

<b>Address:</b>	180 Arlington Road, London, NW1 7HL		<b>1</b>
<b>Application Number(s):</b>	2023/4355/P	<b>Officer:</b> Sam FitzPatrick	
<b>Ward:</b>	Camden Town		
<b>Date Received:</b>	11/10/2023		
<b>Proposal:</b>	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).		
<b>Background Papers, Supporting Documents and Drawing Numbers:</b>			
<b>Drawings:</b>			
Location Plan; Ground Floor Plan – Existing (P-SC-ARL-23-004 Rev 2.3); Ground Floor Plan – Proposed (P-SC-ARL-23-008 Rev 2.3); Basement Plan – Existing and Proposed (00-01 Rev B); First Floor Plan – Existing and Proposed (00-03 Rev B); Cycle Parking Location – Proposed (P-SC-ARL-23-012 Rev 2.4); Cycle Parking Detail – Proposed (P-SC-ARL-23-017 Rev 2.4).			
<b>Documents:</b>			
Cover Letter (prepared by Secret Group, dated 11/10/2023); Design and Access Statement (D-SC-ARL-23-005); Draft Operational Management Plan (prepared by Secret Group, dated 24/10/2023); Draft Employment Training Plan (D-SC-ARL-23-018); Secret Cinema Testimonials (D-SC-ARL-23-007); Transport Assessment and Travel Plan – Build, Dismantle & Servicing (D-SC-ARL-23-008); Indicative Audience Movement & Venue Operations (D-SC-ARL-23-009); Operational Timings (D-SC-ARL-23-010); Access Statement (D-SC-ARL-23-014); Draft Noise Management Protocol (D-SC-ARL-23-016); Community Consultation, Benefits and Enrichment (D-SC-ARL-23-018); Audience Route Detail (D-SC-ARL-23-022); Flood map for planning (prepared by Environment Agency, dated 25/08/2023); Residents Letter Template (prepared by Secret Group, dated August 2023); Residents Letter Map; Distance to Residencies (P-SC-ARL-23-002 Rev 2.3); Fire Exit Routes (P-SC-ARL-23-005 Rev 2.3); Pedestrian and vehicle access routes (P-SC-ARL-23-009 Rev 2.3); Waste storage (P-SC-ARL-23-013 Rev 2.3); Letter of support from landlord (prepared by Rank Group, dated September 2023); Letter to landowner (prepared by Secret Group, dated 11/10/2023).			
<b>RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY: Grant conditional planning permission subject to a Section 106 Legal Agreement</b>			
<b>Applicant:</b>	<b>Agent:</b>		
Secret Group Limited 24 West Street, London, WC2H 9NA	Secret Group Limited 24 West Street, London, WC2H 9NA		

## ANALYSIS INFORMATION

Land use details				
Use Class	Description	Existing GIA (sqm)	Proposed GIA (sqm)	Difference GIA (sqm)
None (Sui Generis)	Bingo Hall	2,419	0	- 2,419
None (Sui Generis)	Interactive entertainment including immersive theatre and associated ancillary bar space.	0	2,419	+ 2,419

Parking details			
Type	Existing spaces	Proposed spaces	Difference
Car	0	0	0
Cycle	0	20	+20

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- i) The application site relates primarily to the ground floor of 180 Arlington Road, but also involves parts of the first floor and basement levels. The building itself was constructed in the 1930s as a cinema but was divided into two parts in 1968; the upper portion of the site became the cinema accessed from Parkway and currently occupied by Odeon, and the lower portion of the site became the application site, accessed from Arlington Road. This was originally the 'Rank Strand Club', though was renamed as 'Mecca' at a later date. The last use of the site was as a bingo hall, which is excluded from any use class (Sui Generis) since the last change to use classes in 2020.
- ii) The proposal is for the change of use of the ground floor level, as well as parts of the basement and first floor levels, from the previous bingo use to use for interactive entertainment, which includes immersive theatre and associated ancillary bar space.
- iii) The development would result in the loss of the established Sui Generis bingo hall floorspace, however the Rank Group, the owner of the site (and owner of the operator, Mecca Bingo), has issued a statement detailing its intention to cease operation of the bingo use due to the decline in business viability. Therefore, the change of use would also prevent a period of vacancy for the site that may otherwise result from Mecca Bingo ceasing operation. Given the impending closure of the bingo hall, the change of use would not result in the loss of existing businesses. The proposed use is considered to protect and enhance the role and unique character of Camden Town Centre, contributing to the success and vibrancy of the area, and so is considered appropriate in this location.

- iv) The development does not involve any external alterations or extensions, so would not impact the character or appearance of the host building or any part of the Camden Town Conservation Area. No signage or advertisements relating to the development are proposed as part of this permission, if advertisements are required then they may need to obtain express consent for them to be displayed at a future date.
- v) Though no objections were received, comments by amenity groups and residents raised the potential issue of noise disturbance and the need for satisfactory venue management. To this end, the applicant has provided a draft Operational Management Plan, and agreed to final plan to be secured by S106 legal agreement, officers are satisfied that the proposed development could be operated whilst protecting the amenity of nearby residents and occupiers.
- vi) The existing use as a bingo hall and the proposed use as an immersive theatre venue are functionally similar in that both operate as entertainment facilities, and the 'pulse' format of managing numbers of visitors by small groups admitted at periodic intervals would prevent there being a significant impact on the transport infrastructure. The existing venue is designed to an overall capacity of 1,200, while the proposed use would be expected to be around 250-350 at any one time (including both visitors and staff). Therefore, the bingo hall at full capacity would bring significantly higher numbers of visitors to the site than the expected full capacity of the proposed interactive entertainment use. The smaller numbers of peak visitors and use of staggered arrivals and dispersal would also alleviate potential amenity concerns such as noise disturbance.
- vii) Subject to the suggested conditions and an Operational Management Plan and Employment and Training Package, both secured by legal agreement, officers are satisfied that the proposed development would be operated without a harmful impact on the Town Centre or the neighbours. The proposed development complies with the development plan as a whole and is acceptable and in accordance with Local Plan policies, so it is recommended that conditional planning permission is granted subject to a Section 106 agreement.

## OFFICER REPORT

**Reason for Referral to Committee: Change of use resulting in the provision of more than 1,000 sqm of non-residential floor-space [Clause 3(ii)].**

### 1. SITE AND BACKGROUND

#### *Location*



*Figure 1 – The existing site*

- 1.1 The application site covers an area of approximately 0.19 hectares (1,913 sqm) that previously operated as a bingo hall known as 'Mecca Bingo' at 180 Arlington Road. The site lies at the intersection of Arlington Road and Inverness Street, though it is also close to the intersection of Arlington Road and Parkway. Camden High Street and the Camden Town tube station lie just to the east.
- 1.2 The application site is located in the designated 'Camden Town' Town Centre and has an excellent Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) of 6b. The nearest London Underground Station is Camden Town, which is approximately 180m east, whilst Chalk Farm Road and Mornington Crescent London Underground Stations are both within a short walking distance. Camden Road Overground Station is also close by, and there are numerous bus routes serving Camden High Street, Parkway, and Bayham Street. There are also a number of Santander Cycle docking stations located on Arlington Road, Parkway, and Greenland Road. A dedicated parking bay for

dockless rental e-bikes and rental e-scooters is located on the corner of Arlington Road and Inverness Street.

- 1.3 The site is in the Camden Town Conservation Area. Although the building is not listed or noted as a positive contributor in the Camden Town Conservation Area appraisal, its pantile roof slope does make a distinct contribution to the conservation area. The nearest listed buildings are the Grade II listed Arlington House and the Grade II listed terraces at Gloucester Crescent and the west end of Inverness Street.
- 1.4 The building itself is a large brick building that was constructed in the 1930s as a cinema known as the 'Gaumont Camden Town'. Following the grant of planning permission in 1967, the building was split horizontally, with the Odeon cinema occupying the upper portion and the Rank Strand Club occupying the lower portion, the former section accessed via Parkway and the latter through Arlington Road. At the time of the permission granting the separation of the site, cinemas fell under Class XVIII and Bingo Halls under Class XIX. These have since been replaced by new planning use classes. Under the current Use Classes Order, bingo halls are excluded from any use class and so the site is currently considered a *Sui Generis* use.
- 1.5 The site consists of approximately 1,915 sqm at ground floor level and 329 sqm and 175 sqm at basement and first floor level, respectively. The permission granted in 1967 to split the site specified that all but the first floor would change to use as a bingo hall, so it is considered that the entirety of the basement and ground floor would be *Sui Generis*. Although the permission states that the first floor would remain cinema use, a very small part of the first-floor level has been used as ancillary space to the bingo hall and is therefore included as part of this application.

## 2. THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The proposal is for the change of use of the building (ground and part first floor and basement levels) from a bingo hall to an interactive entertainment use, which includes immersive theatre and an associated ancillary bar space. The site would be operated by 'Secret Cinema Limited' who specialise in immersive film and television events.

## 3. RELEVANT HISTORY

### *The site*

**2017/2321/P** – External alterations to building including new entrances to both street elevations and addition of plant equipment on northeastern side elevation. **Granted 29/06/2017.**

**2007/1797/P** – Retention of a metal canopy at the rear of the building, to be used as a smoking shelter for bingo hall. **Granted 02/08/2007.**

**PEX0200567** – Installation of a shutter to the front entrance. **Granted 02/09/2002.**

**PE9606093R1** – Alterations to the front elevation to form ramped access, new entrance canopy with illuminated fascia panel above, blocking up of existing openings, new security shutters to the front recessed entrance and formation of new fire exit. **Granted 21/03/1997.**

**AE9606109R1** – The display of a new illuminated fascia sign, two new projecting box signs and new fascia strip with illuminated detailing. **Advertisement consent granted 21/03/1997.**

**3760** – The change of use of the Odeon Theatre, 14 Parkway, Camden, (with the exception of the first floor) from Cinema, (Class XVIII) to Bingo Hall (Class XIX). **Granted 31/07/1967.**

### ***The area***

#### Stables Market

**2020/5876/P** – Use of the site for interactive entertainment which includes a combination of immersive theatre and team challenges (sui generis). **Granted subject to a section 106 legal agreement 13/04/2022.**

#### Horse Hospital

**2020/4731/P** – Use of the first floor as an immersive theatre space, drinking establishment with ancillary events (sui generis). **Granted subject to a section 106 legal agreement 24/11/2021.**

## **4. CONSULTATION**

### ***Statutory consultees***

4.1 None.

### ***Local groups***

#### TRACT

4.2 **TRACT** (Tenants and Residents Associations, Camden Town) commented on the application to raise concerns, but did not object. These comments are outlined below:

- Given the large capacity of the venue and the suggested operating hours, conditions should be attached to any granting of permission to protect the amenity of surrounding residential areas;
- The operation of the building requires further detail and consultation to ensure residents' concerns are considered, and deliveries and servicing should be restricted to appropriate times;
- If the immersive cinema were to fail as a business, what measures are in place to prevent the use of the premises as a night-club or other late-night venue.

Officer response:

- *Please refer to section 9 for a full assessment and response to objections relating to impacts on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.*
- *Please refer to section 10 for a full assessment and response to objections relating to transport impacts, including servicing.*
- *Because the use is Sui Generis, planning permission would be required for any material change to an alternative use (such as a night-club or other late-night use). The acceptability of any change of use would be considered against the development plan policies in place at the time of an application being made.*

Theatres Trust

4.3 Theatres Trust wrote to support the application.

***Adjoining occupiers***

4.4 Multiple site notices were displayed adjacent to and in the vicinity of the building on 18/10/2023, at Arlington Road, Inverness Street, and Parkway. A press advert was placed in the Camden New Journal on 19/10/2023.

4.5 One comment was received from the owner/occupier of 48 Parkway, which raised the following considerations:

- The development may result in increased congestion and disruption along Arlington Road due to loading and unloading associated with the use of the site; and
- The proposed use may result in greater noise break-out due to the more lively and interactive form of entertainment (compared to that of the bingo hall). Additionally, any increase in footfall would need to be managed to avoid disruption as the proposed use is likely to have higher attendance than the existing use. Given the alcohol licence and bar space provided on site, the site would need to be managed to ensure that dispersal takes place with minimal impact.

Officer response:

- Please refer to section 9 for a full assessment and response to objections relating to impacts on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers;
- Please refer to section 10 for a full assessment and response to objections relating to transport impacts.

**5. POLICY**

***National and regional policy and guidance***

[National Planning Policy Framework 2023 \(NPPF\)](#)

[National Planning Practice Guidance \(NPPG\)](#)

[London Plan 2021](#)

[London Plan Guidance](#)

***Local policy and guidance***

Camden Local Plan (2017) (CLP)

[Policy G1 Delivery and location of growth](#)

[Policy C3 Cultural and leisure facilities](#)

[Policy C5 Safety and security](#)

[Policy C6 Access for all](#)

[Policy E1 Economic development](#)

[Policy E2 Employment premises and sites](#)

[Policy E3 Tourism](#)

[Policy A1 Managing the impact of development](#)

[Policy A4 Noise and vibration](#)

[Policy D1 Design](#)

[Policy D2 Heritage](#)

[Policy TC2 Camden's centres and other shopping areas](#)

[Policy TC4 Town centre uses](#)

[Policy T1 Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport](#)

[Policy T2 Parking and car-free development](#)

[Policy T3 Transport infrastructure](#)

[Policy DM1 Delivery and monitoring](#)

Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance

*Most relevant Camden Planning Guidance (CPGs):*

[Access for All CPG - March 2019](#)

[Amenity - January 2021](#)

[Community uses, leisure and pubs - January 2021](#)

[Developer-Contribution CPG - March 2019](#)

[Employment sites and business premises - January 2021](#)

[Town centres and retail - January 2021](#)

[Transport - January 2021](#)



Other guidance:

[Camden Town Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy 2007](#)

## 6. ASSESSMENT

6.1 The principal considerations material to the determination of this application are considered in the following sections of this report:

7	Land use
8	Design and conservation
9	Amenity
10	Transport
11	Economy and employment
12	Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)
13	Conclusion
14	Recommendation
15	Legal comments
16	Conditions
17	Informatives

## 7. LAND USE

7.1 The application site is in the 'Camden Town' Town Centre, where Policy TC2 (Camden's centres and other shopping areas) of the Local Plan seeks to promote and ensure successful and vibrant centres throughout the borough to serve the needs of residents, workers, and visitors. The policy aims to protect and enhance the role and unique character of each of Camden's centres by providing for a range of shops including "*food, drink, and entertainment and other suitable uses to provide variety, vibrancy, and choice*".

7.2 Policy TC4 (Town centre uses) of the Local Plan seeks to ensure that the development of shopping, services, food, drink, entertainment and other town centre uses does not cause harm to the character, function, vitality, and viability of a centre, the local area, or the amenity of neighbours. To this end, the Council will consider the effect of development on shopping provision and the character of the centre in which it is located, as well as the cumulative impact of food, drink, and entertainment uses, taking into account the number and distribution of existing uses.

- 7.3 The Camden Planning Guidance 'Town centres and retail' details the character of the 'Camden Town' Town Centre, which is characterised by its diversity of uses, popularity as a vibrant tourist destination, and its music and entertainment venues. The site itself is located on a sensitive frontage within the Town Centre, where entertainment uses can be acceptable provided that the amenity of nearby residents is protected.
- 7.4 The application site currently operates as a bingo hall, and the proposed use is for interactive entertainment with immersive theatre and an ancillary bar space. The proposed use of the site would be fairly similar in terms of land use impacts on the Town Centre, and potentially is more likely to bring visitors from a larger variety of demographics than a bingo hall. The geographical catchment for visitors is also likely to be wider, which reflects the regional and national importance of Camden Town as a town centre. The ground floor is proposed to be used to host the immersive theatre events in the space currently occupied by the bingo hall itself, and the ancillary bar space in the area that is currently a bar area serving the bingo hall.
- 7.5 The immersive theatre experience would be run by 'Secret Group Limited', who operate numerous theatrical, musical, and cinematic immersive productions. Although they have usually provided single large-scale shows, this facility would provide shows in a different format that operates with a 'pulse' system of smaller groups and shorter shows of around 60-90 minutes. At maximum capacity, including actors and staff, the occupancy limit would be 250. This entertainment use is considered an appropriate town centre use that would attract locals, families, and tourists to the Town Centre, contributing to the success and vibrancy of the area. The proposal would provide a cultural and leisure facility and avoid a vacant site that would otherwise harm the function, vitality, and vibrancy of the centre and local area.
- 7.6 Overall, the proposed use is considered to protect and enhance the role and unique character of 'Camden Town' Town Centre, providing variety, vibrancy, and choice for residents and visitors. The use would support the character, function, vitality, and viability of the Town Centre and as such is considered to be in accordance with Policies TC2 and TC4 of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan and is acceptable in terms of land use. Impacts on local amenity are discussed in section 9.
- 7.7 Policy C3 (Cultural and leisure facilities) of the Local Plan seeks to protect cultural and leisure facilities, only permitting the loss of such a facility where it is demonstrated there is no longer a demand. Cultural facilities include uses such as museums, galleries, theatres, and bingo halls.
- 7.8 The owner of the building (the Rank Group) currently owns 'Mecca Bingo', which operates the bingo hall in its current form. They have provided a statement to confirm that trading difficulties resulting from the coronavirus

pandemic alongside general market trends have led them to the decision to seek alternative uses of the premises.

- 7.9 Although the loss of a bingo hall may potentially disproportionately affect particular cohorts, men are a growing proportion of players and 18-34 year olds are the fastest growing age demographic. Overall, it is not considered that any impact in this regard would outweigh other planning considerations.
- 7.10 Given that the proposed use as an interactive entertainment venue would also be considered a cultural/leisure facility, the proposed development does not involve the loss of a cultural and leisure facility, and so is considered to comply with Policy C3 of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan.

## **8. DESIGN AND CONSERVATION**

- 8.1 The Council's design policies are aimed at achieving the highest standard of design in all developments; Policy D1 (Design) of the Local Plan requires development to be of the highest architectural and urban design quality which improves the function, appearance, and character of the area, while Policy D2 (Heritage) states that the Council will preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas. Camden's Local Plan policies are supported by the Camden Planning Guidance 'Design' and the Camden Town Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy.
- 8.2 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ("the Listed Buildings Act") provides a statutory presumption in favour of the preservation of the character and appearance of Conservation Areas and their settings. Considerable importance and weight should be attached to their preservation. A proposal which would cause harm should only be permitted where there are strong countervailing planning considerations which are sufficiently powerful to outweigh the presumption.
- 8.3 The duties imposed by the Listed Buildings Act are in addition to the duty imposed by section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, to determine the application in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 8.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires its own exercise to be undertaken as set out in Chapter 16 – 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment'. Paragraph 190 requires local planning authorities to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage assets that may be affected by a proposal. Paragraphs 193-196 requires consideration as to the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, including an assessment and identification of any harm/the degree of harm.

- 8.5 The proposal involves a change of use of the ground floor, as well as some ancillary space at basement and first-floor level and does not involve any external alterations or extensions. The internal alterations are all limited to modest refurbishment works that would not make changes to the supporting structure and all installed sets within would be capable of being removed. The sets would also be primarily static and would not require regular changing, as with most conventional theatres. Therefore, it is expected that the refurbishment of the property would take approximately 75 days, so there is little infrastructure that would need to be brought into the building once the initial set is in place and the building has been made suitable for the proposed use.
- 8.6 Should any external alterations be required in the future then these would be the subject of a separate application, as required. This includes any changes to the building's signage, which would require an advertisement consent application.
- 8.7 As such, the development would not impact the character or appearance of the host building or the Camden Town Conservation Area and so would be in accordance with Policies D1 and D2 of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan.

## **9. AMENITY**

- 9.1 Policy A1 (Managing the impact of development) of the Local Plan seeks to protect the amenity of Camden's residents by ensuring that the impact of development is fully considered and does not harm the amenity of neighbouring residents. This includes light, privacy, outlook, and noise disturbance.
- 9.2 The proposals do not include any external alterations or extensions and, as such, would not increase opportunities for overlooking of neighbouring residential properties or impact their outlook, daylight, or sunlight. The principal consideration would be the potential impact of noise and disturbance arising from the new use itself and from customers entering and leaving the premises.
- 9.3 No objections to the proposal have been received, however comments from both TRACT (Tenants and Residents Associations Camden Town) and a resident living raise the issues of increased noise break-out, operating hours of the proposed use, and management of arrivals and dispersal so as to avoid disturbance to nearby residents.
- 9.4 The nearest residential properties and noise-sensitive receptors are located to the west, the north, and the east of the site – at the west side of Arlington Road, the north side of Inverness Street, and at the junction of Inverness Street and Camden High Street, respectively. The distance to the residential

properties is approximately 16m to the west, 18m to the north and 10m to the east. This is in the context of a busy London Town Centre, and the largest town centre in the borough. Given the distances between the site and the residential properties, as well as the commercial nature of the surrounding area itself (particularly on Inverness Street), there would likely be limited noise disturbance arising from the use. Nevertheless, it is suggested that permission is granted subject to a condition requiring that any music or sound played at the site is not audible from the adjoining highway or neighbouring residential properties.

- 9.5 It has been noted that the area surrounding Arlington Road has previously experienced anti-social behaviour and is therefore potentially sensitive to uses that may exacerbate this. The applicant has demonstrated that the likelihood of the proposed development contributing to anti-social behaviour has been reduced by a number of reasonable actions, such as security checks and CCTV systems. The Council's 'Designing Out Crime' Officer was consulted on the proposal, and following a meeting with the applicant's team, they have confirmed that they are satisfied that the proposal is acceptable. The more managed nature of the use (see section below) and the pulse format managing customer attendance would further help manage impacts in the area. Any potential vulnerabilities would be alleviated by way of management and an operational management plan would be required to secure this.

#### ***Operational Management details***

- 9.6 A draft Operational Management Plan (OMP) has been prepared by the applicant in support of the application, which covers the management and operation of the site. The final **Operational Management Plan would be secured by a Section 106 legal agreement** to ensure compliance, and should ensure that the following details are covered:

- Details of opening and operating hours;
- Details of measures to manage expected occupancy levels;
- Details of measures to manage customer queuing and dispersal, in and out of the site;
- Evidence of consultation with community groups;
- Statement summarising representations from local community and local groups including actions that may have been taken in response to representations;
- Details of code of conduct shared with all visitors to the development setting out expected standards both within and in the immediate vicinity of the site;
- Information about the owner's representative (including name and contact details) that are to be made available to the Council and all local residents at all times to ensure any issues or concerns are dealt with in an efficient and effective manner;

- Details of a formal complaints procedure to be adopted so that all complaints can be formally logged and dealt with within a set timeframe;
- Details of the mechanism for dissemination of information relating to the on-going management of the development;
- A 12 month review of the Operational Management Plan from the initial occupation date;
- A review mechanism that allows for reviewing and updating the Operational Management Plan as reasonably required by the Council (including if the maximum occupancy is expected to exceed 350 due to a change in visitor format – see below).

9.7 The draft Operational Management Plan (along with other documents submitted with the application) already secures a good level of detail about the measures to manage the use. It states that the use would operate with a pulse format; groups of no more than 24 would be permitted entry to the site at intervals of 15 minutes, making their way through the immersive theatre experience over the course of approximately 60 to 90 minute periods. There would be a maximum of five groups at any one time, so a maximum of 120 guests on site at any time. Based on the draft Employment Training Plan, it is estimated that there would be between 41 and 68 members of staff. Therefore, allowing for staff and visitors (including those arriving, moving through the interactive experience, and in the ancillary bar area), the occupancy of the site is expected to be around 250 persons, however taking into account the crossover between departures and arrivals, could rise to around 350 at any one time.. The maximum occupancy of the site at any one time would be secured as a condition (condition 7), and details of how the occupancy levels would be managed would be secured within the Operational Management Plan. This would mean that any change in the maximum occupancy that may be expected due to, for example, a change in event format, would require a review of the Operational Management Plan (ensured through the review mechanism) and an application for planning permission to vary the aforementioned condition. The benefit of this is that any potential significant change to occupancy levels would be publicly advertised during the planning permission process, allowing the local community to be consulted. Licensing can impose further controls under the licensing regime.

9.8 The venue is licensed to be solely ticketed, and tickets would be available on a time slot basis. This would allow visitors to be distributed throughout the day and reduce the need for people to queue to enter the venue. It is expected that there will be no external queuing due to the internal entrance lobby area providing space for queuing, which would limit the numbers of people outside and the potential for noise disturbance.

- 9.9 In terms of hours of operation, the draft Operational Management Plan states that the venue would be open to the public 10:00-00:00 on Mondays to Saturdays, and 12:00-23:00 on Sundays. The sale of alcohol would cease half an hour before close each day, and the last admission would be at 21:45 on all days (except bank holidays, which would be at 21:30). As previously discussed, groups of 24 would be permitted every 15 minutes, so it is expected that there would be no more than 47 sessions per day on the busiest days (likely to be Saturdays). The latest that visitors would be expected to leave by would be 23:59, other than Sundays (as the premises would already be closed by this point). The primary point of egress from the venue would be at Arlington Road, with a secondary egress point at Inverness Street. Guests would also be guided to Parkway as the quickest and closest route to public transport links, which would reduce the impact on residential properties in the opposite direction along Arlington Road and Inverness Street.
- 9.10 In preparation for this application, consultation was undertaken to collect views and perspectives amongst the local community. A total of 1038 letters were sent to surrounding properties in the general area (both residential and commercial), with an invitation to two open community meetings on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 2023. The first of these meetings was at 13:00 and was attended by two residents and the second of which took place at 18:30 and was attended by one resident. The applicant has also reached out to Councillors and local stakeholders where possible. The feedback from the consultation was reflected in the draft OMP.

### ***Noise disturbance***

- 9.11 In terms of disturbance resulting from noise breakout, it is not expected that the proposed use would result in any additional or significant disruption. The existing building is large and well insulated, and the nature of the proposed immersive theatre use also means that there are multiple 'rooms' within the main auditorium space, which would need to have sound insulation so that visitors cannot hear what is taking place in adjacent rooms. Therefore, the proposed use will already be self-limiting in terms of noise. As an additional precaution to limit noise disturbance arising from the proposed use, if planning permission is granted it is recommended that this is subject to a condition to prevent music being played such that it is audible within adjoining premises or on the adjoining highway (condition 4). There will also be a designated contact number so that any noise complaints can be reported and formally logged so as to be dealt with. This would be secured as part of the Operational Management Plan, secured as an obligation as part of a Section 106 legal agreement.
- 9.12 As a result of the location of the site close to main commercial roads such as Parkway and Camden High Street, the staggered entry and departure times, the entertainment style use, the internal space for queuing at the entrance of

the venue, the limited space to congregate post-event, and the small group sizes, it is considered that the potential disturbance arising from customers entering and vacating the site would be limited. Although the proposed bar area would serve alcohol, the predominant use of the site would be the entertainment function and the bar area would be an ancillary element of this. It is also worth noting that the existing use as a bingo hall includes an ancillary bar area without significant impacts to amenity. As such, it is not considered the impact the character of the area or unduly impact neighbouring amenity and the proposals are therefore considered to accord with Policy A1 of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan.

- 9.13 It is noted that similar applications for immersive theatre experiences have been approved in recent years elsewhere in the borough, including at the Horse Hospital and the Atrium Building, both located in the Stables Market north of this site. It is recommended that this application for planning permission is approved subject to a Section 106 agreement securing a full Operational Management Plan which must demonstrate consideration of the potential for the use to cause disruption to the amenity of nearby residents and the area more generally. It is considered appropriate to secure this plan via a Section 106 as this will be a live document that will allow for review and modification as appropriate if any issues do arise.

## **10. TRANSPORT**

- 10.1 The Council's transport policies are aimed at promoting sustainable methods and means of transport so as to improve the health of the borough's residents, improve air quality, and strengthen communities. Policy T1 (Prioritising walking, cycling, and public transport) of the Local Plan requires developments to promote sustainable transport by prioritising walking, cycling, and public transport through methods such as improving the pedestrian environment and creating a safe and accessible environment for cyclists. Policy T2 (Parking and car-free development) seeks to limit the availability of parking and require all new developments to be car-free, including by using legal agreements to ensure that future occupants are aware that they are not entitled to on-street parking permits. The Camden Planning Guidance 'Transport' supports these policies.

### ***Cycle parking***

- 10.2 Developments are expected to provide cycle parking in accordance with Policy T1, the 'Cycling Facilities' section of CPG Transport, and the London Plan. As per the most relevant standards, the development should provide 1 long-stay cycle parking space per 8 full-time equivalent staff and 1 short-stay space per 30 visitors). Based on the estimated staffing level of approximately 41 and the maximum number of visitors of 120, the requirement would be for five long-stay cycle parking spaces and four short-stay cycle parking spaces.



10.3 It is proposed to provide a staff bike store to the northeast of the site within the contained courtyard area off Inverness Street, which would contain twenty bike spaces. The applicant originally included wall-mounted cycle hooks in an internal bike store, but this was revised following officer comments, as this design would require lifting a bike, which could exclude less able users and would therefore not be supported. The applicant has since provided revised documents to show horizontal cycle parking in the secure courtyard area to the northeast of the site., which would be acceptable. The provision of this staff cycle storage area containing twenty long-stay spaces would be secured by condition 6 if planning permission is granted.

10.4 Given the site constraints and lack of an appropriate area with which to satisfy the requirements for short-stay visitor parking, it was considered that alternative contributions should be sought to promote the use of sustainable methods of transport, such as an off-site financial contribution towards a short-stay cycle hangar in the immediate area. However, no cycle hangars are currently planned or proposed in the immediate vicinity, and the closest installed hangar is located on Greenland Road, close to Camden Town Underground Station. As such, an alternative financial contribution of £2,000 towards dockless bike and scooter hire is sought, which would help improve access to sustainable methods of transport in the absence of short-stay cycle spaces or capacity in the immediate surroundings.

#### ***Disabled parking***

10.5 In line with the requirements of the London Plan, all non-residential development should provide access to at least one on or off-street disabled parking bay. This seems feasible in this case with bays available for conversion outside the venue. As such, a financial contribution of £4,000 is sought to support the provision of an off-site disabled parking space, which would be located in close proximity to the site. This **contribution for off-site disabled parking would be secured as part of a Section 106 agreement**, and would cover the costs associated with design, consultation, advertising, preparing an amended traffic management order, and construction.

#### ***Operation and Servicing***

10.6 The applicant has submitted information pertaining to the operation of the site and the potential transport impacts that may arise, including the draft Operational Management Plan, the Transport Assessment and Travel Plan, the Access Statement, Operational Timings, Audience Arrivals and Departures, and Audience Route Detail documents. These have all been reviewed by the Council's Transport Officer.

10.7 Given the application is for the change of use and there are very little construction works (limited to internal refurbishment), it is not considered that a Construction Management Plan, delivery and servicing plan, or travel plan

would be required given the scope of development works. The existing and proposed uses are broadly and functionally similar in a general sense given that both operate as entertainment venues with the same capacity. Although it is likely that the proposed use will attract a larger number of visitors, the supporting documents submitted as part of the application outline that it is expected there would be a maximum of 96 arrivals and 96 departures per hour, and that given the session size of 24 and the highest expected number of sessions on Saturday, the busiest day, being 47, there would be a total of 1,128 distinct visitors to the site at the busiest point. Spread across the course of a day, this level of attraction is not expected to have a significant impact on the local public transport network or surrounding area.

- 10.8 The draft Operational Management Plan also states that the sale of alcohol will cease 30 minutes prior to closure, with the latest dispersal of visitors being at 23:59. This, combined with the small group sizes and staggered approach of arrival and egress would mean that the incremental impact of dispersal into Arlington Road would be negligible, especially given the close proximity to Parkway and Camden High Street, which are both busy streets with a number of late night alcohol licenses in place across different times.
- 10.9 Where customers are visiting the experience later in the evening, a number of public transport options would still be available; normally, last trains from Camden Town are at 00:25, so those leaving the premises at the latest point of dispersal would still likely be able to use this option. In any event, later arriving customers will also have the opportunity to use the night tube on Fridays and Saturdays, and there are a number of night bus routes from various points around Camden Town. There are also various licensed taxi ranks in the area.
- 10.10 Although a Construction Management Plan is not deemed necessary, the Transport Assessment and Travel Plan document outlines the works required for the preparation of the venue. Although these are minimal, they do require the use of small vans, rigid, and articulated vehicles throughout the period of installation, with an estimated 300 commercial vehicle movements. In order to ensure that the public highway is protected, a highways contribution of £20,000 is sought, that could then be returned if the public highway does not sustain any damage. This **highways contribution of £20,000 would be secured as part of a Section 106 legal agreement**, if planning permission were granted.
- 10.11 The proposed use as an immersive entertainment venue is unlikely to generate much waste and refuse, and any generated would likely arise predominantly from the ancillary bar space, which would be easily accommodated within the existing waste disposal arrangements. The Council's Transport Officer has confirmed a delivery and servicing plan would not be necessary, however any substantial internal works that may

involve increased servicing (even for a limited period of time), should be communicated to the Council's Transport team. This would be secured as part of the final Operational Management Plan.

- 10.12 In accordance with Policy T2, the development would need to be secured as car-free, which involves limiting the availability of both off-street and on-street parking. This would be **secured as car-free by a Section 106 legal agreement** if planning permission were to be granted and would prevent future occupiers from obtaining on-street parking permits. Given that both staff and visitors have no alternative to travelling to the site beyond public transport (or walking or cycling if they live in reasonable proximity) due to the lack of parking available, there is no requirement for a Travel Plan for this particular development.
- 10.13 Following review of the submitted documents and revisions, the Council's Transport Officer has confirmed that the draft Operational Management Plan is reasonable. **A full Operational Management Plan would be secured by Section 106 legal agreement** and would include a review mechanism to deal with other issues that may arise once the development has commenced.

## **11. ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT**

- 11.1 Policies E1 (Economic development) and E2 (Employment premises and sites) of the Local Plan are aimed at securing a successful and inclusive economy in Camden by supporting employment generating uses, including leisure and tourism. The policies also aim to support schemes that will increase employment opportunities for local residents, including training and apprenticeships.
- 11.2 In support of this application, the applicant has provided a draft Employment Training Plan, that sets out the employment and economic benefits that would result from the proposed scheme. These include the jobs provided through an increase in staffing, the provision of work experience, and the delivery of a school engagement programme. The applicant has also met with Camden's Inclusive Economy team to discuss the scheme.
- 11.3 The details outlined in the Employment Training Plan are welcomed and would ensure that the proposed change of use supports the aims of Camden's economic policies. The applicant has indicated a willingness to deliver work experience with 18-25 year olds in partnership with the Inclusive Economy service and to work with Good Work Camden to recruit locally to vacancies, including for roles in performance, front-of-house, cleaners, security, and bar staff. The work experience programme would provide ten placements per year and would ring fence a number of these opportunities for specific priority cohorts, such as disabled young people and care experienced young people. This **Employment and Training package**

would be secured as part of a Section 106 legal agreement, were planning permission to be granted.

- 11.4 Although there is a brief construction phase required to refurbish the internal area of the site, this is limited in scope and duration, so is not suitable to provide a meaningful training placement for. However, efforts will be made to advertise any temporary roles involved with this phase to the local community first, where possible.
- 11.5 The Employment Training Plan also states that the proposed use will involve a programme of schools outreach, with the intention to deliver a school engagement programme. This would involve both primary and secondary ages and consist of varying types of assemblies and workshops. The applicant would work with Camden learning and Camden Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) to design and deliver the school engagement programme and would sign up to the Camden STEAM pledge. The school engagement programme would also be secured as a planning obligation as part of the Employment and Training package.
- 11.6 The Council is also intending to publish its first Evening and Night Time Strategy, which will include an intention to establish a Licensing Charter for venues to set standards of best practice and incentivise good management behaviours in the evening and night-time. Though not a planning obligation, the applicant would be strongly encouraged to involve themselves in the strategy work to contribute to the success of Camden's economy.

## **12. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)**

- 12.1 No new floorspace is proposed at this stage so it will not be CIL liable. The CIL applies to all proposals which add 100m<sup>2</sup> of new floorspace or an extra dwelling.

## **13. CONCLUSION**

- 13.1 In conclusion, the proposed use is considered appropriate in this town centre location, and would preserve and enhance the vitality, function, and viability of the 'Camden Town' Town Centre. The development does not involve any external alterations and only very minor internal alterations for refurbishment, so would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the building or wider Camden Town Conservation Area. Subject to the conditions and obligations secured by legal agreement, the proposed development could be operated without harmful disturbance to neighbours and would contribute to the economy of the Camden Town area and the borough more generally.

### ***Public benefits***

- 13.2 If the committee decides there is harm, there are a number of public benefits that could weigh against any harm identified:

- Ongoing economic support for the Town Centre
- Transport contributions
- Work experience package
- Schools engagement programme

13.3 As such, the proposed development is considered acceptable and in accordance with Policies C3, E1, E2, A1, A4, D1, D2, TC2, TC4, T1, and T2.

#### **14. RECOMMENDATION**

14.1 Grant conditional Planning Permission subject to a Section 106 Legal Agreement with the following heads of terms:

- Car-free development
- Highways contribution of £20,000
- Dockless bike and scooter hire contribution of £2,000
- Off-site disabled parking bay contribution of £4,000
- Operational Management Plan with review mechanism
- Employment and Training Package with schools outreach

#### **15. LEGAL COMMENTS**

15.1 Members are referred to the note from the Legal Division at the start of the Agenda.

## 16. CONDITIONS

1	<p><b>Implementation period</b> This development hereby permitted must be begun not later than three years from the date of this permission.</p> <p>Reason: In order to comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).</p>
2	<p><b>Approved drawings</b> The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:</p> <p>Drawings: Location Plan; Ground Floor Plan – Existing (P-SC-ARL-23-004 Rev 2.3); Ground Floor Plan – Proposed (P-SC-ARL-23-008 Rev 2.3); Basement Plan – Existing and Proposed (00-01 Rev B); First Floor Plan – Existing and Proposed (00-03 Rev B); Cycle Parking Location – Proposed (P-SC-ARL-23-012 Rev 2.4); Cycle Parking Detail – Proposed (P-SC-ARL-23-017 Rev 2.4).</p> <p>Documents: Cover Letter (prepared by Secret Group, dated 11/10/2023); Design and Access Statement (D-SC-ARL-23-005); Draft Operational Management Plan (prepared by Secret Group, dated 24/10/2023); Draft Employment Training Plan (D-SC-ARL-23-018); Secret Cinema Testimonials (D-SC-ARL-23-007); Transport Assessment and Travel Plan – Build, Dismantle &amp; Servicing (D-SC-ARL-23-008); Indicative Audience Movement &amp; Venue Operations (D-SC-ARL-23-009); Operational Timings (D-SC-ARL-23-010); Access Statement (D-SC-ARL-23-014); Draft Noise Management Protocol (D-SC-ARL-23-016); Community Consultation, Benefits and Enrichment (D-SC-ARL-23-018); Audience Route Detail (D-SC-ARL-23-022); Flood map for planning (prepared by Environment Agency, dated 25/08/2023); Residents Letter Template (prepared by Secret Group, dated August 2023); Residents Letter Map; Distance to Residencies (P-SC-ARL-23-002 Rev 2.3); Fire Exit Routes (P-SC-ARL-23-005 Rev 2.3); Pedestrian and vehicle access routes (P-SC-ARL-23-009 Rev 2.3); Waste storage (P-SC-ARL-23-013 Rev 2.3); Letter of support from landlord (prepared by Rank Group, dated September 2023); Letter to landowner (prepared by Secret Group, dated 11/10/2023).</p> <p>Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of proper planning.</p>
3	<p><b>External features</b> No lights, meter boxes, flues, vents or pipes, and no telecommunications equipment, alarm boxes, television aerials, satellite dishes or rooftop ‘mansafe’ rails shall be fixed or installed on the external face of the buildings, without the prior approval in writing of the local planning authority.</p> <p>Reason: To safeguard the appearance of the premises and the character of the immediate area in accordance with the requirements of Policies D1 and D2 of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017.</p>

4	<p><b>Noise breakout</b> No music shall be played on the premises in such a way as to be audible within any adjoining residential premises or on the adjoining highway.</p> <p>Reason: To safeguard the amenities of the adjoining premises and the area generally in accordance with the requirements of Policies D1, A1, A4, TC1, TC2, and TC4 of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017</p>
5	<p><b>Opening hours</b> The use of the premises hereby permitted shall not be open to members of the public other than within the following times:</p> <p>10:00 Hours to 00:00 Hours – Monday to Saturday 12:00 Hours to 23:00 Hours – Sundays, Bank Holidays, and Public Holidays</p> <p>Reason: To safeguard the amenity of the adjoining premises and the area generally in accordance with Policies A1 and A4 of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017.</p>
6	<p><b>Cycle storage</b> Cycle storage for twenty cycles shall be provided in their entirety in accordance with the approved drawings (references P-SC-ARL-23-012 Rev 2.4 and P-SC-ARL-23-017 Rev 2.4) prior to commencement of the use hereby approved and permanently retained thereafter.</p> <p>Reason: To ensure the development provides adequate cycle parking facilities in accordance with the requirements of Policy T1 of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017.</p>
7	<p><b>Maximum occupancy</b> The maximum occupancy of the site for the use hereby approved shall not exceed 350 people (including visitors and staff) at any one time.</p> <p>Reason: To safeguard the amenities of the adjoining premises and the area generally in accordance with the requirements of Policies D1, A1, A4, TC1, TC2, and TC4 of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017</p>

## 17. INFORMATIVES

1	<p>Your proposals may be subject to control under the Building Regulations and/or the London Buildings Acts that cover aspects including fire and emergency escape, access and facilities for people with disabilities and sound insulation between dwellings. You are advised to consult the Council's Building Control Service, Camden Town Hall, Judd St, Kings Cross, London NW1 2QS (tel: 020-7974 6941).</p>
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2	<p>All works should be conducted in accordance with the Camden Minimum Requirements - a copy is available on the Council's website (search for 'Camden Minimum Requirements' at <a href="http://www.camden.gov.uk">www.camden.gov.uk</a>) or contact the Council's Noise and Licensing Enforcement Team, 5 Pancras Square c/o Town Hall, Judd Street London WC1H 9JE (Tel. No. 020 7974 4444).</p>
3	<p>Noise from demolition and construction works is subject to control under the Control of Pollution Act 1974. You must carry out any building works that can be heard at the boundary of the site only between 08.00 and 18.00 hours Monday to Friday and 08.00 to 13.00 on Saturday and not at all on Sundays and Public Holidays. You must secure the approval of the Council's Noise and Licensing Enforcement Team prior to undertaking such activities outside these hours.</p>
4	<p>This approval does not authorise the use of the public highway. Any requirement to use the public highway, such as for hoardings, temporary road closures and suspension of parking bays, will be subject to approval of relevant licence from the Council's Streetworks Authorisations &amp; Compliance Team, 5 Pancras Square c/o Town Hall, Judd Street London WC1H 9JE (Tel. No 020 7974 4444). Licences and authorisations need to be sought in advance of proposed works. Where development is subject to a Construction Management Plan (through a requirement in a S106 agreement), no licence or authorisation will be granted until the Construction Management Plan is approved by the Council.</p>
5	<p>Your attention is drawn to the fact that there is a separate legal agreement with the Council which relates to the development for which this permission is granted. Information/drawings relating to the discharge of matters covered by the Heads of Terms of the legal agreement should be marked for the attention of the Planning Obligations Officer, Sites Team, Camden Town Hall, Argyle Street, WC1H 8EQ.</p>



# Location plan 180 Arlington Road 2023/4355/P











