

Protecting theatres  
for **everyone**



Ref.: TC

2 November 2023

Sam Fitzpatrick  
Regeneration & Planning  
Development Management  
London Borough of Camden  
Town Hall  
Judd Street  
London  
WC1H 9JE

By e-mail: [planning@camden.gov.uk](mailto:planning@camden.gov.uk)

**Application:** 2023/4355/P

**Site:** 180 Arlington Road London Camden NW1 7HL

**Proposal:** Use of the basement, ground, and first floors of the site for interactive entertainment which includes immersive theatre and associated ancillary bar space (Sui Generis).

**Remit:**

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 has come to the attention of Theatres Trust through press reports. It is within our interest and remit because it is seeking change of use of a former

**Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

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**Chair** Dave Moutrey OBE

**Director** Jon Morgan

**Trustees** Paul Cartwright, James Dacre, Suba Das, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Lucy Osborne, Jane Spiers, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

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## Protecting theatres for everyone



theatre building most recently utilised for bingo back to theatre use for an immersive operator.

This site was formerly the Gaumont Regents Park which opened in January 1937 on the site which was formerly the Royal Alexandra/Park Theatre (1873-1881, destroyed by fire) and later the Royal Park Hall. The Gaumont was designed by renowned cinema and theatre architect William E. Trent along with his son Sydney Trent and Daniel Mackay, both of whom designed other cinemas. It had a capacity of 2,742 seats and was equipped with full stage facilities, twelve dressing rooms and a café/restaurant. Historic images show live shows advertised. The auditorium was decorated with horizontal bands of colour with a stepped ceiling with pendant light fittings. Its main entrance was located on Parkway with a deep foyer with streamlined art deco plasterwork leading to the auditorium which was built behind the neighbouring block to the Parkway/Arlington Road junction. Soon after opening its name was changed to the Gaumont Camden Town. In the 1960s it became the Odeon, at which point it was sub-divided with the stalls being used for bingo with side emergency doors to Arlington Road becoming its main entrance. The cinema utilised the circle level and the foyer block. It also housed a projectionist training school. In 1983 the café/restaurant was converted to a second small screen and in the late 1990s the cinema section was remodelled to provide five screens of between 88 and 403 seats.

In September 2023 the closure of the bingo hall was announced. Despite some less sensitive external alterations as well as internal loss of fabric this site can be considered as a non-designated heritage asset and as such we are keen to see the whole building remain in active use. Whilst this proposal would result in the loss of bingo use which is considered as a community function, Policy C2.g.i of the Camden Local Plan (2017) allows alternative replacement facilities of a similar nature. Policy S1.G of the London Plan (2021) also seeks the full or partial reuse of redundant social infrastructure as other forms of social infrastructure before other alternative developments are considered. We consider that theatre/entertainment use is compatible with these policy criteria and is closer to the site's original function.

Furthermore, based on the proposed plans there are relatively minor internal alterations being carried out; those which are occurring appear to be enhancing function and accessibility, for example providing a larger bar area within the stage house with wheelchair accessibility. These works would not discount future reversibility should an alternative bingo operator come forward. The layout is

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conducive to the flexible nature and range of shows and events indicated by the applicant.

This proposal will help further contribute to the strength and diversity of the theatre and cultural offer both within the local area and the wider London market. We are therefore supportive of the granting of planning permission.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or should you wish to discuss this representation in greater detail.

Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Adviser

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