

HERITAGE CASEWORK

By Tim Hatcher

Grade II*

The conversion work initiated in order to convert the **State** in Grays into a hostelry of the JD Wetherspoon chain has been halted whilst variances to the approved planning consent conditions are sought. It is understood that installation of additional fenestration to the auditorium is proposed. This is a perturbing development: the windows previously approved for the rear stage-wall already represented an undesirable intrusion upon the building's originality and character.

Grade II

It is gratifying to record that planning and listed building consents relating to the **Grand** in Westbourne have been declined.

A new strategy for the area in which the **Forum** in Liverpool is situated has been formulated and accorded the appellation 'Upper Central'. Redevelopment is scheduled to commence during the current year, with the conversion of the cinema into a music venue encompassed therein.

As an element of the refurbishment of the **Empire** (ex-**Carlton**) in London's Haymarket, the former stalls area in the basement is to be converted into four screens. Assurance has been furnished that prominence will be awarded to the original wooden panelling.

The latest scheme for redevelopment of the **Regent** in Lyme Regis incorporates two residential apartments. Contact with the architectural practice involved is to be established.

Unlisted

The **Curzon** in Eastbourne is currently advertised for sale at a price of two and one-quarter million pounds. Enquiries are to be instigated in order to ascertain if the building is locally listed or situated in a Conservation Area.

The residual façade of the **Picture House** in Leicester has been divested of its listed status by Historic England. As it was deemed worthy to retain its listing following the demolition of the major portion of the cinema some years ago, attention is once again drawn to the disproportionate subjectivity of the statutory assessment process as currently practised.

Regrettably the Council local to the **Dominion** in Harrow has rejected the CTA's recommendation that the foyer spaces should be integrated into its proposed redevelopment. A report has been prepared investigating a practicable means of stabilising the frontage during the demolition and rebuilding processes.

Approaches are to be made in order to secure an archival record of **The Point** in Milton Keynes prior to any construction activity on site.



The **Futurist** in Nottingham has been proposed for local listing. Although this building by Alfred Thraves has been thoroughly stripped internally, it retains a significant street presence. *Photo taken July 2004.*

It may be recalled that the **Regal** in Sunderland was denied listed status, despite being endowed with an accomplished and largely unaltered interior. In order to stimulate local interest and awareness, the Association's Public Relations Officer recently composed an exemplary press-release (see p26 last Bulletin) which prompted newspaper and radio attention. It is also envisaged that a presentation concerning the cinema shall be made to the local historical society.

ELECTRIC PALACE NEWS

By Chris Strachan



The main structural repairs at the Grade II* listed **Electric Palace** in Harwich are now making good progress after the not-totally-unexpected discoveries of additional, sometimes quite significant, problems – as often happens during such extensive and intensive assessments of 'ancient' cinemas! These major problems have now been very carefully dealt with and successfully overcome by the excellent team work of the architects, the main contractors and several expert restoration firms specialising in fibrous-plaster ceilings, external and internal ornate plaster-work, cement-work, new roof, new air-circulation plant and ducting etc. etc.

One of the causes of increased costs and significant time delays was due to the confirmation of asbestos in the roof-space after the dismantling and removal of the whole outer roof. This was dealt with by a specialist clearance firm thanks to an additional grant from Historic England specifically for this purpose.

The fibrous-plaster ceiling has been completely encapsulated and access to enable the expert annual reviews is much improved. The auditorium roof, walls, cornices, proscenium arch, whole stage area, side rooms, entrance lobby and doors are all being upgraded and will require complete redecoration – now already underway. The seating metalwork has survived well and the fabric is less than 20 years old but the non-visible wooden framework of most of the seats is in poor condition and ideally needs to be completely replaced with high quality hardwood. The underfloor heating in the auditorium was completely renewed less than 10 years ago (in late 2010); it remains intact and with regular surveys should be good for at least another 10 years.



One aspect of the newly built **Palace** in 1911 was the finial above the main arch of the Frontage. It is not known how long the original finial lasted but it was a feature of the original building which Gordon Miller, the Architect who saved the building from destruction in 1972 by successfully promoting an emergency listing, had recommended for reinstatement when an extensive restoration project took place. With the presence over the past year of by far the largest amount of scaffolding ever used in our restoration works projects now seemed the best opportunity to proceed.

The parts of the restoration programme in need of more funding are: the seating refurbishment, toilets renovation, replacement of security gates of the open entrance foyer, reinstatement of the finial and installation of a stage extension. {2597}