



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

Roy Bullock M.B.E.
Council Leader, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Town Hall, Tunbridge Wells
TN1 1RS

10th December 2007

Dear Roy

Re: Cinema Site: Design Competition and Demolition

You will recall that at the meeting of the Town Forum on the 25th October 2007 it was unanimously agreed that the current state of affairs surrounding the Cinema site was totally unacceptable. In this meeting we resolved that the Cinema should be demolished as soon as possible and that the site, if needing to be left for a period of time prior to any development, be used as an open space and not as a temporary car park.

The Town Forum is pleased to see that a Cinema Design competition has been enacted as a new project coordinated by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in partnership with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. The Town Forum is pleased to support any initiative which will remove this now infamous “grot spot” from the scenery of Royal Tunbridge Wells. **The demolition of the cinema has received the merit of a separate planning consent on 23rd March 2006 (TW/06/00369/CAC/RCC) and is not linked anymore hand in hand with construction.** We therefore look to see the cinema building being demolished as soon as practicable taking care to cater for concerns raised in previous correspondence.

We fully understand the need for certain aspects of this development needing to remain confidential due to business critical activities but we see no reason why the developer of the site could not be asked to come to a Town Forum meeting in the near future. We feel sure that having a good understanding of intentions on both sides would enable the owner of the cinema to move matters along. While the competition between architects is a good initiative we have no idea as to whether or not the architect, who does win, will listen to the views of those who live around or very close to the site. Our intention is that the architects should listen and want to listen and that they treat the needs of the local resident equally to those in official positions.

We look forward to hearing from you soon and trust that you agree with our simple requests.

Yours sincerely
Christopher K Thomas
Chairman

c.c. Cllr Elizabeth Thomas Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development

INFO:

RTW Town Forum Meeting 25 October 2007 — *The Cinema Site* was discussed and the Town Forum considered it a disgrace and a shame for the town that the site had been left to decay. The Town Forum resolved to write to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Roy Bullock, and the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development, Councillor Mrs Thomas expressing their very strong view that at the least the existing site should be demolished. This would be better visually and would encourage local residents that things were moving forward. It was suggested that if the site was demolished it could become an open space until a final decision of its use was agreed.

Tunbridge Wells

B O R O U G H C O U N C I L

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Mr Christopher Thomas
Chairman
Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum
3 Woodbury Close
Royal Tunbridge Wells
Kent TN4 9LE

13 December 2007

Dear Christopher

I will respond to your letter of 12 December 2007, using the numbering of the paragraphs therein.

Paragraph 1 - I am sorry that you have found it necessary to resolve that the cinema should be demolished as soon as possible. Unfortunately, there is a significant technical issue in that Network Rail are the owners of the tunnel immediately beneath the footprint for future development and their advice is that demolition should not be allowed until we have a clear construction plan for the development that will take account of their needs to protect the tunnel.

Paragraph 2 - Thank you for your congratulations on the proposal of a cinema design competition. The rest of this paragraph refers to the demolition to which I have already responded in the previous paragraph.

As far as paragraph 3 is concerned, the first part of this process is to judge conceptual designs from the architects that have been selected by RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects). When we have an understanding of the selection process and the possible chosen design it may be possible to invite the competition winner to come along to a future Town Forum meeting. I am sure that as part of pre-application discussions for the detailed design both the owner and the architect will wish to listen to the views of those who live around or close to the site and obviously as part of the planning process there will be a statutory consultation period of three weeks whereby all interested parties can respond to the application.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Roy Bullock
Leader of the Council

From: Christopher Thomas (christownforum@btinternet.com)

To: roy.bullock@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

Date: Monday, 17 December, 2007 5:38:39 PM

Subject: Yr letter re. **Cinema site**

Dear Roy

Thank you for your letter regarding the cinema site. I am pleased to hear that you will be making every endeavour to have the winning architects come and talk to the Town Forum, which would be over and above standard planning processes. Please keep myself and the Town Forum up to date with the selection process.

Importantly, could three weeks not be extended in the planning process considering the major impact this site will have?

With respect to the technical issue relating to the tunnel and when to demolish I do not see where Network Rail is coming from. Either the demolition can be done or not. It should not matter when the demolition is done as it has to be done at some point, so, why not immediately. Would you please ask Network Rail to provide reasons why they would not like to see the demolition done (in simple layman terms) ASAP when the process of demolition is no different in either event. It would be good to at least know from them directly. Please advise in due course.

What would concern me more is the requirement for footings etc, as piling would be inappropriate due to earth shocks and possible tunnel collapse. This will be a major aspect in the design process I suspect.

I look forward to hearing from you soon and thank you for your advices to date.

Kind regards
Christopher Thomas