

CAMPAIGNING TO SAVE YOUR HISTORIC CINEMAS

By Tim Hatcher

A Request for Members' Assistance.

Historic England has launched an initiative entitled 'Enrich The List', which aims to expand the depth of detail in listing descriptions of statutorily protected buildings. Some early designations appertaining to cinemas lack precision and omit salient features that could prove vital in preventing subsequent abuse if listed building consent is sought. Members with factual architectural knowledge, information, or photographs of their local listed cinemas are thus requested to contribute to this crucial enterprise. Full details, including guidance on varying degrees of participation, may be found at: [historicengland.org.uk/listing/enrich-the-list].

Grade II* Listed



Plans for alteration of the Granada in Woolwich reveal the intention of constructing two major extensions and additionally, as previously feared, drastically modifying the fly tower. No objection is being forwarded to the former; however, alteration of the fly tower is being strongly opposed as it would permanently preclude possible return to full entertainment usage in the future. *Photo above taken April 2015.*

Plans for conversion of the State at Grays into a Wetherspoon hostelry have been forwarded by the project's architects. These largely demonstrate respect for the integrity of the cinema, although concerns arise over the siting of ladies' lavatories in the distinguished circle foyer and the insertion of large areas of fenestration into the rear stage wall.

Renovation work to the Electric Palace in Harwich is proposed to begin in April 2018 with an ambitious target of reopening in the following October. A concession to modern comfort over authenticity is the unsurprising decision against reversion to the seating layout of 1911.



As part of a major programme of works involving an investment of £2.4m by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Hyde Park Picture House in Leeds is to have a second cinema constructed in its basement.

Photo above taken June 2005.

Grade II Listed

The architectural practice of Austin Smith Lord has submitted a listed building consent application to renovate the Forum in Liverpool as a multi-purpose venue, with a programming accent upon musical events. It is gratifying to report that this revised proposal shows a far greater respect for the character of the building than did the original: the large area of glazing previously advocated for the façade is no longer featured and the decorative plasterwork of the auditorium, including the skyscraper motifs, is to be restored.

The saga of the Ritz at Nuneaton continues, with no positive outcome currently in sight: the cinema has recently been sold to a proprietor who again appears to have little current interest in its rehabilitation. Somewhat more encouragingly, a 'Friends of the Ritz' group has been formed.

The local Council in Southport is expressing unease over the vacant Grand Casino and its conservation officer has requested that the CTA advises of potential buyers or operators. Various contacts are thus being approached.

The management of the Rio in Dalston has issued an assurance that the plan to subdivide the auditorium by creating a second screen in the balcony has been reassessed and aborted; instead only a small cinema in the basement area will be established.

Unlisted

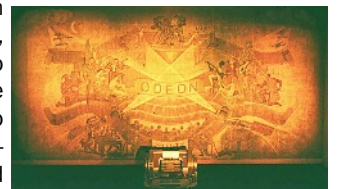
A representative of the Association spoke at a meeting of the local planning committee in Banbury against an application to redevelop the Grand. Unfortunately planning permission was subsequently granted, following which the developer immediately placed the property on the market at a price of £895,000. Paradoxically the Grand has also recently received Asset of Community Value status.

Progress is being made towards identification of a viable location for reinstallation of the frieze removed from the frontage of the Gaumont in Doncaster during its demolition. A Council planner has communicated with officials of a local museum, which may re-house the artefact, resulting in an imminent inspection to determine suitability.

The future of the Coronet in London's Elephant and Castle district appears bleak. The current management is now operating within its final year of occupation, following which, as part of a major redevelopment of the area, it is proposed to construct a new building on the site, of which the London College of Communication will take possession. A considerably smaller music venue is envisioned as part of this scheme, which may unfortunately serve to counter objection to loss of the Coronet as an amenity. The Association will, of course, object strongly, whilst simultaneously attempting to build a coalition with other specialist interest groups opposed to the demolition.

At the behest of the Hither Green Community Association, the Association's previous submission objecting to plans relating to the Park has been augmented with further exposition.

A major refurbishment of the Odeon in Leicester Square has been heralded. Reassuringly the main auditorium will be retained as a single screen and the organ therein will remain. Apprehension does arise, however, over the stated intent to install a large screen format of some genus, which engenders doubt as to the continued survival of the splendidly painted safety curtain [pictured here on 1982 CTA visit]. Regrettably only this feature and the ribbed coving area above the circle remain from the original internal décor, thereby rendering listing unattainable.



Permission to demolish the Odeon in South Hackney has been deferred. Its future employment as a community venue has been rendered unlikely following a decision to renovate the nearby Savoy in Stoke Newington for this purpose: it is improbable that the area could support two such ventures.

Planning permission has now been granted for the scheme that partially integrates Pyke's Cinematograph Theatre in Shepherd's Bush into a new development. Bizarrely, as previously reported, the rare terracotta plaque on a flank wall is to be replaced with a replica.