



Potential closure of the country's leading museum dedicated to Cinema.

For over 19 years The Cinema Museum has been located in the old Lambeth Workhouse, Kennington, former home to Charlie Chaplin, his brother and mother. Our landlords over that time have been South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. We have always paid market rent and frequently deliver therapy projects and host events for the hospital free of charge. In the 33 years since the Museum's creation it has reached out to hundreds of thousands of the elderly and disabled, LGBT+ people and those with nowhere to go and no social network. We run a wide-range of film, cinema and wellbeing events on a daily basis to a community of both young and old - including crucial mental health services for those managing/recovering from mental health issues. We also run a range of wellbeing services and ensure older people who are cut off from society have a place to go, meet others and reminisce through film. This improves mental health and provides the social connectivity so vital in reducing demand on NHS services. Our wellbeing business plan and services stand as an example of how mainstream arts and health can work together to improve community wellbeing, in a way the NHS are unable to. We fund this work through commercial hires – so our wellbeing work is delivered at no cost to the taxpayer. Sadly our wellbeing services are likely to disappear from Lambeth and Southwark in 2018.

We also provide essential training and resources to universities/students studying film, cinema, media and communications via our unprecedented archive of material and our range of activity-based programmes. We house over one million movie stills, exceedingly rare cinema memorabilia and thousands of cinema and film magazines dating from the 1900s to date. The collections owners want to gift a substantial proportion of their collections to the Nation via the charitable vehicle of The Cinema Museum – once their permanent home is secured. Sadly, it seems that these services and the opportunity for this gift will also be lost forever.

Over the past 10 years South London & Maudsley Hospital Trust promised to let the Museum charity purchase its home, to secure its future. It was agreed that once the hospital was ready to sell, this would be done via the Red Book Valuation process to ensure transparency/good value for the taxpayer. The Museum paid for Red Book Valuations, found partners, secured funding and as agreed awaited the hospitals own valuation for both sides agents to negotiate. However, the hospital changed its mind at the last minute – categorically refusing to sell to us – preferring to sell our home on the open market with a view to a fast sale, before Xmas 2017 without planning permission. This leaves us facing imminent closure within months, indeed South London & Maudsley Hospital Trust say they will make our lease expiry (March 2018) a feature of their marketing material.

South London & Maudsley Hospital Trust now claim they never even had any conversations about selling directly to us and their directors have been contacting influential politicians privately, implying that the trustees of the Museum are somehow deluded. This claim is entirely untrue. Indeed, we have files of clear documented evidence of the position – but their claims are nevertheless very damaging for our small charity and we have written to the trustees of South London & Maudsley Hospital Trust asking them to desist.

The Cinema Museum truly is a one-off and will be missed when it is gone, a view shared by our local MPs, Leader of Lambeth Council, London Assembly members and a host of musician/actor/ambassadors including Bastille, Glenda Jackson, Sylvia Syms, Barbara Windsor and Emma Thompson.

We completely understand the needs of the public purse, and of this Hospital Trust in particular, to maximise their return on land disposal. It was for that reason we have always offered to purchase the land at a mutually agreed Red Book Value, at a time convenient South London & Maudsley Hospital Trust, over the 10 years.

We want to continue our work in our Chaplin-related historic building, with collections that have historic significance to the world of film, cinema and the arts. We are talking to Lambeth Council, The Mayors Office and Government departments to explore how this impending disaster might be averted. Of course, had South London & Maudsley Hospital Trust told us a decade ago that they had no intention of selling to us, we would have entered into different arrangements with them; we would be in a new home now with an established Museum and range of wellbeing programmes – and the Nation would own another fabulous and unique international collection. The NHS and its staff need and deserve our support – but it does not have to involve sacrificing our community assets, our cultural heritage and the shape of our future social care. We are still hopeful that a solution can be found that allows us all to continue our work and the delivery of social benefit.

If you think you can help in any way, or have any questions or would just like to be kept updated then please contact martin@cinemamuseum.org.uk