

A new cinema coming to Lewisham

Lewisham Council have finalised an agreement to restore the Ladywell Playtower and provide a new, independent cinema for local residents – the Ladywell Cinema.

The four-screen cinema, with a restaurant and bar, will provide a welcome boost to the local economy and evening offer, with all staff paid the London Living Wage. Subject to planning permission, work will begin next year, with the cinema due to open to the public in 2024.

The restoration project will be led by Guildmore, in partnership with an independent cinema operator. The cinema will have a strong community focus, with special events and screenings, helping contribute to Lewisham's Borough of Culture legacy.

The Playtower originally opened in 1884 as a swimming pool and public hall and, despite closing to the public in 2004, the Grade II listed building remains an iconic feature of the neighbourhood. Over the last few years, the Council has been developing plans to bring this much-loved building back into public use and safeguard its future.

While these plans were delayed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, an agreement has now been finalised with Guildmore to progress the project. After the previous cinema operator had to withdraw from the project due to the impact of the pandemic, an independent operator has been selected to run the new Ladywell Cinema.

Damien Egan, Mayor of Lewisham, said:

"I am delighted that plans for the restoration of the Ladywell Playtower are back on track after the uncertainty of the COVID.

"As well as saving a much loved historic building, a new local cinema will be a fantastic addition to our community. Importantly, the new cinema operators will be paying the London Living Wage so we will also see more good local jobs too."

Engin Ertosun, CEO of Guildmore, said:

"Having been selected through the bid process in 2017 and having consulted and engaged extensively since this time, reaching this agreement with Lewisham Council is a major milestone in securing the Playtower's restoration.

“We will now be submitting a planning application as soon as possible to allow for the restoration itself to begin to save the building and to deliver the benefits that the proposals will bring to the local community.”

Lyn Goleby, of The Ladywell Cinema, said:

“I’m pleased to be working with Guildmore to help them bring a cinema to Ladywell. This project has been long in the making and I hope it will make an important contribution to the economy and liveliness of the area. It is very exciting to be working on bringing back such a beautiful building to a vibrant new use and I’ll look forward to working with the local community.”

Published on: 20/01/2022