

From: Anonymous 1
Sent: 20 August 2013 18:11
To: CineworldCityScreen
Subject: Arts Picturehouse and Cineworld Cambridge

The APH in Cambridge and the Cineworld provide very different cinema experiences, and target two quite different groups of cinema goers.

One actual look around the two venues should have made this quite obvious.

I go to both, depending on what I want to get out of the experience.

Should having to sell one of them, mean the closure of this cinema, it would be a significant loss to the cineastic scene in Cambridge.

From: Anonymous 2
Sent: 20 August 2013 15:00
To: CineworldCityScreen
Subject: Cinema closures in Bury St Edmunds

To whom it may concern,

I was shocked to hear that the Competition Commission are planning to close one or both cinemas in Bury St Edmunds. It was mentioned in a newspaper article online that if the cinemas were to be sold, they would merely be bought by another company. I would like to put forward the widespread opinion that, as Cineworld is such a widespread chain, more support should be aimed at the Picturehouse (although I am aware that the Picturehouse is owned by the same company as Cineworld).

Abbeygate Picturehouse has been newly refurbished and offers a wide variety of films (particularly independent/foreign films, which are not screened in the bigger multiplex cinemas). The Picturehouse appeals to a more diverse audience of all age groups, and provides a welcoming, dynamic atmosphere to aid the cinema experience. Furthermore, in times of economic hardship, would it not be more sensible to support and invest in local/independent businesses?

Finally, both cinemas are extremely popular in Bury St Edmunds and the fate of both will be greatly followed.

Yours faithfully

Anonymous 3

I would like to contribute evidence as a local Cambridge resident to the findings by the Competition Commission on the acquisition of the Cambridge Arts Picturehouse. I also work in arts marketing and pr in the area and have a good knowledge of local audiences.

They stated in their report that they found a "substantial lessening of competition" in the city.

However, the market catered to by Cineworld and Picturehouse is entirely different, particularly in Cambridge where there is a very large audience for international and independent films.

Cineworld predominantly caters towards a mainstream audience showing a large proportion of big budget blockbuster movies. The Arts Picturehouse in Cambridge shows an entirely different set of films; independent cinema, world cinema and streaming of arts events such as opera and exhibition openings.

Even if Cineworld have taken ownership of the Picturehouse chain, it does not change the demand there is in Cambridge from a highly literate, older and educated audience for independent cinema and coverage of arts events.

Prices could not be driven up by dominating the market because they are two separate markets.

There is still competition to the Cineworld complex from Vue Cinemas in the town centre. The Arts Picturehouse (as long as it continues to show the type of film it currently runs) not only faces competition from Vue but also from other local arts organisations and theatres who cater to the exact audience who visit the Arts Picturehouse.

If the Picturehouse is sold which cinema chain will buy it? Will they have the same financial strength to support an independent arts cinema as Cineworld does? Currently Cambridge has a competitive and well programmed arts cinema, with no need to sell it – if it is sold and mismanaged it could very easily lead to the end of the Arts Picturehouse in Cambridge which is one of our best loved arts organisations.

From: Anonymous 4
Sent: 20 August 2013 17:18
To: CineworldCityScreen
Cc: cambridge@picturehouses.co.uk
Subject: Cineworld and the Arts Picturehouse in Cambridge

To whom it may concern

Further to the recent findings and recommendations by the Competition Commission regarding the Cambridge Cineworld and the Arts Picturehouse.

I cannot emphasize strongly enough that these cinemas can and do co-exist peacefully in the same town.

Closing the Arts Picturehouse in particular would be an enormous blow to the Cambridge Arts scene and community.

1) The Picturehouse is fundamental to the local arts scene. It has space for flyers and a noticeboard in its foyer which act as a simple but reliable central place to promote grassroots arts and events going on around the city.

The Picturehouse bar and cafe is also a vital meeting place for like-minded people.

This is supported by regular events run by the Picturehouse, such as the regular film quiz.

The Picturehouse enriches Cambridge. Cambridge is a place which is dominated by the University: if you are not connected to the University you cannot take part in many of the events going on around Cambridge and there is little focus for the Arts in the town for people un-connected to the University.

The evidence for this is, perhaps, the fact that there is no central/main arts centre in Cambridge.

The services to the local community that the Picturehouse provides - beyond the films that it shows, that is - is irreplaceable, has evolved over years and could not be replicated. The Picturehouse is, for example, part of the Cambridge Wordfest festival: it is the location for some events and also supports the festival by selling Wordfest tickets at its box office.

The Arts Picturehouse is vital to the town in this sense: it is open and accessible to everyone, it's in central location and offers a huge range of Arts events and films that can't easily be seen anywhere else.

The Arts Picturehouse offers a real experience, not just another chain cinema. It feels like being part of a community to go there, because it is. Cineworld is different: it offers discounts for families, to capitalise on its family-friendly parking facilities and the Leisure Park where it is based. It makes the most of its bigger screens with many 3D film showings of all the latest blockbusters.

2) I am an avid cinema goer and watch films in both Cineworld and the Arts Picturehouse. There is little crossover in programming between the two. It would be an enormous mistake to assume that the two cinemas are somehow interchangeable. This is simply not the case.

Cineworld is a mainstream cinema showing mainstream films.

The Arts is an arthouse cinema showing mainly independent/arthouse/world films and special events. The difference between the two is clear.

To sell the Arts Picturehouse, leaving a relatively small city with two mainstream cinemas (Vue and Cineworld) and no arts picturehouse in the name of "unfair competition" is laughable.

3) The programming at Arts Picturehouse offers an alternative to mainstream cinema to anyone who wants it, and there are many, many people who do. Cambridge is a culturally diverse town and this is reflected in the Arts Picturehouse's programming with cinema from beyond the mainstream and from countries around the world.

If the only films you ever saw or hear of were the ones showing at CineWorld, then you would assume that **all** films were American, directed and featuring white American men.

This is obviously not true of cinema, and the Arts Picturehouse is tantamount to redressing this imbalance in film culture not just in Cambridge but in many picturehouse locations.

Please accept this email as evidence for the support of both the Arts Picturehouse and Cineworld remaining open in Cambridge.

Regards

From: Anonymous 5
Sent: 23 August 2013 15:31
To: CineworldCityScreen
Subject: Re: Bury St Edmunds Picturehouse

Good afternoon,

I am emailing to say that it would be a terrible shame if we were to lose our lovely little cinema in our small town of Bury St Edmunds.

It has recently undergone a refurbishment with comfortable seating, whereby one can enjoy a film whether it's a general release one or something from the past or a little more obscure, the Picturehouse offers a variety. Anyway, not all of us want to go to the likes of a huge cinema, I certainly don't want to be surrounded by masses of people munching popcorn and crackling sweet wrappers.

I wouldn't feel comfortable going to a large cinema on my own but to the Picturehouse I would and I know several other ladies that would too. Please listen to the townsfolk and save our lovely little cinema please.

Thank you.
Yours sincerely,

From: Anonymous 6

Sent: 27 August 2013 17:24

To: CineworldCityScreen

Subject: Cineworld /Abbeygate Picture House, Bury St Edmunds

To: Alasdair Smith, CC Deputy Chairman and Chairman of the Cineworld/City Screen merger Inquiry Group

Dear Mr Smith,

I understand that the Commission is concerned that the fact that Cineworld now owns the Abbeygate Picture House in Bury St Edmunds may lead to a situation where lack of direct competition leads to higher admission prices.

The Picture House is one of the most valued entertainment venues in the town, especially perhaps among the older and (if I dare say so) more cultured section of the cinema audience.

Cineworld shows the 'blockbuster' and popular films; The Picture House caters for a niche market which wants the opportunity to see independent British and foreign films, the films which may not have a huge marketing budget or mass appeal.

The Picture House offers a number of membership deals which provide customers with discounts and free tickets, so tickets can be cheaper than Cineworld anyway, but price is not the main determinant. Local people are concerned that we should not lose this delightful, small scale cinema with a 24 year history, right in the centre of town.

The Picture House is part of the social life of the town, complementing our Georgian Theatre Royal. The recently opened restaurant and café has been very much appreciated. We don't want to lose all this and hope you will not throw the baby out with the bathwater – destroying this valued amenity in the name of saving us money.

Regards

From: Anonymous 7
Sent: 28 August 2013 10:01
To: CineworldCityScreen
Subject: Cineworld/City Screen merger Inquiry

Dear Sirs

With regard to your publication of Provisional Findings on the above inquiry, you ask for interested parties to consult on this matter. As a regular customer and Member of the Bury St Edmunds PictureHouse cinema, I would like to make the following points:

1. Having experienced the cinema before and after the merger, the range and quality of the offerings and the experience provided has improved since Cineworld involvement. This was partly due to facility improvements that were underway before, but also since the merger the range and quality of the transmissions on offer has improved.
2. PictureHouse cinema customers are looking for a more specialised offering than that obtainable from the non-differentiated mainstream Cineworld Multiplex programmes provided, such that PictureHouse customers are probably only rarely Cineworld users. Thus it is most surely in Cineworld's commercial interest to keep the PictureHouse offering separate and different from the Cineworld programming. For this reason, Cineworld pricing does not really effect PictureHouse users and *visa versa* as it is effectively a different market. On that basis, it is unlikely that it would be in Cineworld's commercial interest to overprice in the PictureHouse cinemas, and the merger will not have an effect of reducing competition in either price or content. As you conclude in your 20th August document Summary of Provisional Findings part 13, there is no programming SLC in programming services following the transaction.
3. I believe the current ticket cost at PictureHouse provides good value as it stands, and with the additional members' benefits of reduced costs with no booking fees, free films and additional free previews, with the improved facilities also provided, cost is not a current issue.
4. For competitive offerings of the type of specialist films that PictureHouse provides, there are currently other sources such as Haverhill Arts Cinema, private clubs in various venues including Newmarket and Hartest with digital DVD showings on a membership basis. These provide content competition as well as price competition to PictureHouse cinema. Some of these may be outside the 20 minute drive definition you use, but it may be that the specialist film enthusiast is more prepared to travel that little bit further to see what they want than the Cineworld multiplex customer. Programming choice is the defining reason for going to a PictureHouse cinema, so if you conclude there is no SLC in programming, then there is no SLC on pricing.
5. If PictureHouse in Bury St Edmunds were to be disposed of by Cineworld, it is certainly not assured that it would be purchased by another cinema operator, and that would hardly be good for the competitive situation for cinemagoers in Bury St Edmunds.

Yours faithfully

From: Anonymous 8
Sent: 28 August 2013 10:52
To: CineworldCityScreen
Subject: Cineworld/City Screen merger inquiry

Dear Sirs,

As a frequent user of the PictureHouse cinema in Bury St Edmunds I would like to submit for consideration the following points with reference to the provisional findings of the above inquiry.

1. This venue shows specialist films which are not shown in Cineworld or any other venue in the town. There are Arts centres and clubs which show specialist films in the area so there is competition.
2. The prices are commensurate with the experience had at the cinema and the membership, free films and concessions make it a very good deal. The market itself can deal with any price rises.
3. There is no guarantee that the cinema would find a buyer and also if it did, there is no guarantee that they would show the same quality and niche films as now.
4. The facilities and the ambience of the PictureHouse are very different from the multiplex which largely caters for a younger audience.

Therefore I urge the Competition Commission to reconsider their recommendations. The closure of the PictureHouse would be a great loss to film enthusiasts and also to the cinema goers who find it an enjoyable social occasion.

Yours faithfully,

From: Anonymous 9
Sent: 25 August 2013 17:26
To: CineworldCityScreen
Subject: Cambridge Picturehouse

I am a Cambridge resident and have absolutely no professional connection with Cineworld. However, I am really quite shocked by the Competition Commissions' "bull-in-china-shop" behaviour in this circumstance. The CC states that it strives for "ultimate benefit of consumers and the economy". Cambridge Picturehouse in no way operates in the same commercial space as Cineworld – it provides an essential service for provision of art films in Cambridge – there are no other providers in the area. In addition, any mainstream films are screened to an entirely different demographic from Cineworld. As a middle-aged cinema-goer I (like thousands would of others in Cambridge) would NEVER go to a Cineworld – it's too big and impersonal, it's pitched at the young, food quality is poor and sound volume of films is too loud. How can this possibly be in the best interests of the Cambridge community? By removing the ONLY cinema in the area that serves my needs, then you're effectively stiffling choice. In a climate of economic and financial instability the CC is effectively removing a loved and treasure resource from Cambridge. CC can provide no guarantee that a future buyers would keep an arts cinema open, in addition the CC had every opportunity to investigate the purchase of Picturehouse by Cineworld. If the Arts Cinema is forced to close then CC has done an ENORMOUS disservice to Cambridge. The CC survey did not directly tackle whether the provision of service at Cineworld and Picturehouse were different - by generalizing across different parts of the country (often including London)the survey concluded that visiting the cinema was driven by film choice (in which case remove Picturehouse and Cambridge residents can go to Vue instead). BUT – Vue does not provide Art films!!

Yours faithfully,

From: Anonymous10
Sent: 28 August 2013 10:52
To: CineworldCityScreen
Subject: Cineworld/City Screen merger inquiry

Dear Sirs,

As a frequent user of the PictureHouse cinema in Bury St Edmunds I would like to submit for consideration the following points with reference to the provisional findings of the above inquiry.

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3. There is no guarantee that the cinema would find a buyer and also if it did, there is no guarantee that they would show the same quality and niche films as now.
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Sent: 25 August 2013 17:26
To: CineworldCityScreen
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Yours faithfully,

From: Anonymous 12
Sent: 27 August 2013 14:01
To: CineworldCityScreen
Subject: Bury St Edmunds Picturehouse

Dear Mr Smith,

I believe that there is concern about possible lack of competition between the Cineworld and Abbeygate Picturehouse cinemas in Bury St Edmunds.

My opinion is that the two cinemas serve entirely different markets and that competition on ticket price is largely irrelevant - although noone wants to see large price increases. My personal preference would be to visit the Picturehouse for its choice of film and range of prices on different days, for its pleasant cafe and because of its other patrons. I would be unlikely to go to Cineworld even if its ticket prices were significantly cheaper, as I am not interested in blockbuster movies, nor do I like popcorn or coca cola.

I do hope the deliberations of the Competition Commission will result in the Abbeygate Picturehouse remaining exactly as it is, following its recent excellent restoration. It is a major asset in the town.

Yours sincerely