



FAQ - Frequently asked questions

www.streathamhilltheatre.org

What is Streatham Hill Theatre?

Firstly it is not to be confused with *Streatham Theatre*, our local amateur open-access theatre company, nor *Streatham Space Project*, the new small theatre and performance space in the London Square development.

Rather it's a grand-scale theatre, built in the late 1920s as part of the new developments which made Streatham the 'West End of South London'. It staged theatre, variety, ballet, opera, pantomimes etc. right up to 1962, when it re-opened as a bingo hall originally for Mecca and ultimately Beacon.

In recent years the owners Beacon Bingo let community groups such as *Streatham Festival*, *Streatham Film Festival* and *Streatham Theatre* stage events in the building. Bingo continued right up until January 2017 when it closed, leaving it as a slot machine operation, and no longer available to the community.



Why does it need saving?

As well as being a beautiful and significant building it is the last of the large venues remaining in Streatham Hill – *Caesars* (originally *Locarno Ballroom*) and the *Megabowl* (*Gaumont Cinema*) have gone. There is nowhere comparable in size or with such facilities as this theatre. There is a limited opportunity to save this building for the community.

The building has retained much of its original grandeur and is Grade 2 Listed. It has also been granted Asset of Community Value (ACV) status by Lambeth. This means that should the owners wish to sell the community has an opportunity to bid. The owners recently asked Lambeth to review ACV status but Lambeth have confirmed that ACV status should remain.

What could it become?

But just saving a building is not enough; it needs to have a new purpose. The Friends would like to see the building return to an arts, cultural or performance use for the benefit of the community. This could be through a suitable organisation taking over, or by the community taking the building on itself - as a centre or hub with co-working, studios, rehearsal and performance spaces, hosting events and activities for the community.

We are talking to various people and organisations about what sort of things the community would like to see taking place in the building. This consultation will continue.

How would it work if the community took it on?

If the community wanted to take on the building, a charitable body with a board of trustees would be formed to rent the building (from the current owners or a new one - we have investigated these options). A small number of paid staff would be required to operate the building, supported by volunteers as required. As a charity, grants for capital work for repairs and upgrades become available.

Parts of the building such as offices and shop front would be rented longer term to artists, small companies, etc. to form a co-working hub. Other parts such as larger rooms would be available for community use, art/cultural events, commercial hires etc. and there would be cafe/bar and food offerings open to the public. Our research suggests that these will provide the income required to keep the building going, without major building work.

The auditorium and stage area can be adapted for multi-purpose use without losing the heritage and grandeur, to support medium to larger events (but no longer regularly on the scale of 2500!).

How can I help?

We want to show the level of community support for saving the building. We also need help to run the campaign, raise funds, set up a charity and further develop our proposals, working with the various stakeholders.

You can join the Friends (it's free) through our website, follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, and encourage your friends to do the same.

Where do I find out more?

Our website www.streathamhilltheatre.org has more information about the theatre and the Friends and our campaign.