

HERITAGE CASEWORK

by Mike Whitcombe

The CTA Casework Committee are continually involved in securing a positive future for many endangered cinemas, both present and former. It's important work – here's a summary of our current work load.

England

Grade I

GRANADA/BUZZ, TOOTING, LONDON (Cecil Masey, 1931)

The freehold is being sold for £6 million and FCI Properties Ltd. are interested in buying the freehold. Unfortunately, it appears that the potential buyers of the freehold are a very small operation. We have been in touch with Wandsworth Council who have written to FCI Properties to remind them that there is an Asset of Community Value designation. In a separate matter, an individual has submitted a planning application to Wandsworth council for a plaque to be placed on the front of the building with wording that focuses on rock performances. We have objected to the wording as the Granada was built primarily for films. We have also written to Wandsworth Council about the proposed plaster repair to the ceiling. We received a reassuring response.

Grade II*

STATE, GRAYS (Francis Chancellor, 1938)

We can report that despite Thurrock Council still being in special measures a planning application has, at last, been submitted and that the scheme is identical to the one which we saw in Autumn 2025. We feel we should support the application in order to move the situation on.

REGAL, UXBRIDGE (Eric Bailey, 1931)

The owners have renovated the auditorium and agreed to fund the restoration of the console that belongs to the on site Compton organ as well as a tidy of the organ chamber. We were happy to support the planning application which included a hotel, plaster restoration in the auditorium and the possible reinstallation of the organ but that now, owing to the threat of traffic congestion in the area resulting from the proposed new use, the Council has halted the application *pro tem*.

Grade II

ODEON, BLACKPOOL (William Robson, 1939)

The Funny Girls nightclub has gone into administration, causing their owner to put the club on the market as a going concern.

RITZ, ILKESTON (Reginald Cooper, 1938)

We can report that the Ilkeston Trust, led by Paul Opiah, has raised £275,000 to buy, restore and reopen the building as a community venue.

FORUM, LIVERPOOL (William Glen, 1931)

We are concerned about lack of ongoing maintenance on the building but are pleased that the Council is happy to speak to anyone who is willing to take on the operation. We are hoping to have a meeting with a local councillor to discuss the situation.

DOMINION, ACTON, LONDON (Frank Bromige, 1937)

Although the Arch Climbing Centre has closed the building, it is being purchased by a small Ealing-based developer called Hogarth. We have referred the case to Mark Price, Conservation officer for the London Borough of Ealing, the local authority.

SAVOY, BURNT OAK, LONDON (George Coles, 1936)

The new drawings that were submitted in January 2026 were double checked by local planning officer Nicola Blake at Brent Council to ensure that the new scheme omits columns in the auditorium. Due to her effective action, the auditorium will remain intact, with no intrusive stanchions to hold up the residential development to be built on the roof. However, the number of flats proposed for the scheme will not be reduced because the Council deems that the number is not excessive.

FORUM, FULHAM ROAD, LONDON (John Beard & Alfred Clare, 1930)

The building will now comprise a family activity area, which will include a twin cinema. At the time of writing, the Environmental Assessment has been submitted but not the main application.

CARLTON, HAYMARKET, LONDON (Frank Verity, 1927)

We had a meeting with the Crown Estate in January 2026 where they proposed to make it easier to enable fluidity between the cinema and ancillary areas. Their latest plan is to punch a door through a panel in the foyer currently containing a mirror. The Crown Estate are submitting an application for opening up parts of the structure for inspections, something we feel raises concern.

REGAL, KINGSTON, LONDON (Robert Cromie, 1932)

Although the building is still derelict, we are in useful contact with Kevin Davis, the owner's agent.

Mr Davis recently stated: "As I think I may have mentioned in the past, one of the key issues has been that the current owners incurred significant costs, over a long period of time, on both securing planning and securing the site. It has now been about 14 years since it was acquired and work started under the former development managers CNM Estates. More recently, the current owner did allow us to commence pre-applications on the site but there came a point where to put the scheme into planning became such a high cost that there was a risk of throwing even more money into the pot with no guaranteed outcome.

"Over the past few months we have been working with the owner and their agent to find a way through this. Sadly to make something happen requires the owner to right-off very significant sums. To give you an indication, the likely value of the site is some 25% off the cost of the money spent to date. Helping the owner go through the process of reducing their expectations to a realistic market sum has understandably, not been quick. Negotiations are at a very delicate stage but I am pleased to report that I am hopeful there is to be a new owner for the site and this should complete in the next month or so. I cannot say who the new owner might be other than to say, in my view, that this is a very positive moment.

"I can confirm that the building is watertight as the fire, despite appearances, seems not to have caused extensive damage. I did visit a few weeks ago and it really did not look a lot different, although there is currently no lighting inside so it was difficult to see too much. There was some plaster damage around the proscenium arch as that is where the main problem was. I am told, but cannot confirm, it was started by kids starting a bonfire after a break in. I also understand the building has now been completely sealed and all doors and windows bricked up which has meant there has been a reduction in incursions onto the site."

PYRAMID, SALE, MANCHESTER (Francis Drury & Joseph Gomersall, 1934)

We can report that the amazing Egyptian style Pharaonic pillars of the organ console will be reunited with the rest of the instrument in a church in St. Helens.

ODEON, MORECAMBE (William Robson, 1937)

Two years ago, member Fabian Breckles submitted a listing application. Now listed Grade II. See also Newsreel p26.

GRANADA, SHREWSBURY (Cecil Masey & Theodore Komisarjevsky, 1934)

Buzz Bingo has closed and we have written to our contacts at Historic England, the local Civic Society and the Council to say that we need to avoid any possibility of arson while the building is disused.

GRAND, SOUTHPORT (George Tonge, 1938)

We have written an email to the owner's (Mikhail Group) to ask what is happening.

NOT LISTED

PALACE/ODEON, ANDOVER (F Henshaw, c. 1926)

The building has been taken over by an Islamic organisation and is being used as a social centre/mosque.

ODEON, ASHFORD (Andrew Mather, 1936)

A major problem for some time for this cinema was that the leader of the Conservative council wanted to demolish the auditorium to open up the view to the church. But the Greens and the Independents, who

recently formed a coalition, seem open to abandoning this proposal to demolish the auditorium. We have been in contact with The Theatres Trust to discuss the future of the building and we can now report that the council has come up with a proposal to create a theatre out of the front and foyer blocks. Haworth Tompkins Architects have been commissioned to design this and we have been invited to a presentation of the scheme.

GAUMONT, BIRKENHEAD (Daniel MacKay & William Trent, 1938)

The Wirral Conservation Officer is keeping a watching brief on the building that overlooks a Grade I park.

ELECTRIC, BIRMINGHAM (Bertie Crewe, 1909)

The site in Station Street is owned by Glenbrook (developers) and the Electric remains derelict. Ian Francis, a Birmingham campaigner who runs a local film festival, is trying to save the cinema.

PRINCESS, BLACKPOOL (Halstead Best, 1922)

Although there is not much remaining of the interior, the building still boasts a good 1920s façade. We have been in contact with the Blackpool Conservation Officer to locally list the building. As it sits within the Town Centre Conservation Area, it is offered a level of protection from the permitted development right to demolish. It also means that any proposals for the site and its future must consider the heritage value of the building and what it contributes to the conservation area and how the loss of the building might harm it.

ROYAL PAVILION, BLACKPOOL (JA Barraclough, 1909)

The Blackpool Conservation Officer is not interested in adding the cinema to the local list. Although it was never a particularly attractive or architectural significant building, later alterations and cladding have made it more of a negative element in the streetscape, which is a significant challenge when making any argument for its preservation.

ODEON, LANSDOWNE, BOURNEMOUTH (George Coles, 1937)

There has been an approved scheme for the treatment of the rear of the foyer block but it has not been implemented.

GRAND, BOURNEMOUTH (Harry Hawker, 1922)

The building is on the market for hospitality use at a price of £700,000. We once asked Everyman if they would take the building on but that they said that they were not interested.

REGENT, BOURNEMOUTH (William Trent, 1929)

Until 2023, Libra were the owners of both the Regent and the nearby Westover but they then sold the two cinemas on to two different developers. A scheme for the Regent was approved in October 2023 but in 2024 the new owners submitted an alternative application for an increased number of flats which was refused. The case went to an appeal which was not upheld and as a result the new owners reverted to the original planning application which has been approved. The façade is locally listed.

RITZ, BRIGHOUSE (JH Freer, 1937)

There is a planning application for a drive-through coffee shop on which we have been consulted. Since the fire, which all but destroyed the former cinema (later, ballroom), the complete demolition and clearing of the site has been recommended as the most economic solution. Upon consultation with the Conservation Officer, though, we have resubmitted our continued objection to complete demolition.

PALACE, DEVIZES (1912)

There is an undetermined planning application for restoration but nothing seems to be happening. The owners, Picturedrome Cinemas, hold occasional open days to try to reassure the locals that something will happen.

DANILO, HINCKLEY (Ernest Roberts, 1937)

A scheme to build flats within the original brick façade was approved and that it is now being realised.

RITZ, KEIGHLEY (Samuel Beverley, 1938)

We have been informed by the local Conservation Officer that a conversion comprising eight retail units and one restaurant unit has been proposed. The Ritz has an Asset of Community Value designation but it is not listed. We will object to the planning application.

CLIFTON, LEOMINSTER (Ernest Roberts, 1936)

We have collected the paybox and will deliver it to the Cinema Museum. We are still waiting for the local council's deliberation about the frontage of the building.

PALACE, LONGRIDGE

The cinema is to be converted to a play centre but with minimal intervention.

ODEON/MECCA, ELTHAM HILL, LONDON (Andrew Mather, 1938)

Lidl want to redevelop this late work by Andrew Mather as a supermarket and housing. We objected in the previous iteration of the Greenwich Local Plan and now there is a new one, we have objected again.

ADELPHI, SLOUGH (Eric Bailey, 1930)

The building has been converted to a wedding venue even though local residents are objecting to change of use due to the possibility of increased noise and parking difficulties.

PREMIER ELECTRIC, SOMERCOTES (1912)

This building is not locally listed nor in a Conservation Area and a local developer wants to redevelop it for residential accommodation. We have argued to keep the original fenestration but that this may not happen. The façade, however, will be retained.

EMPIRE, WISBECH (Francis Ward & CEA Woolnough, 1932)

It has recently been taken over by Rio Bingo, a small East Anglian bingo operator.

Wales

Grade II

PALACE, CONWY (Sydney Foulkes, 1936)

The building is still for sale at £600,000. We will contact the local planning authority to see what the situation is, including if there is possible water ingress.

Past and present cinemas around the country are always under threat. The CTA Casework team are always happy to help another cinema from disappearing forever and your help could be vital in doing just that. If any member learns of a threat to a cinema, please let the Casework Committee know. You might just save a cinema for future generations.

