

## **Proposed relocation of Cinemas 2 & 3 - Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. Cinemas 2 & 3 closure**

#### **Why do the cinemas have to be closed for 2 years – can't they stay open till the new ones are built?**

As the advice given to us is that sound levels from the cinemas (particularly bass/Dolby) would have an unacceptable impact on the residents of the new flats, a policy decision has been made that we should cease film showings in Cinemas 2 & 3 from when the first residents are able to move in, 1 April 2010 – although we will be keeping them open as conference facilities, and for talks and lectures.

In Cinema 1 we will continue to programme our range of diverse arts projects, special film seasons and new releases. The estimate of two years closure is we hope a maximum to allow for planning and consultation issues: the actual construction period will be much shorter.

The City of London is committed to cinema as an integral part of the Barbican's offering – the cheapest solution would have been to close down the cinemas completely, so while the temporary closure is less than ideal, it will eventually result in a much better experience for audiences. At the same time it should improve the area at the end of Beech Street tunnel and improve the attractiveness and desirability of the area.

#### **Will the arts programming and film festivals be affected by the one-screen operation?**

Barbican Film will continue to programme its range of diverse arts projects, special film seasons and new releases. However, due to the reduced capacity, there will be some change in the cinema offer during the re-building period.

#### **Can audiences listen to headphones instead in the cinemas to avoid the noise problem?**

The possibility of using headphones in Cinemas 2 and 3 has been investigated. With headphones, our assessment is the cinemas would not have the full Dolby surround sound experience. A full cinema installation has at least 6 distinct sound channels, one of which is in the centre behind the screen - with headphones on the left and right of your head its hard to recreate this exactly. There are surround-sound headphones available primarily aimed at the computer gaming market and a system called "Dolby headphone" which uses normal stereo headphones and some clever processing to attempt to mimic the effect of the full speaker setup. This system is primarily for private use and is aimed at people for example watching DVDs at home late at night. However neither of these options have been designed to work in cinemas as a replacement for speakers, for instance all of the calibration and equalisation performed by a Dolby engineer on a normal system would not be possible with headphones.

While certainly a creative idea, it's not technically one that would enable us to keep the high quality cinema experience our audiences expect and deserve from the Centre. There are also issues around financing and hygiene which make it practically difficult to implement and sell to customers.

### **2. Proposed new cinemas**

#### **Building:**

**What would the capacity of the new cinemas be?**

The maximum number of seats in the new Cinemas would be 151 each.

**What alternatives have been explored to closing cinemas 2 & 3 and locating the proposed new cinemas?**

Alternatives explored included closing cinemas 2 & 3, or moving them to an alternative location in the Centre. Other locations considered included adjacent to Cinema 1 in the Pit Theatre and Exhibition Hall 2.

**How will the Cinemas affect the current architecture?**

The new development will not affect the Grade II listing. Regular meetings with Planners and English Heritage will take place to enhance the area (Beech St) but within keeping of the Barbican architecture. Any changes will be subject to the requirements of the listing and the approvals of Planning, English Heritage and Government Office for London.

**Audiences:****How will the Centre manage entrances and departures and people lingering?**

Due to the low volumes of people we don't anticipate that this will result in potential problems for residents relating to departing cinema goers. However there will be prominent signs in the foyers requesting patrons leave the building quietly plus staff will be on hand should they be required.

**Is there any estimate in the changes in footfall resulting from the cinema proposals?**

It should be noted that a large proportion of the audiences that visit Cinemas 2 & 3 located in Frobisher Crescent arrive at the Barbican via Beech Street tunnel and the Beech Street/Whitecross Street intersection. Modelling of changes and implications in footfall will be considered by the pedestrian traffic consultant. It should also be noted that the total capacity of the two cinemas is only 300 people, whereas the Exhibition Halls in their current capacity achieve visitation levels of up to 3,000 people per day.

**Noise containment:****We have had a number of queries regarding noise containment, the answer below aims to incorporate the key questions:**

We want to be clear with residents that if the noise from the new Cinemas were to penetrate into their flats, it would result in Environmental Health changing the cinemas' operation to remove the nuisance. It is very clearly in the interests of the City of London and the Barbican Centre to avoid this situation occurring and therefore we will be requiring very strong (insurance backed) guarantees from contractors that there will not be a problem.

It would not necessarily have been impossible to stop sound from cinemas 2 & 3 penetrating Frobisher Crescent flats, however, because of the limited size of the spaces, the "box within a box" solution would have left an impracticably small space for the cinema and the cost and practicality of that solution therefore ruled out any further work on cinemas in that location. This is not the case in the Exhibition Halls as we can take advantage of the much greater space of the double height void to design in sound protection from scratch.

Before implementation there will be detailed testing of the materials and construction technique, in order to verify the acoustic containment performance of what is being proposed. Thorough testing will then be done before the cinemas are put into use as well.

In terms of the timing, early work on the project had indicated that it could be possible to mitigate the sound within the current spaces, however when further work was carried out as the project progressed it became clear that with the sound generated by current cinema showings (especially bass / Dolby) the amount of mitigation required (full box within a box) would not be practical in the size of the current cinemas.

And by the time this became clear the timetable of the development was set.

### **Street-scaping, access and operational hours:**

#### **Are there any wider works associated with this matter, such as street-scaping?**

This is to be considered by the designers and architects and the specialist pedestrian traffic consultant. The current proposal is to establish a green space on the corner of Whitecross Street and Beech Street which may extend in and around the pedestrian ramp to enhance this area.

#### **Will you be maintaining street level access to Ben Jonson, access to the ramp?**

Street level and ramp access will be maintained. There will be no disruption of street level access aside from establishing the green space and implementing a new façade. The entrance point area will in fact be enhanced and consideration has been given to continuing the greening of this area to run parallel with the existing ramp.

#### **What will the effect on narrow, busy pavements at a difficult traffic junction be?**

A specialist traffic pedestrian consultant will be advising on this issue and will be feeding into the design. It should be noted however that the total capacity of the two cinemas is only 300 people, whereas the Exhibition Halls in their current capacity achieve visitation levels of up to 3,000 people per day.

#### **How will Hall/Cinema entrances and exits be configured?**

This is still subject to detailed design, but we envisage we will have the main cinema entrances and exits located on Beech Street.

#### **Will the proposed changes to the halls have any impact on the residents car park?**

The structural changes will impact on approximately 4 car parking spaces, but this is still being assessed as part of the detailed design phase. Utilization of the car parks is not part of the cinema redevelopment scheme.

#### **What impact will the changes to the halls have on security for residents, including the residents car park and fire risk?**

It is not envisaged there will be any impact on security for residents. The new cinemas will be fully compliant with building regulations which will cover items such as fire risk.

#### **What will the hours of operation be?**

The hours of operation are yet to be confirmed, however cinema screenings on Monday to Fridays are likely to be from 5pm to 11pm. Saturdays and Sundays may include daytime screenings from 10am and will finish at 11pm.

The restaurant and coffee shop hours of operation are again to be confirmed but are likely to be from 8am – 11pm.

**Will smells from the onsite catering be a problem?**

Carbon filters will be installed within the extract ductwork, which are designed to stop smells.

**3. Funding**

**Who will be paying for this development? Will any money need to come from the residents for any part of the proposed works?**

The development of Frobisher Crescent brings back floors 7, 8 and 9 to the use originally envisaged for them. In doing this development the City of London will realise a capital receipt and this is being used for the relocation of the Cinemas. Residents will not be required to make a contribution.

**4. Resident consultation and planning permission**

**What are the formal steps in this matter, e.g. planning permission, resident involvement?**

A formal planning application will be discussed with City of London Planning and English Heritage. The application is then formally submitted to City of London Planning, after which they forward on for English Heritage and the Government Office for London approval.

**Are the Barbican Residents being consulted in the process?**

Yes. The Barbican Residents will be consulted fully throughout the process, starting in January 2010 and there will also be formal consultation during the planning process. It is hoped that the redevelopment will be beneficial to residents and cinema goers in the City. Many of the ideas which residents are already suggesting are being fed into the design.

**Are Barbican Residents being consulted on whether the current Cinemas 2 & 3 are to close?**

No. A policy decision has been made to close them for cinema screenings once the first residents are able to move into new flats and a decision in principle has been taken by members to relocate the two cinemas to Exhibition Hall 1.

**5. Exhibition Halls**

**What are the long term plans for both Exhibition Halls?**

The City of London and the Barbican Centre are looking into the possible options surrounding the future of Exhibition Hall 2. It is anticipated that Exhibition Hall 2 will close at the end of 2010. The Exhibition Hall 2 assessment will take place during 2010 and will be subject to a separate commercial evaluation and residents' consultation process. Exhibition Hall 1 would contain the two new cinemas, some retail space and possibly an education space and some offices for the Barbican Centre.

**Has the Exhibition Hall license change from last year got anything to do with the cinema plans?**

No. is not at all related to the previous license application that we sought for the Exhibition Halls last year, although that application did make reference to the fact that the Halls are currently under-utilised and that alternative uses were being sought.

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