

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/9006052

23 December 2019

Development Management
London Borough of Redbridge
Town Hall,
128-142 High Road,
Ilford,
IG1 1DD

By e-mail: planning.consultations@redbridge.gov.uk

Applications: 4721/19

Site: 1078 1082, High Road, Chadwell Heath, Romford, RM6 4BD

Proposal: Change of use from Bingo hall (D2) to Wedding and events venue (D2). Erection of metal railing / fencing to rear elevation.

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:

This application represents a further re-submission of an almost identical application which was refused on 5th November 2019. That itself was in effect a re-submission of refused application 1217/17 in September 2017 for which subsequent enforcement action was taken by the Council and that enforcement notice being found to be correct in June 2019 following appeal. The Trust submitted comments to the Council regarding the previous 2017 and 2019 applications and to the Planning Inspectorate regarding the appeal.

The proposal remains almost unchanged from the previous application with the exception of an updated traffic report and a stated desire to work more with the local community regarding the venue's programming of community activities. It does not however address the primary reasons for our previous objection, namely that the proposal would result in the loss of the facility as a community and cultural facility for use by the wider community without sufficient justification that it cannot be viable or that no need exists within the local community. Therefore we again maintain our objection.

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

T 020 7836 8591 **E** info@theatrestrust.org.uk **W** theatrestrust.org.uk

Chair Tim Eyles **Director** Jon Morgan

Trustees Richard Baldwin, David Blyth, Pam Bone, Paul Cartwright, Paddy Dillon, Ruth Eastwood, David Ian, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Dara Ó Briain, Simon Ricketts, Ann Skippers, Truda Spruyt, Anna Stapleton

The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund co-operates with the Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697

As we stated previously, fundamentally the private hire nature of the proposed use is not compatible with the building's designation as an Asset of Community Value (ACV). We still contend that other community and cultural uses would also be viable and the onus must be on the applicant to prove otherwise. While a stated intention to utilise the facility for more community events including cinema is welcomed, without formal condition there is no mechanism to enforce and maintain this.

There is a strong policy basis on which evidence should be required to justify this change of use. Paragraph 92 of the NPPF (2019) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for the provision of community facilities including cultural buildings, and to guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities. This is reflected within regional (London) and local policy; Policy LP17.2 of the Redbridge Local Plan 2015 - 2030 (2018) only supports loss where it is clearly demonstrated there is no longer a need within the community for the existing use or re-use for other community purposes. Policy HC5 of the Draft London Plan (2018) seeks boroughs to protect existing cultural venues and facilities. Need can be clearly demonstrated by virtue of the ACV designation, but more fundamentally the applicant continues to provide no justification to support the change of use. We are also aware of a community group with a potentially viable plan to revert the site back to community cinema and live arts use, so the proposal also conflicts with part b. of Policy LP17.2.

Furthermore, retention of the site for community and cultural use such as the cinema/arts centre proposal would better meet the placemaking objectives of Policy LP10.1.d which seeks to support the role and function of the designated Chadwell Heath district town centre. Use as a wedding and events venue does little to attract a significant number of shoppers and visitors to the centre and would not enhance the vitality and viability of the frontage or the centre more generally. In contrast a cinema/arts centre would be able to bring in visitors at different times of day and during the evening which would have a beneficial impact on footfall and surrounding businesses.

In conclusion it is vital that the potential loss of the facility as a community and cultural facility designated as an ACV is properly evidenced and justified. We consider that there is strong potential for the site to be maintained for the social and cultural well-being of local people, and fundamentally this proposal is unaltered from previous refusals. Therefore again we **recommend that this application is refused.**

In the event the Council is minded to permit the application, we recommend that the regular holding of public and cultural events consistent with the building's D2 function and status as an Asset of Community Value including in the evening and at weekends is conditioned. This is consistent with the approach taken by London Borough of Barnet in relation to the Golders Green Hippodrome (application reference C00222W/07, conditions 2 and 3). That required submission for approval of a public performance management scheme and for public performances to be carried out in accordance with that scheme at approximately the regularity specified. The

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

T 020 7836 8591 E info@theatrestrust.org.uk W theatrestrust.org.uk

Chair Tim Eyles **Director** Jon Morgan

Trustees Richard Baldwin, David Blyth, Pam Bone, Paul Cartwright, Paddy Dillon, Ruth Eastwood, David Ian, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Dara Ó Briain, Simon Ricketts, Ann Skippers, Truda Spruyt, Anna Stapleton

The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund co-operates with the Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697

Protecting theatres for **everyone**



Golders Green Hippodrome programme included music concerts, film screenings, a Christmas fair and a Christmas pantomime.

Should the above approach be taken we recommend the Council engages with us for further advice, although fundamentally we consider the application should be refused for the reasons we have outlined.

If you require any further information or wish to discuss these comments in greater detail, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

T 020 7836 8591 **E** info@theatrestrust.org.uk **W** theatrestrust.org.uk

Chair Tim Eyles **Director** Jon Morgan

Trustees Richard Baldwin, David Blyth, Pam Bone, Paul Cartwright, Paddy Dillon, Ruth Eastwood, David Ian, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Dara Ó Briain, Simon Ricketts, Ann Skippers, Truda Spruyt, Anna Stapleton

The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund co-operates with the Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697