

Our Ref.: VS/129  
Please contact: Ms Vicky Simon

24 February 2010

For the attention of Mr Brian Russ

Mr Clive Gilbert  
Service Manager, Development Control  
Gravesham Borough Council  
Civic Centre, Windmill Street  
Gravesend  
Kent DA12 1AU



Dear Mr Gilbert,

**Gala Bingo Hall (Former Gem/Regal Cinema), 65 New Road, Gravesend**  
**Application ref: 20091011**

Thank you for consulting The Theatres Trust on the above application for extension of use classes to include D1 and A3. The Trust has **supports** the application. Please see our detailed advice below.

**Remit:** The Theatres Trust is The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres. It was established by The Theatres Trust Act 1976 'to promote the better protection of theatres'. This applies to all theatre buildings. Our main objective is to safeguard theatre use, or the potential for such use but we also provide expert advice on design, conservation, property and planning matters to theatre operators, local authorities and official bodies.

**Advice/comment:** The Trust supports the application in principle for the proposed extension of use classes for the *Gala Bingo Hall* (former *Gem/Regal Cinema*) from D2 to include D1 (exhibition hall for special interests and conferences) and A3 (banqueting hall) as this will enable the continued use of this structure. In addition, it would not prevent a return to live performance at a future date should the building be required as a cultural facility, which would best preserve the original structure and features of the building. The cinema has a significant presence in the town centre and The Trust welcomes the proposals for a viable use to be made of the building in preference to demolition.

The *Gem Picture House* was constructed in 1910 and designed by architect Charles Lovell. It was taken over by Union Cinemas in 1933 and renamed the *Regal*, but closed in 1968 and used as a bingo hall. Notwithstanding its theatrical appearance it was never a theatre, but unlike smaller cinemas, which used piano accompaniment only, it made use of a full orchestra, which was apparently a draw in itself.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Mark J Price MRTPI, IHBC  
Planning and Heritage Adviser

cc Richard Gray, Cinema Theatre Association

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