

Leanne Palmer,  
The Planning Inspectorate,  
Room 3/02 Kite Wing,  
Temple Quay House,  
The Square,  
Temple Quay,  
Bristol.  
BS1 6PN.

October 2012

*From:*

Dear Ms. Palmer,

**Planning Appeal APP/U5930/A/12/2183662/NWF The EMD (Former Granada) Cinema, 186 Hoe Street, London E17 4QH**

I am writing to object to the above Planning Appeal. I believe the loss of Waltham Forest's only significant entertainment building will have a disastrous impact on the economic regeneration of the area.

I support the more detailed objections submitted by the McGuffin Film Society but my own objections include:

**No change from the previous Appeal:** In 2003, UCKG was refused permission for a change of use by the Deputy Prime Minister. That decision should only be overturned if there has been a "material" change in circumstances and there has not: the EMD remains the only purpose-built multi-use arts venue in Waltham Forest capable of staging professional scale cinema, theatrical and music events.

**Loss of the borough's only significant dedicated entertainment venue:** Despite the cinema facilities proposed in their latest application, UCKG's plans will permanently deprive the 225,000 residents of Waltham Forest of their only significant dedicated entertainment venue. Waltham Forest already has over 200 places of worship. A number of alternative sites would be suitable for specialist religious activity but the EMD's loss as a dedicated venue for entertainment and culture would be irreplaceable.

**Access to the main auditorium:** The heart of the EMD building is the main auditorium. The provision of small scale screening rooms in other parts of the building would in no way compensate for the loss of this unique cultural asset and amenity. UCKG state they will make the space available for one-off special events and cite their use of the Finsbury Park Rainbow as an example – but during the 17 years UCKG has owned the Rainbow, only two films have ever been screened in its main auditorium.

**Viability:** The building is viable as an entertainment venue. It did not close because of falling attendances – but because UCKG bought it and closed it. By their own admission, UCKG has received numerous offers from potential buyers and serious interest has been registered by a range of cinema operators. Waltham Forest Cinema Trust has also offered to buy the venue and operate it on a not-for-profit basis to secure its long-term future. The option for a hybrid church-cinema is also entirely inappropriate for a town centre landmark in a multicultural and multi-faith area. It could not have the wide public appeal that a fully revived entertainment venue would enjoy and is unlikely to be viable in the longer term.

**Lack of consultation:** Despite the demonstrably high levels of public interest in the EMD building, UCKG has made almost no attempt to consult the residents of Waltham Forest with regard to their proposals for the venue. UCKG's plans make clear that the sole motivation for including cinema screens in the scheme is to obtain permission to convert the majority of the building for specialist religious use – an outcome which has already been firmly rejected by residents and the local authority. The ongoing lack of community engagement is particularly worrying given the precedent set at Catford in 2005 when UCKG obtained planning permission to convert that area's cinema into a place of worship following assurances that a portion of the building would be retained for D2/cinema use. Those assurances were later completely disregarded and no entertainment facilities have ever been provided on the site.

**Economic vitality of the area:** A re-opened EMD would boost Walthamstow town centre's night time economy. There is no credible evidence to support claims that a specialist UCKG church would have the same positive impact. The Planning Inspector in the 2003 Appeal visited UCKG's centre in Finsbury Park and concluded: "Nothing in the commercial life of that area appeared to benefit from the UCKG Helpcentre". A hybrid scheme involving a UCKG church and significantly reduced cultural facilities is unlikely to have the same broad appeal or generate the same economic benefits as a fully revived entertainment venue.

**Listed status:** The first option for a Grade II\* Listed building should always be the purpose for which it was originally designed (i.e. a venue for entertainment and culture). The historical importance of the building (in a borough which was home to some of the first British film studios and the birthplace of Alfred Hitchcock) makes the venue unique – its compromise or loss would deprive Waltham Forest of a major part of its cultural heritage and potential tourism revenue.

**Additional comments:**

**Yours faithfully,**