

A08

L/TH/17/0836

PROPOSAL: Application for Listed Building Consent for internal alterations to bingo hall together with refurbishment works

LOCATION: Dreamland Cinema Dreamland Leisure Complex Marine Terrace MARGATE Kent

WARD: Margate Central

AGENT: Mr Nick Dermott

APPLICANT: Thanet District Council

RECOMMENDATION: Approve

Subject to the following conditions:

1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

GROUND:

In accordance with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Purchase Act 2004).

2 The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted drawings numbered 17.01.03 Rev P0 and 17.01.04 Rev P0 received 7 June 2017.

GROUND:

To secure the proper development of the area.

SITE, LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

Dreamland Cinema is sited on Marine Terrace Margate and fronts the famous Margate Sands. Dreamland Cinema was built in two stages. The construction of the more northerly part, comprising the entrance hall, saloon and public bars and the Sunshine Café, commenced in autumn 1933 with the Café opening at Whitsun (late May) 1934. Work on the auditorium commenced in autumn 1934 and the completed building finally opened on March 22nd 1935.

The structure might be more properly described as an Entertainments Complex since it contained a variety of spaces - a 2,200 seat cinema with back stage facilities to enable live performances, three bars, two restaurants and seven shops. It also served to advertise the entire Dreamland site and acted as the entrance to both the Amusement Park and to the long-established Dreamland Ballroom at the back of the site.

The structure was listed Grade II on 11.8.1992 and the entry was upgraded to II* on 25.4.2008. It sits within the Margate Seafront conservation area which was designated on 29.1.1997.

The Lord George Sanger 'Hall-by-the-Sea' site was bought by John Henry Iles in 1919 and renamed 'Dreamland'. JH Iles invested heavily in Thanet throughout the 1920s; at the Cliftonville Lido and the Dumpton Park Greyhound Track as well as at Dreamland itself. The 1930s were one of Margate's boom periods and, however the frontage to the former Hall by the Sea was dressed its diminutive form did little to advertise the Dreamland Park hidden behind Marine Terrace. In addition two super cinemas were planned for Margate in the early 1930s. Both of these, the Astoria (1305 seats) and the Regal (1795 seats), were to open in 1934. Dreamland was constantly striving to upgrade its facilities and its cinema and attendant bars - the converted Hall by the Sea - must have seemed hopelessly out-of-date and constricted.

Iles' aspirations for the new Dreamland Cinema were high. At his speech at the opening of the Cinema in 1935 Iles was to say "...we have tried to produce for the public something elegant and full of refinement. Personally, I have always thought that nothing is too good for Margate and the Isle of Thanet. The better the places of entertainment are, the greater the success of Margate will be".

The brief for the new cinema was complex and difficult. High land values along Marine Terrace had always restricted the street frontage of Dreamland to some 30m width. The new development had to retain and build up against the existing Ballroom and the Garden Café, and provide grand entrances to both. It also had to form the entrance to the Park and provide the 'masthead' for the entire site - all within the narrow confines of the seafront land owned by Dreamland. Part of the brief was no doubt to also create a bigger, more luxurious and more sensational cinema auditorium than at other Margate places of entertainment.

Choosing the architectural critic and innovator Julian Leathart as Architect for the project was a radical choice by Iles. Leathart and his partner WF Granger had designed four influential cinemas in the London area between 1926 and 1930, a time when cinema design was evolving rapidly. The practice pioneered the use of the building being an advertisement in itself, rather than the prolific use of signage - a solution which relied on the quality of the architecture to draw in the public. Leathart and Granger also developed the use of concealed and neon tube lighting to highlight massing and specific decorative details. Architectural lighting was to be used extensively and strikingly on the Margate project. Dreamland was the last Cinema to be designed by the practice, which was dissolved in 1937. However, the Margate design was to prove highly influential on the evolution of Cinemas in the pre WW2 period.

Leathart and Granger were assisted on the project by JH Iles' son John Bird Iles, who at the time was an Associate Member of the RIBA. JB Iles had responsibility for the interior of the building including carpets, textiles and furniture. The sculptures in the auditorium were by Eric Aumonier and those elsewhere in the building by Lawrence Bradshaw (who designed the bust of Karl Marx at Highgate). The wall paintings in the entrance corridor and the Sunshine Café were by Walpole Champneys, as were some of the fabrics. Another of Iles' sons, Gordon, was responsible for installing the theatre organ - an innovative Compton

which utilised some of the pipe ranks from the Noterman organ which had been installed in the Dreamland Cinema of 1923.

The majority of the interior was in a refined Art Deco style. There were exceptions. The public house fronting Marine Terrace was in the Modern Tudor style with oak wainscoting, wrought iron light fittings and a coffered ceiling decorated with vine leaves formed of fibrous plaster. The ceiling survives. Surviving almost in its entirety is the Directors' Bar, at the top of the stairs to the Ballroom, which is fitted out in fibrous plaster as the stern of a galleon with moveable flaps painted as waves behind leaded light windows.

The contractors for the Cinema were Rice and Son of West London, who had branches in Margate and Brighton. Rice and Son had built the Cliftonville Lido for Iles in the mid-1920s and were also to build the De la Warr Pavilion in Bexhill and Burtons shop in Margate High Street; both of which opened in 1935. Rice and Son were prestige builders during the Inter-war period. They survived in Margate at their Westbrook Road premises until 1988.

When opened, the entertainments complex consisted of the following. The lower ground floor, entered from base of Hall by the Sea Road, comprised the entrance tunnel to the Dreamland Park which was flanked by the Popular Restaurant to the right and seven shops to the left. At the end of the tunnel was the Oyster Bar and Fish Restaurant under the Ballroom, and the Garden Café in a converted American aircraft hangar. At ground floor level in the building were the public and saloon bars directly accessed from Marine Terrace, the entrance foyer, the top-lit ticketing rotunda off which led the stairs to the circle, the Cinema stalls, the Directors' Bar and, eventually terminating the axis, the Ballroom. At first floor level was the Sunshine Café (said to seat 300), the Cinema circle and the circle bar. Beneath the public house were kitchens and cellars serving both the bars and the Popular and Sunshine Cafes; linked to the upper floors by stairs and lifts. At the time of opening it was stated that the Cinema auditorium could hold 2,200 people, the Ballroom 1,500 and the cafes and restaurants 3,500.

In 1973 the Cinema auditorium was subdivided to form two 370 seat cinemas within the former circle and a live theatre in the stalls. This was achieved by spanning the stalls auditorium with a beam and placing a central partition down the rake of the circle. The fibrous plaster auditorium ceiling was covered by a suspended ceiling. In 1975 the live theatre auditorium was converted into a bingo hall, which in 1992 was refitted again into its present configuration. In 1981 the Circle Bar was converted into a 60 seat cinema. The Cinema and bingo hall foyers and lobbies were revamped in 1998 when much of the original decorative scheme was covered up. The cinemas and bingo hall closed in 2008 and are currently unused.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

The Dreamland Cinema building has been the subject of numerous applications with the aim to regenerate, preserve and enhance its special historic and architectural interest and find users/occupiers for the building.

Of particular relevance to this application is listed building consent L/TH/98/0920 (approved January 1998) for the conversion of former workshops into extension to amusement centre

including the removal of an existing single storey extension and provision of new shopfronts, conversion of former squash club into additional all weather amusement facility including construction of covered staircase access and demolition of existing cottage and squash court extension to form a terrace.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

It is proposed to remove the non-historic partitions and finishes from the Cinema stalls (bingo hall) foyer and stage. To the foyer, these are mostly the changes which were undertaken under listed building consent L/TH/98/0920, which created offices and a bar within the stalls foyer space. The original structure and decorative finishes remain beneath these super-imposed additions. On the stage the original proscenium arch was infilled with a timber framed partition in 1975. This partition carries the bingo score boards. It is intended to remove these, together with the asbestos fire safety curtain dating from 1935. Temporary lighting, WCs, handrails and some minor repairs are also proposed.

It is proposed that Thanet Council seek an operator for the Cinema auditoria. The removal of the modern additions to the stalls foyer will allow interested parties to gain a better appreciation of the historic form of the space. The fire safety curtain needs to be removed as part of a policy to eradicate asbestos from the building.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

Thanet Local Plan 2006 - saved policies

D1 - Design Principles

T8 - Dreamland

NOTIFICATIONS

Letters were sent to adjoining occupiers, a site notice posted near the site and the application publicised in a local newspaper.

No representations have been received.

CONSULTATIONS

Conservation Officer: No objection

Historic England: Do not wish to comment

COMMENTS

This application is reported to committee as the Council is the applicant.

Analysis

Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires Local Planning Authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Paragraph 131 of the NPPF advises that: In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraph 132 states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.

This application proposes the removal of non-historic fabric added to the building in the late 1990s (the insertion of offices and a bar within the stalls foyer space) as well as the removal of the asbestos fire safety curtain which dates from 1935. Temporary lighting Wcs, handrails and some minor repairs are also proposed.

The removal of the non-historic fabric will allow a better appreciation and understanding of the historic and architectural form of the space and is welcomed as an enhancement to the listed building. It is disappointing that the 1930s fire safety curtain is to be removed, but its removal is necessary due to the health and safety issues associated with asbestos.

It is considered that the proposal as a whole would enhance the designated heritage asset and the public benefits of removing the fire safety curtain is considered to outweigh the resulting harm.

Conclusion

This application would see the removal of non-historic fabric of the building added in the 1990s together with the removal of the fire safety curtain (dating back to the 1930s) together with other minor works and repairs.

It is considered that the removal of the non-historic fabric will be beneficial and allow a greater appreciation and understanding of the historic and architectural interest of the listed

building. It is considered that the removal of the historic fire safety curtain would cause some harm to the designated heritage asset, but this would be less than substantial and the public benefits of this proposal outweigh this limited harm. It is therefore recommended that members approve the application.

Case Officer

Annabel Hemmings

TITLE: L/TH/17/0836

Project Dreamland Cinema Dreamland Leisure Complex Marine Terrace MARGATE
Kent

Scale:

