the preservation of the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey or the glittering square mile of Soho? In turn, what would Soho be without its nightlife – and in corollary, what has Soho's nightlife been for the past few regretful years without the jewel in its crown – Madame Jojos.

To restore and rejuvenate a beloved British institution to its rightful place and condition is a noble and magnanimous duty. And in just the same way that Londoners will beam with pride at the freshly polished clock faces of the Elizabeth Tower upon completion of their refurbishment, so denizens will rejoice at the reopening of a reinvigorated Madame.

I need not repeat my past commendations of Soho as a cultural beacon of the city, its unrivalled history and contemporary power as a centre for the arts, excellence in film

production, theatre and music, nor as an unrivalled haven for diversity and the LGBTQ+ community and their creative contribution to London.

What I am acutely aware of is how the absence of Madame Jojo's has tragically (though temporarily) diminished the brightness of Soho's inextinguishable light. For over half a century the original nightclub was a world-renowned home for drag and burlesque – a camp capital of cabaret. Yet it was not only a club for drag artists and gay patrons, but also punched above its weight and size as a mainstream live music venue and, rather uniquely, brought together strands of community who would be unlikely to rub shoulders with each other elsewhere. Bands, burlesque, DJs, drag, club night, cabaret, gay, straight, bi, trans: the venue was notorious as a melting pot of attractions and patrons of every stripe, hue and orientation. Nowhere else in London – or even in Soho – has catered to such variety.

Thus I am utterly thrilled that the venue is to open its doors once again. And I am reliably informed that the new Madame Jojo's, rising like a beseequined phoenix with a £6million fit-out will dazzle anew and prove a proud homage to the erstwhile Madame. With the original name and theme she will inspire the next generation of drag artists and burlesque performers, while maintaining her renown as an inclusive, welcoming venue at the forefront of diverse entertainment and London nightlife. Licensing of the premises would be the feather in her very fetching new cap.

Save Soho was created, in part, when the original Jojo's closed a couple of years ago and I'm delighted (and I know others will join me) that this institution was proudly take its place again in the heart of Soho where it has been for over 25 years and where it belongs.

Therefore, lest I *drag* on, to end this address to a man about a man in a dress at a West End address, I urge you with the ardent plea of a patron and supporter to grant the licence for this reborn Queen of Soho. Madame Jojo's epitomizes the spirit and vibrancy of the most creative square mile in the world. It is a venue that both produces and embodies Soho's unequalled heritage – a heritage that Westminster and Londoners would be much poorer without.

I therefore ask that you please grant the licence of terms they have asked for. The Queen needs her crown.

Yours, quite immodestly in full support,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Fry', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Stephen Fry**