



From: Martyn White <Martyn.White@arun.gov.uk>
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To: Amber Willard <Amber.Willard@arun.gov.uk>
Cc: Planning.Responses <Planning.Responses@arun.gov.uk>
Subject: BR/237/19/PL & BR/238/19/L

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The Cinema is an attractive building which has been identified as Grade II Listed. It is also located within the Station Square Conservation Area. Other buildings within the conservation area are either listed or locally listed Buildings or Structures of Character which collectively form an imposing group of late Victorian and Edwardian buildings.

Whilst a heritage statement has been provided, it does not meet the requirements of paragraph 189 of the NPPF in that it does not really consider the significance of the building, nor the impact of the proposals upon that significance. However, in light of this, I provide the following comments.

The building is considered to be of architectural and historic significance, which is derived, in part at least, from the following points:

- It is an unusual example of an early cinema, derived from an assembly hall of 1886, which has retained its original architectural character.
- The bold massing and facade details largely survive, including a stylish Victorian canopy.
- The interior has good survival of the principal areas, including auditorium and staircase. The interior appears to retain much of the original fabric, and where there are alterations, they are illustrative of the development of the building.
- There are special features such as the coloured glass Picturedrome sign, the external projection room, the boxes flanking the 1911 proscenium.
- It is also notable as exemplifying an entertainment building in a traditional seaside townscape.

It is noted that the lobby has been somewhat altered for the accommodation of a new pay desk/kiosk, requiring the removal of a wall which originally divided the entrance from the stairs. The panel doors which lead to the auditorium and most of the other internal doors are thought to be original.

Proposals

The proposal consists of two main elements, namely:

- The removal of a window and its replacement with a pair of doors
- The removal of several internal walls

The removal of a window and its replacement with a pair of doors

The removal of the window and its replacement with a pair of doors which appear to match the existing other two doors, will have a neutral impact upon the significance of the building. The colour of the doors and the door furniture should also match that of the existing ones.

The removal of several internal walls

The issue of the removal of the internal walls is much more problematic in that the original layout of the building is considered to be fairly original in the assessment undertaken when the building was listed. It appears that that intention is to remove these walls to open up the foyer area on the ground floor, and office space on the first floor.

It is considered that the loss of these walls on the ground floor would erode the character of the space, and therefore impact upon the significance of the building. Little information is provided with regards to what the space is to be used for, or if any new structures will be located in it. Without this information, it is hard to justify the loss of the walls/impact upon the building. It might be that an alternative approach could be established which creates the spaces required, whilst protecting this key space within the building.

The works on the first floor could be acceptable, subject to the retention of some form of nib in order to indicate where the former layout would have been.

Conclusions

On balance, due to the internal works, the proposal is such that the impact can be described as causing less than substantial harm in accordance with paragraph 196 of the NPPF (2018). As such, you will also need to consider the public benefits that the development may achieve as part of your assessment of the application, along with the contents of sections 16 and 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended).

For your information, the Planning Practice Guidance states that public benefits include:

- sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting
- reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset
- securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long-term conservation