# London to welcome its first LGBTQ+ cinema in Bermondsey



London’s first LGBTQ+ cinema, The Arzner, is poised to open in Bermondsey Square, South London, in late 2024, the brainchild of Simon Burke and Piers Greenlees, the team behind Southwark's queer pub, The Rising SE1.

The new cinema and cocktail bar will be situated in a building formerly occupied by Kino Bermondsey, which ceased operations in January 2023 after failing to pay rent for 18 months. The space has been empty for more than a year and a half, sparking interest from various quarters looking to repurpose it. Initial proposals to convert the venue into a shop, restaurant, or fitness studio were shelved following Southwark Council’s advice that such plans were unlikely to gain approval.

At a Southwark Council licensing meeting last Thursday, Simon Burke articulated the mission of The Arzner, stating that the goal is to offer visitors access to art house and independent films. He also highlighted the significance of providing a safe space in one of the country’s most LGBTQ+ densely populated areas. "We are currently the only LGBTQ+ pub in SE1, and this, to our knowledge, will be the only LGBTQ+ cinema in all of London," he explained.

Once operational, the cinema will feature a single screen accommodating up to 50 spectators, while the combined venue, including the bar, will have a total capacity for 150 customers. Burke anticipated that it would be unusual for the venue to reach full capacity.

In terms of operational hours, the Southwark Council licensing committee has permitted The Arzner to remain open until 11 PM from Sunday to Wednesday and until midnight from Thursday to Saturday.

Local reaction to the cinema’s forthcoming launch has been mixed but generally positive. A representative from a local residents’ association expressed delight at the announcement of a new cinema but voiced concerns regarding potential noise disturbances. Burke addressed these concerns, emphasising that The Arzner would not function as a loud live music venue but rather as a tranquil, safe space for relaxation.

The venue promises to bolster the LGBTQ+ cultural landscape in SE1, doubling the number of permanent queer venues in the district, following the opening of The Rising SE1 in April of the previous year.

With construction and planning now underway, Londoners can look forward to a new inclusive space dedicated to celebrating and supporting LGBTQ+ culture and the arts.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)