

Secret Group – 180 Arlington Rd, London NW1 7HL – Planning Application  
Our Reference (D-SC-ARL-23-018)

# **Community Consultation, Benefits and Enrichment**

# 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.

This document has been prepared to lay out the community consultation that has been carried out by the applicant, along with the benefits to the community.

## 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.

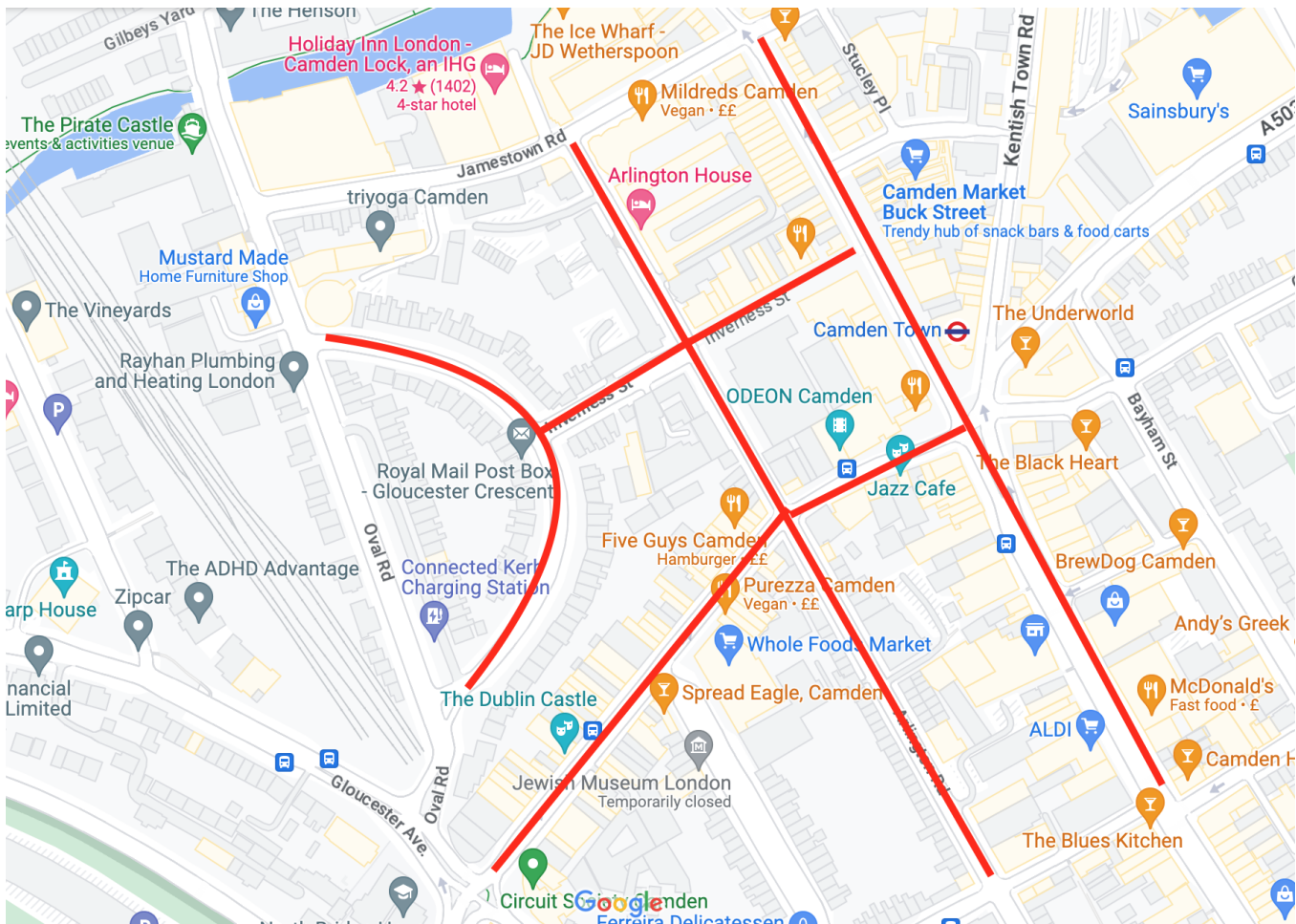
SGL are aware that Arlington Road and the surrounding areas have increasingly become an area of high crime and antisocial behaviour. It is envisaged the proposed development will have a positive impact in reducing these issues. The increased visible staffing presence around the entrance, and the nature 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.

# Consultation

Secret Group Limited always aims to be a ‘good neighbour’ for all its sites, and prides itself on maintaining good working relationships with all key stakeholders.

On the 4th September 2023, Secret Group Limited held 2 open community meetings, a total of 1038 invitations to this were sent by letter to surrounding properties, both commercial and residential. The below map shows the area to which those invitations were distributed.



On the 4th September, 2 sessions were held, attendance for which is laid out below;

Session Time	Attendance - Residents
13.00	2
18.30	0

# Community Relationship Management

Secret Group Limited believes that fostering great working relationships with all the key stakeholders is vital to the successful running of the venue, for both SGL and its neighbours.

In order to best communicate with these key stakeholders, SGL provides a number of channels.

## Dedicated Residents Webpage

This page will be kept up to date during the refurbishment process, providings the latest information to residents about any potential disruption caused by these works.

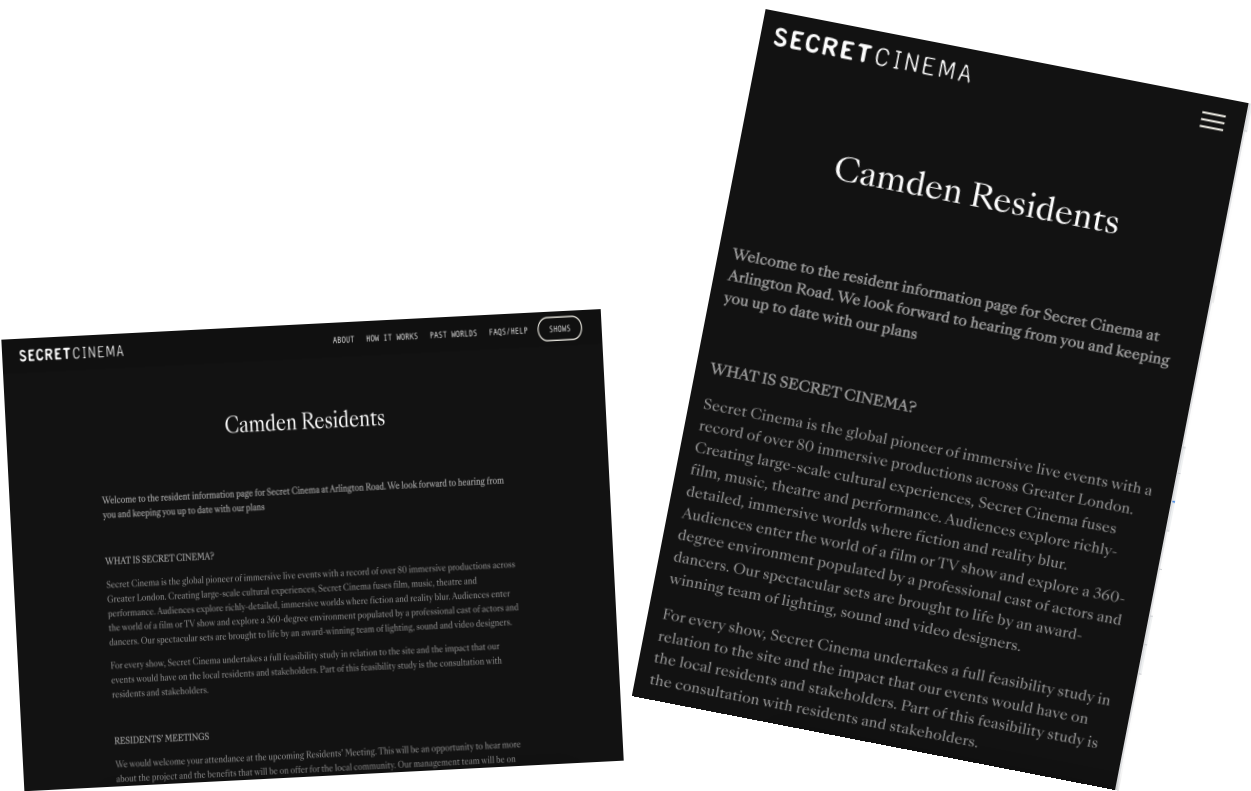
Job Vacancies will be posted here as roles become available.

A set of Frequently Asked Questions will be posted to provide quick answers to questions that residents may have.

This page will also include the details needed to contact the community team. The page can be found at <https://company.secretcinema.com/camden-residents>

## Dedicated Email / Phone Contact Details

A dedicated email address and phone number will be provided to all residents to enable them to quickly make contact with a member of the team should they have any questions or concerns. SGL always encourages residents to use this resource at the first opportunity where there is a potential issue, so any necessary mitigation can be put into place as quickly as possible.





# Employment and Training Strategy

## Construction Phase

The planned construction phase is limited in scope, and mainly concentrates on internal refurbishment in order to bring the facilities up to date.

Where possible, SGL will endeavour to advertise any temporary roles as they arise during the construction phase to the local community first.

Given the limited time period of this phase of the project, it is not possible to include a meaningful training placement for this project.

## Operational Phase

During the operational phase the following roles will be created.

Role	Number of FTE Roles
Cleaning Staff	4-8
Security Staff	4-6
Bar Staff	10-20
FOH Staff	5-10
Technical & Stage Management Staff	11-15
Venue Management Staff	3

Where possible, these roles will be advertised in the local community and amongst the existing staff employed by Mecca at the site. SGL will also work with recognised schemes, such as Back to Work to fill these roles where appropriate.

## Work Experience, Internships and Training

SGL plans to provide 10+ work experience placements for people aged 18-25 from Camden. These roles will involve shadowing Front of House, Operations, and Stage Management teams. It is SGLs aim that work experience participants go on to paid employment at the shows.

### Work Experience Students



“We learned a lot about everyone’s roles. Staff were encouraging us to ask question and find out more about their roles... a great and informative experience”

- Martyna

“Thank you again for this great experience, it was truly incredible to see all the work behind such an amazing project.”

- Noa



Statements from former SGL Work Experience Placements

# Schools and Colleges Program

SGL has a proven track record of providing an excellent community engagement program for educational institutions that serve the local area of their sites.

This work harnesses the imagination of the students and enhances learning by placing young people at the centre of an inspiring environment. SGL is in a privileged position to give young people and community groups access to world class immersive events and cultural experiences.

The programs are tailored to the needs of the environment, but previous examples have included:

- Workshops with national partners i.e. LEGO, V&A Museum, Royal Observatory
- Immersive experiences
- Assemblies
- Courses i.e. filmmaking
- Work experience
- Careers talks
- Education Enrichment

Some examples of this are found below:

Age	Aimed at...	Timing	Details
11-18	Secondary Schools	10-20 min assembly	<b>Overview of SC and careers in the performing arts/live events industry. Focus on the range of careers.</b>
17-18	School leavers	10-20 min assembly	<b>Overview of SC and careers in the performing arts/live events industry. Promotion of 2-day work experience for age 18+ during the summer show</b>
17-18	School leavers with interest in events / creative arts careers	1-2 hour workshop	<b>Masterclass in creating &amp; producing an immersive experience with Secret Cinema creatives. Culminates in students pitching their own SC show.</b>
13-16	Drama / Media	1-2 hour workshop	<b>Masterclass in creating &amp; producing an immersive experience. Culminates in students pitching their own SC show.</b>

14-18	Media / Film Studies / Graphic Design / Art	1-2 hour workshop	<b>Masterclass in creating a marketing campaign for a live event with SC experts.</b>
14-18	English / Drama / Art & Design		<b>Masterclass in analytical skills: reading and interpreting signs, symbols and language in film.</b>
8-11	Primary school children	1-2 hour workshop	<b>Drama activities exploring themes of the film with aims to develop confidence, performance skills and analytical skills in a dynamic and exciting workshop.</b>

# Conclusion

SGL are committed to fostering great relationships with their neighbours, and providing the local community, and the existing site staff with job opportunities where possible.

The commitment to community engagement will continue into the operational phase of the development, providing ongoing support through work opportunities, and the schools and college program, benefiting the local community and the wider borough as a whole.