

Ref.: TC/2576

19 May 2026

Jonathan Keen  
Thurrock Council  
Civic Offices  
New Road  
Grays  
Essex  
RM17 6SL

By e-mail: [dm@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:dm@thurrock.gov.uk)

**Application:** 26/00009/FUL

**Site:** Old State Cinema George Street Grays Essex RM17 6LY

**Proposal:** Change of use of building from former cinema to hotel with banqueting services, spa and gym suite and works comprising two storey roof extension and associated amenity space and landscaping

**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'.

**Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

**Telephone** 020 7836 8591 **Email** [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk) **Website** [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk)

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**Chair** Dave Moutrey OBE

**CEO** Joshua McTaggart

**Trustees** Vicky Browning OBE, Anna Collins, James Dacre, Liam Evans-Ford, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson OBE, Louisa Harris, Mark Johnston, Adam Knight, Tracy Ann Oberman MBE, Lucy Osborne, Saratha Rajeswaran, Michèle Taylor MBE, Katie Town

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## **Comment:**

Thank you for consulting Theatres Trust on this application for planning permission. It seeks to refurbish and restore the vacant State along with constructing an upper-level extension to bring the building back into active use as a banqueting suite with short-stay accommodation and associated functions. There is an associated application for listed building consent to which we have also commented under separate cover.

The State is a Grade II\* listed heritage asset which has been vacant since 1998. This prolonged period of vacancy has resulted in significant deterioration particularly as a result of water ingress. It is on Historic England's Heritage at Risk register and Cinema Theatre Association's Cinemas at Risk list. It is a distinctive and significant contributor to local townscape and character in Grays. We are keen to see it repaired and restored to active use at the earliest opportunity to minimise further loss and harm.

The State opened in 1938 and was built in Art Deco style by FGM Chancellor. It had a capacity of around 2,200. It is considered as one of the most completely preserved and theatrical of the late 1930s cinemas. It is equipped with a stage and dressing rooms which enabled live shows, with concerts also being held after conversion to a nightclub in the 1990s. During the 1980s a series of organ concerts were held and these were revived during the 1990s nightclub years. The State has been used for filming on a number of occasions including notably the music video for Jamiroquai's Deeper Underground and the film Who Framed Roger Rabbit?. Cinema use ceased in 1989 and it has been vacant since the nightclub closed in 1998.

The State was originally listed Grade II in 1985 but was regraded to Grade II\* in June 2000 following a re-appraisal of the original interior features which were still intact. It is understood to be one of only eight 'super cinemas' in England to be listed II\* and is of great architectural, cultural and social significance.

On the proposed change of use, this is something that we support. Banqueting/event halls can be sensitive and compatible uses for former theatres and cinemas because they are capable of utilising existing volume, layout and character with little intervention. As noted above, the State has been vacant for a considerable period and with its size and scale there is little realistic prospect of it being returned to cinema, theatre or other such cultural/performance use in its current form. The

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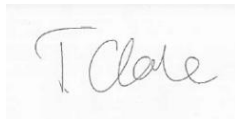
proposed use could also facilitate continued public access to enable appreciation of the internal significance of this asset.

With regards to the proposed upper-level extensions, we consider these to be sensitively designed and integrated with the original building and massing. Impact is mitigated through being set back. Provision of short-stay accommodation can support the viability of the proposed use within the more sensitive auditorium and front of house areas.

There will be new openings created within the original wall to the west elevation to create five long windows into the auditorium and five new windows into the eastern elevation. Although this has some impact on original character and fabric there is clear rationale in this to provide natural light, and it is a change we had supported (although within different positions) on the previous scheme in 2021.

Therefore in relation to the proposed change of use, extension and external alteration we support 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 Manager

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