

Secret Group – 180 Arlington Rd, London NW1 7HL – Planning Application
Our Reference (D-SC-ARL-23-014)

Access Statement

The Purpose of this Document

This document has been prepared on behalf of Secret Group Limited for their Change of Use application from D2 (Bingo Hall) to an event space (Sui Generis Use Class) to be located at 180 Arlington Rd, London NW1 7HL

The Change of Use of 180 Arlington Rd, London NW1 7HL will allow the site in Camden to be used for a range of event activities, including film screenings, theatrical performance, community activities, music and interactive / static display spaces.

Due to the variety of potential event scenarios, this document has been created to show one possible scenario as this most closely aligns with previous projects and undertakings. A dedicated Venue Management plan will be provided to the authority prior to new uses of the space.

This access statement outlines the processes and methodology in place to ensure that the proposed development is accessible to all visitors and staff members, regardless of physical and mental access needs.

The Site

The site is bounded by Arlington Road to the West, Parkway to the South, Inverness Street to the North, and Camden High Street to the East. The site has access to the public highway on both Arlington Road and Inverness Street.

The site is currently occupied by Mecca Bingo. The building was constructed in the 1930's, originally as The Gaumont Camden Town, a 2,742 seat cinema. In 1968, the site was split horizontally into the Odeon as the upper portion, accessed from Parkway, and the Rank Strand Club as the lower portion, which was later renamed as Mecca.

“Trading has been tough across hospitality, and regular bingo players have been slow to return

to halls since the pandemic. As a result, despite the prime location of our Camden club, we are not seeing the footfall required to ensure the continued operation of the venue as a bingo hall.

180 Arlington Road has been a Mecca Bingo for 55 years and rather than mothball the site, we are keen to secure its future. Having reviewed various options we are confident that Secret Cinema’s proposal will build on the site’s great heritage of community, excitement and entertainment, and offers the best solution both for the venue and the area.”

Statement from Rank

SGL are excited to revitalise the site, bringing it back into popular usage, which is fitting with central entertainment uses of the area. In recent years, Camden has become home to a number of immersive theatrical events, such as Peaky Blinders and Tomb Raider at Camden Stables Market, and it is hoped that we can build on this success, and make Camden a destination for immersive theatre in London.

The site is centrally located on Arlington Road, with Camden Town Northern Line station being an easy 3 minute walk away. The surrounding area is a mixture of residential and commercial uses, with a number of bars and restaurants being located within close proximity.

Overall the site extends to 1,913 m2, on the ground floor, with some ancillary back of house spaces being located at basement and first floor levels.

Area	Current Use	Proposed Use	Retained Use m2	Changed Use m2
Ground Floor	Foyer & Bar	Foyer & Bar	775m2	
Ground Floor	Bingo Hall	Main Event Space		1,140m2
1st Floor	Offices, Dressing Rooms and Ancillary	Offices, Dressing Rooms and Ancillary	175m2	
Basement	Plant Rooms	Plant Rooms	329m2	

The Proposed Development

The building was originally designed as a cinema/ music hall arrangement with front of house, auditorium and stage area. It is proposed that SGL will utilise all areas in a similar manner to those which have subsequently been managed as a Bingo Hall.

- Existing foyer area (access from/to Arlington road) - remaining as main entrance and foyer/ congregation space
- Existing bingo hall (accessed internally from the foyer) - remaining as audience space/ auditorium
- Bar area (access from/to Inverness Street and internally from the auditorium) - remaining as bar/ function space

As the previous use was within a similar use category, very little work on the building's infrastructure is planned. A modest amount of internal refurbishment works are required. External elements such as windows and doors will be refurbished inline with their current appearance, and a separate advertising consent application will be submitted for the replacement of the property's signage.

SGL plans to use the space as a multi-purpose events venue, and it is the intention that a number of individual events will be hosted on the site.

Given the size of the venue, it is currently planned that these shows will follow a 'pulse' format, with tickets being available on a time slot basis. This approach effectively distributes the audience throughout the day, rather than a singular 'curtain' time, which concentrates audience arrivals and departures into a short time period.

In addition, it is planned to provide a food and beverage offering, within the area currently occupied by Mecca's current bar. This will be primarily provided to compliment the main offering within the event space, but at times may run independently using the entrance on Inverness Street.

SGL are aware that Arlington Road and the surrounding areas have increasingly become an area of high crime and antisocial behaviour. It is envisaged the proposed development will have a positive impact in reducing these issues. The increased visible staffing presence around the entrance, and the nature of the audience flow being distributed throughout the day will help reduce the risk of crime usually associated with little footfall.

The landlord is keen to keep the site in use, and the proposed development provides a secure future for the application site, further reducing the risk of crime and antisocial behaviour normally associated with vacant sites.

Inclusive Access

Policy Approach

Secret Group Limited is committed to providing a venue that is accessible to as many of their visitors as possible. Designing this event venue to be inclusive has been one of the founding principles that has driven the design and layout of the overall temporary event site.

- It is intended that all elements of the site layout and design will be considered equally for those users who are disabled as for those without impairment.
- The site will be created to ensure that flat and level access both to, around and within the venue is made available.
- Patrons will have a choice of level accesses to and from the venue.
- Measures such as highlighted rises, high contrast signage and a hearing loop system will enable full use by the visually and hearing impaired.

Statutory and Regulatory Background

The Access Statement section of this Design and Access Statement satisfies Part M of the Building Regulations 2004 and the more detailed requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 as detailed in the Planning (Applications for Planning Permission, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006.

Philosophy

The Secret Group Limited philosophy on inclusion is based on the social model of disability that recognises that disabled people are disadvantaged by barriers and hazards over which they have no control. In order to maximise access for all people Secret Group Limited will take all reasonable steps to ensure that all aspects for which they have responsibility are to be based on inclusive design and will be achieved by specific provision of equipment or facilities, or by management procedures.

Consultation

- BS8300: 2009 – Design of Buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people
- Building Regulations Approved Document Part M (2004 edition)
- Technical Standards for Places of Entertainment – The Association of British Theatre Technicians
- Fire Safety Risk Assessment: Theatre, Cinemas and Similar premises
- Fire Safety Risk Assessment: Open Air Events and Festivals

How Access will be Achieved

Specific Issues

- A level and firm approach route, where ramps are included, these will be designed and constructed in accordance with Approved Document M.
- Step free entry to, and circulation around the venue where possible.
- Suitable lift access where required.
- Accessible WCs to Part M Specification, with step free access
- Any internal ramping to comply with Part M.
- Emergency evacuation procedures that take account of all impairments with information readily available.
- Free Carer ticket available for attendees who require assistance to attend the event

Plan (P-SC-ARL-23-009) identifies the details of physical access to the site and how issues of barrier free access at the interface between the development and the public realm have been addressed.

Maintenance of Features

Management and staff (both planning staff and on-site) will be aware of their responsibilities regarding disabled people and will understand the reasons for the accessible provision for which they are responsible.

Overall venue

Public access to the site will be via the existing entrance at 180 Arlington Road. This entrance is flat and level to the street. Once inside the foyer there is an existing ramped access into the space.

Internal circulation around the experience space will be designed with accessibility in mind, with ramped access or lift access provided as required, in line with the requirements of Approved Document M.

Back of House spaces (staff only)

The back of house spaces allow for support functions to enable the smooth running of the venue. These spaces (offices, dressing rooms, storage areas) will be step free where possible. Where staff members with access needs are employed by SGL, all suitable and reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure that the staff member is able to access all these spaces.

Emergency access and egress

In the event of an emergency, audience and staff members will be able to exit all spaces through designated emergency exits. Exit routes have been calculated for layouts for the outside event spaces, as well as the temporary structures, front of house and circulation spaces. For all other exit routes, step free exiting is possible from all areas, through all exit doors and to final places of ultimate safety, outside the site perimeter.