

PLANNING UNIT  
Head: Irene Whitehead

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE  


CELEBRATING THE MOVING IMAGE

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Dear Florian Beigel

LFVDA/LVA/LFC Relocation

Following our conversation earlier today, I am delighted to be able to give you an update on my initial enquiries into potential properties in Stratford East and Brixton, plus the state of play with the Diorama.

As I explained initially, the Crown Estates agents, Chestertons, were in negotiation with a commercial company for occupation of the building. The commercial group are offering to meet the entire cost of restoring and refurbishing the building in return for a reduced rent (Chestertons indicated that 10% of a market valuation had been offered). Chestertons have been asked by the Crown Estates to evaluate three options: negotiating with us on the basis that the Crown Estates meet the cost of renovation and hand the building over to us for fitting out in return for a market rent; proceeding with the commercial developers on the terms already discussed; negotiating with the commercial developers for a higher rent. Unfortunately, Chestertons do not expect to have a decision on the basis of those options until next week. I will contact you as soon as I have any further information. I enclose, as you requested, drawings of the Diorama and the brochure produced by the Diorama Arts Trust in 1990.

The British Film Institute exists to encourage the development of film, television and video in the United Kingdom, and to promote knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of the culture of the moving image. Its activities include the National Film and Television Archive; the National Film Theatre; the Museum of the Moving Image; the London Film Festival; the production and distribution of film and video; funding and support for regional activities; Library and Information Services; Stills, Posters and Designs; Research, Publishing and Education; and the monthly Sight and Sound Magazine.

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In Stratford I have had an introductory meeting with the Chief Executive of the City Challenge company, who is very enthusiastic to see the three groups relocate into his area. He has proposed two areas for our consideration, the town centre itself and a development site called Three Mills.

The Three Mills site is some distance from the centre of Stratford and is currently undergoing the process of redevelopment, and for these reasons may not be of immediate interest to the groups. However, any development there would probably attract considerable assistance from City Challenge as well as very low rent levels. The site includes redundant industrial property dating from the 18th-20th Century (including one Grade I listed mill building). Existing occupants include a major tourism development the Fairground Museum, and the commercial production and promotions company Imagination. I enclose a City Challenge promotional document about the site and a map showing its location.

Unfortunately I have not yet been able to see any property in Stratford Town Centre. I will however be having a meeting on Thursday with an Officer from the Newham Planning Department to discuss our requirements and available properties. He has already indicated that there are a number of possibilities, including a redundant cinema and the old Magistrates Court. Both of these are in the immediate vicinity of the Theatre Royal.

The building I looked at in Brixton is the old Bon Marche goods depository on Brighton Terrace. The discussions I have had are with Paul Halpin of Media Production Facilities who hopes to be able to develop the entire building (some 46,000 square feet) as a multimedia training centre. The building is currently owned by a third party and negotiations are apparently at a delicate stage. Whilst I am sure that Mr Halpin would be pleased to arrange access with the current owner it may be wiser until we are able to confirm that the three groups are interested. The building is in fair condition, with the exterior having been repaired and refurbished about three years ago with the aid of an Urban Programme grant. Inside it is divided across its width into three sections, two with a floor area of approx. 3,500 sq. ft. on each of five

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floors, one of approx. 3,000 sq. ft. on two floors. The headroom on the ground floor is I would guess about 16 feet, but it may be that there is in fact insufficient height for our purposes.

As I mentioned on the 'phone, Nicholas Morgan of the LFC has been sent initial details of the Decca building (near Oval tube station) which he believes may represent a possibility. I have asked him to send to you copies of any drawings or detailed information he may receive in the next day or so. I have been unable as yet to establish contact with Hackney City Challenge, who have not returned any of my calls.

In terms of an order of priorities or suitability, I would at this stage say that a ranking of Brixton, the Diorama, with Decca as third place and Three Mills, Stratford as fourth seems likely. However, the following factors may well alter that ranking: in pursuing Brixton we will tie ourselves to another organisation's negotiations on the purchase of the building which may of course fail; the Crown Estates may not even wish to enter into negotiation over the Diorama; it may be that one of the properties in Stratford Town Centre will be very suitable. I hope that at the meeting on Friday we are able to produce a more definite short list.

If you have any queries about any of this please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

  
Chris Chandler  
Regional Planning Officer

cc Steve MacIntyre (LFVDA)

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