

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 II*

STATE, GRAYS (Francis Chancellor, 1938)

We are supporting a planning application for the hotel scheme. We do have, however, some concerns – about the 520 banqueting covers proposed and parking and drop-offs. Historic England (HE) and The Twentieth Century Society are also supporting the application. Thurrock Highways echo our concerns and therefore resolving the application could be a protracted process.

Grade II

GAUMONT PALACE, EXETER (Percy Bartlett & William Watkins, 1932)

In June Mecca closed eight bingo sites, including this one. The Gaumont Palace is in a Conservation Area and the local Civic Society is showing a lively interest in the case. The city's Phoenix performance venue is apparently in talks with the owners about acquiring the building as a new location, which is surely good news.



We shall continue to make contact with Liverpool city council and attempt a site visit. The problem with using the building as a performance space is the lack of a functional back-stage area. The current water ingress is a cause for concern. The building is owned by the Council who are in no hurry to sale.

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

The latest news is that the owners want to use the foyer as a temporary office space for when the building is converted into a community centre (to include cinemas).



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

Things are progressing quite well on the new scheme for the building even though we feel there are an excessive number of flats proposed. The good news is that the auditoria will be restored as a shared work area.

CARLTON, HAYMARKET, LONDON (Frank Verity, 1927)

The latest news on this ongoing case is that the Crown Estate are going to make three small links between the cinema and the surrounding buildings to enable fluidity between the screens and ancillary areas.

CAPITOL, SCARBOROUGH (Frederick Evan & Edwin Gray, 1929)

We are currently engaging with George Wakely of the Capitol Theatre Trust who wrote to say that the Trust want to facilitate the opportunity for community use.

GAUMONT PALACE, TAUNTON (William Benslyn, 1932)

We can report that there is a potential community theatre use proposed for this cinema. We have heard from Andrew Knutt of Project Gaumont who said that they do not have any money yet but that they are planning to sell shares and they are keen on a linkage with the CTA. We would be happy to have a CTA member as a member of the Project Gaumont board and will pursue this further.

NOT LISTED

RITZ, ALDERSHOT (Samuel Beverley & Francis Verity, 1937)

We wrote to a Conservation Officer but were eventually contacted by Jake Hamilton, Senior Planner for the local authority, who said that as the building is locally listed and in a Conservation Area they would be interested in preserving the exterior.



ODEON, ASHFORD (Andrew Mather, 1936)

We visited the building in May, along with council officers. The interior of the cinema itself looked in reasonable condition. We suggested that the council keeps the auditorium in a dry condition and that they work towards community use. They appeared receptive to both suggestions.

RITZ, KEIGHLEY (Samuel Beverley, 1938)

We contacted the architect concerning plans for residential conversion, to which the CTA objected. We suspect that the owners want the planning permission approved so that they can put the building up for sale with planning permission in place. Local opinion is keen on residential use but that there will be no parking provision, which we feel is a stumbling block.

DOMINION, HARROW, LONDON (Frank Bromige, 1936)

We are chasing up at the reinstatement of the original name sign, which was part of the planning application.

SAVOY, HOLLOWAY ROAD, LONDON (William Glen, 1940)

The building is neither statutorily nor locally listed, nor is it in a Conservation Area. But the Islington Conservation Officer is the excellent Tim Walden, who supported our views on the Rex, Stratford. We are currently pushing for the building to be locally listed.

GENESIS, STEPNEY, LONDON (William Glen, 1939)

The application to demolish the building and replace it by student housing was refused but the developers have appealed. As a result, we have submitted comments to the Planning Inspectorate and an appeal hearing is pending.



ALDELPHI, SLOUGH (Eric Bailey, 1930)

A retrospective planning application for conversion to a banqueting venue has been refused, meaning the banqueting suite has been continuing illegally. Martin Cowie, the Planning Officer, is trying to broker a solution between the banqueting operator and the residents of nearby flats who objected to the car parking by those attending banquets.

REGAL, SUNDERLAND (Frederick Evan & Edwin Gray, 1932)

The council owned cinema is threatened with demolition. Listing applications for it have been submitted more than once.



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.