Tory ministers have saved an iconic gay bar once visited by Princess Diana

One of Britain's most famous gay bars which Princess Diana reportedly visited with Freddie Mercury was today given listed building status.

The iconic Royal Vauxhall Tavern, which featured in last year's hit film Pride about the 1984-5 Miners' Strike and where Lily Savage once started a riot, was given Grade II protection.

The 153-year-old pub - one of Britain's most famous gay bars and close to spy agency MI6's headquarters at Vauxhall Cross - has been at the centre of a planning row after being sold to property developers last year.

But the listing will make it much more difficult to close the bar and build flats - and is a victory for the RVT Future campaign.

Founder Amy Lamé said: "The listing is a fantastic milestone for our community and a victory against the odds for our beloved pub.

"We look forward to continuing our work to ensure the RVT remains a vibrant space of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) community and culture for generations to come."

The pub has a rich and colourful history.

Princess Diana was allegedly disguised as a male model and smuggled into the venue in the late 1980s.

Queen singer Freddie and comedians Cleo Rocos and Kenny Everett dressed Diana in an army jacket, cap and sunglasses for a night out at the south London pub.

Lily Savage once started a riot at the RVT when it was raided by cops in 1984.

And it featured in the smash hit movie Pride, which told the story of how a group of striking Welsh miners received the unusual backing of a group of lesbian and gay activists from London's emerging gay scene, with the pub acting as a backdrop.

The RVT's supporters include TV host Graham Norton and Lord of the Rings star Sir Ian McKellen.

Historic England's Director of Listing Roger Bowdler said: "The Royal Vauxhall Tavern is an enduring and important venue for the LGB&T community.

"Built on the site of the Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens, it carries on the tradition of alternative and bohemian entertainment which is bound up in this part of London's history and identity."

Heritage Minister Tracey Crouch said: "I am thrilled to be able to list the Royal Vauxhall Tavern as Grade II - the iconic cultural hub in the heart of London is of huge significance to the LGB&T community.

"Not only of architectural interest, the venue has a longstanding historic role as a symbol of tolerance and alternative entertainment."

"Residing in Lambeth since 1860, the landmark venue has been the springboard for so many of our loved UK entertainers.

"I am delighted that the listing will preserve the history of this venue for future generations to enjoy. I hope that it continues to be filled with laughter and joy."