

PUBLIC STATEMENT MAY 10TH 2021: THE CINEMA MUSEUM & HERITAGE BUILDINGS REMAIN AT RISK

The Cinema Museum (TCM) has fought for its heritage buildings and its sustainable future, in Lambeth, for decades. It has spent 23+ years on short leases at The Master's House (on the wider Woodlands site). Until 2018 the wider site was publicly owned land allocated to South London & Maudsley NHS Trust (SLaM). From 2007-2015 SLaM made promises to sell TCM its home - lastly in 2015 when SLaM agreed to sell the wider site to TCM and Family Mosaic (Housing Association) for £15 million (this had the authority and support of NHS England and its regulators, NHS Improvements). Nevertheless, in early 2017 SLaM put the wider site on the open market, selling in early 2018 for £15.5 million to developers 'Anthology' (merged in 2019 to become 'Lifestory'). At the time SLaM issued a letter saying they sold the public land at below market price on the proviso that Lifestory work with TCM to ensure their sustainable future on site. Pre and post the sale TCM shared their needs with Lifestory; which involve ownership of our buildings and protecting local people from the inconvenience of consecutive: heavy plant work; construction traffic; and pollution. In late 2018 the Greater London Authority (GLA) funded Lifestory's scheme via a £21.8 million loan and the GLA told TCM that granting TCM the freehold of their heritage buildings was a loan condition. Since early 2018 TCM have been in discussions with Lifestory/Lambeth Council/the GLA to secure a sustainable future for TCM and its heritage buildings. TCM have agreed purchase terms for their home with Lifestory but Lifestory insist it is subject to them getting planning permission on the Woodlands site. In 2019 Lifestory applied to Lambeth Council for planning permission; in 2020 the application went to appeal on non-determination grounds. In January 2021 the Planning Inspector ruled against Lifestory who are submitting an application for a new scheme to Lambeth Council in June 2021. TCM have written to Lambeth Council and the GLA with details of the agreement with Lifestory, asking them to make sure that any planning decision ensures that Lifestory are obliged to honour that agreement.

Area of satisfaction/compromise: TCM is satisfied with the agreement reached with Anthology/Lifestory but it should be understood that reaching agreement has involved TCM in significant compromise, cost, expense, business model redesign, financial model redesign and redesign of our development model/capital funding plan. TCM has made huge sacrifices to get this agreement to the below stage, in terms of: accepting delays in the promised transfer of ownership; significantly increasing the sum that it is paying for a dramatically reduced footprint; and covering the 100% cost of millions of pounds of repairs (which increases annually as the buildings deteriorate).

Area of disagreement: Lifestory's position is that if they do not get planning permission for the wider Woodlands site, they will sell the Master's House and other heritage buildings (home to TCM) to the highest bidder to help offset their losses on this venture. This act will inevitably see the permanent closure of the Museum and the potential loss of public access to (and use of) these heritage buildings. TCM does not believe this is an acceptable outcome from the sale of public land, the purchase of which was funded from public money, on a promise to secure the future of TCM. We are taking this matter up separately with the GLA, the Secretary of State and Lifestory's owners and funders.

Some people are of the misunderstanding that TCM, having survived on short leases for over 35 years can do so for another 35 years. That is an entirely incorrect and dangerous assumption. Without the freehold or long lease on The Master's House TCM will close permanently within the next couple of years because:

1. the deterioration of The Master's House and other surrounding G2 listed buildings are such that it will be unsafe for anyone to visit or work there. Indeed, TCM's 'usable space' has decreased by 25% over the past few years due to: damp; collapsed ceilings and the general deterioration throughout. That deterioration and reduction in safe usable space is escalating - as is the cost of remedial works.

2. the majority of TCM collections are on long-term loan and the terms of that loan are that if TCM has to move out of The Master's House then the collections must be returned to the owners - reducing TCM to a museum with no collection and no building - so essentially, nothing more than a memory.

3. if one and two (above) were to come to fruition then it is almost inevitable that TCM will cease to exist, the collections will be lost to the public and the heritage buildings will cease to be a safe, affordable and available space for the benefit of the local community.

This is a matter of 'long-shared' public record and it is for these reasons that TCM and local volunteers have fought for over a decade to secure ownership of The Master's House and surrounding heritage buildings.