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South London campaigners celebrate Streatham Hill theatre being protected from developers

10th August 2018 BY CALUM FRASER calum@slpmedia.co.uk

A campaign to save a Grade-II listed theatre from demolition has been given a boost.

A group of South London residents are campaigning to save Streatham Hill Theatre as it has fallen into disrepair over the years.

They were worried that developers may spy the site as prime real estate and so they submitted an application to Lambeth council to have it listed as an Asset of Community Value (ACV), which the council approved last month.

David Harvey, a member of the Friends of Streatham Hill Theatre group, which submitted the ACV application, said: "We are very pleased that Lambeth has recognised the contribution the former Streatham Hill Theatre has made to the community in a variety of forms over its 90 years."

ACV status gives land protection from development as the community has the chance to buy the site before any sale can go ahead.

Streatham Hill Theatre (SHT) was opened in 1929 as the Streatham Hill Playhouse. It was bombed in the Second World War but was rebuilt and reopened in 1950. It closed as a theatre in 1962, becoming a bingo hall.

Much of the original theatre and its equipment remain. Small scale theatre returned via the Streatham Theatre Company from 2013 to 2016, and bingo ceased in 2017.

Mr Harvey said: "Now that bingo has ceased The Friends would like to see this sleeping beauty of a building brought back into use for the benefit of the community by offering a wide range of events and activities, as well as being a base for innovation and creativity."

In January 2018 the theatre was added to the Theatres Trust's (TT) Theatres at Risk register. The TT is a national advisory public body.

There are 35 other theatres across the country that are on that risk register, including the Coronet in Southwark which could be demolished as part Elephant and Castle regeneration scheme.



Inside the Streatham Hill Theatre

Claire Appleby, TT architecture advisor, said: "It's fantastic that Lambeth council has listed Streatham Hill Theatre as an Asset of Community Value.

"Theatres are an important part of both our social and built infrastructure. They are about people, communities and places, and help create identity as well as being an important economic driver for creating employment and for the night-time economy.

“A reopened Streatham Hill Theatre has the potential of providing that boost to its locality, greatly enhancing the current entertainment offer within Streatham for residents and visitors alike.

We’d like to see more local authorities follow Lambeth’s lead in recognising the value of theatres in local communities.”

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