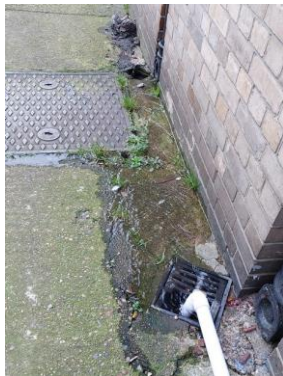


We present and discuss the current status of Streatham Hill Theatre, our future visions, and our campaign at our regular online campaign meetings. Here's a quick summary of what's been going on recently, often behind the scenes. The [next scheduled campaign meeting](#) is on 26th June.

Ongoing Concerns for the Building

- There is a long-term issue of water ingress from ground water in the basement, and making the whole building damp – one of the reasons Historic England added the theatre to its At Risk register. It is unclear if this is being managed or rectified.
- We've liaised with Theatres Trust, Lambeth and Thames Water over an almost constant **water release** in Barrhill Road from the side of the building, first reported on 7th February. On 29th February the problem was addressed, by running an unsightly new pipe along the pavement down to the next drain, rather than fixing the blocked drain. Even this drain has overflowed at times into a third small drain – a wooden “dam” has now been added (c. 2nd May) to direct water that way. The cause of this now longstanding release of water remains of great concern, as do the **blocked drains**.



- There's also **water dripping** from a couple of pipes high up the side of the building.
- The foyer sadly remains strewn with unopened mail and the **paint/plaster debris** from water ingress appears to be worsening.

- A badly **torn canopy** at the side of the building, was reported to Lambeth's dangerous structures team by phone and email on 4th January. For several months it wasn't made safe by the church, and there was no protective barrier provision on the pavement. However, on 8th April a rudimentary repair of the canopy was finally witnessed.
- The **rubbish** piled up round the back of the SHT has been reported to Lambeth, who have said no action can be taken as this is on private land. Most of this has been there since Ruach acquired the building 2 years ago.
- The majority of ground floor doors and windows are **boarded up**.
- We understand **works** are going on inside. Lambeth are **investigating** these works.
- We remain extremely concerned that Ruach hasn't allowed any **inspection** of the building, even to help Lambeth rule on our ACV application. However, a new 5-year **ACV** term was indeed awarded in December 2023. We continue to strongly urge that a building inspection is facilitated as soon as possible. We understand Historic England has been in touch with Lambeth as they too wish to inspect.



Planning + Ruach moving to the SHT this June/July

- After selling their Brixton Hill site on 1st July 2022, Ruach made a deal to remain there rent-free for two years while they prepared their move to the SHT. Ruach has now announced [here on Twitter/X](#) that they'll be **moving to the theatre this July**. On April 15th they announced that the move would be in **June**, and launched an [appeal on Twitter/X](#) for £1m funding.
- Much hangs on them needing to submit a 'Change of Use' **planning** application to Lambeth, from Bingo to a Church. We have been told that Lambeth have received no application, but that pre-application advice has been given. They advise that change of use is likely to be required. And as a listed building, little building works would be possible without consent. Any unauthorised works could lead to enforcement action.
- We have asked to see the **pre-planning advice** mentioned above and have received a redacted version omitting the specifics, but which does emphasise the need for change of use permission and that Lambeth policies including the Local Plan (calling for an arts and cultural use) apply.
- We have also heard rumours that Merkur will create a **new entrance** to their slots from Barrhill Road, which suggests they might remove the

corridor across the foyer. Lambeth have not been approached but note that permission would likely be needed.

- We have been advised that Ruach could potentially use the site for church services for **28 days in a year without permission**. Technically, we're told they'd need to be removing any church paraphernalia between services (unless held on consecutive days) as it should be returned to its original state between uses.
- We're preparing to mount a vibrant **campaign** to oppose the application once it's been submitted, and will need to come up with ways to publicise that, and encourage local residents and businesses to voice their opposition. Ruach were successful getting change of use to a church for their Gaumont State Cinema site in Kilburn in 2008, but there have been successful campaigns that have resulted in similar applications being refused - such as the Everyman Cinema site in Crystal Palace, where local residents mounted a strong and successful campaign against change of use to a church and managed to retain the building as a cinema. (See Inside Croydon, 18 October 2018: ['Dreams do come true' as Crystal Palace gets its cinema back](#)). Unfortunately, we don't have a fighting fund for this, so we aim to put together our change of use objection ourselves. We remain on the hunt for theatre-loving planning experts or KCs who would be kind enough to look that over pro-bono when the time comes.
- The light at the end of the tunnel for us remains with IC Venues, the company owned by Thom Southerland and Morgan Large, that sadly lost out when they negotiated to buy the building during 2021 and 2022. Their **ideas for the SHT, that would involve the FoSHT and the community**, with shows at the ready for the theatre, and exciting long term renovation plans, with support from financial backers, continue to have our support and would go a long way to revitalise the High Road. We're therefore encouraged that they remain in the wings ready and willing to either buy or lease the building should Ruach fail to get change of use.

Land Registry

- The two leaseholds for Mecca and Merkur have been closed.
- The freehold sale to Ruach's trustees is now listed as on 14 July 2022 for £4m. We are requesting copies of transfer documents.
- Merkur's current lease is yet to be listed.
- <https://search-property-information.service.gov.uk/search/search-results/m5mFLch7aDNq0qiM3bVuCA==>

Archive Project

- We've meet with Lambeth Archives to discuss our new project to digitise our collection of historic SHT programmes. We have recently received further donations of programmes, including some from Australia.
- We are also helping Lambeth with their publicity regarding the [return of Shakespeare Folios to the archive](#).
- We also plan to explore the items held about the theatre by Lambeth, Wandsworth and the London Metropolitan Archives.

Awareness Campaign

- Heart Streatham magazine published a centre-fold spread on the SHT [here](#) on pages 16-17 of their Spring 2024 issue.
- Our regular [social media posts](#) continue to attract readers on X/Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.
- We have been invited to give a talk to the CTA and the Frank Matcham Society.

The Friends of Streatham Hill Theatre
A volunteer-run community campaign | A CIO & Registered Charity No. 1193643

info@streathamhilltheatre.org | www.streathamhilltheatre.org | 020 3582 4912

Patrons: Akram Khan MBE, Baroness Floella Benjamin OM DBE DL, Catherine Russell, David Harewood OBE, Jessica Thom, Jools Holland OBE DL, Paul Merton, Renato Balsadonna, Robert Glenister, Samira Ahmed, Simon Callow CBE & Sir Mark Rylance