

Ref.: TC/1488

21 January 2021

Annika Lepoittevin  
Planning  
Post point 15  
North Somerset Council  
Town Hall  
Weston-super-Mare  
BS23 1UJ

**Application:** 20/P/2945/LBC

**Site:** Curzon Cinema Old Church Road Clevedon BS21 6NN

**Proposal:** External and internal alterations including the removal of the modern suspended ceiling; installation of 2no. new roof hatches; replacement of modern window with sliding sash window; installation of a new fall-arrest system; installation of a new fire and acoustic lobby with new fire doors; improvements to an existing fire door; external chimney repairs and strengthening; replacement of modern felt roof coverings with zinc

**Remit:**

The Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. We were established through the Theatres Trust Act 1976 'to promote the better protection of theatres' and provide statutory planning advice on theatre buildings and theatre use in England through The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, requiring the Trust to be consulted by local authorities on planning applications which include 'development involving any land on which there is a theatre'.

**Comment:**

This application for listed building consent has come to the attention of the Trust because it seeks alterations to the statutorily Grade II listed Curzon.

The Curzon opened in 1922 as a cine-variety theatre incorporating an earlier cinema which was constructed in 1912. Although predominantly operated as a cinema it had stage facilities, dressing rooms, a fly gallery and grid. We believe the grid still survives. The original auditorium is also believed to be intact aside from box fronts and the organ; original features have been concealed by later alterations such as the false ceiling from the balcony to the proscenium. The Curzon was unusual for a British theatre or cinema in that it was decorated by pressed metal plates as is common in North America and this is a key factor in the building's significance as noted within Historic England's listing description. Today the Curzon remains a valued community, cultural and historic asset for Clevedon, operated by a charitable trust. Still predominantly a cinema, it does run some live events including comedy, live music and limited

**Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

**T** 020 7836 8591 **E** [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk) **W** [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk)

**Chair** Tim Eyles **Director** Jon Morgan

**Trustees** Richard Baldwin, Paul Cartwright, Paddy Dillon, Annie Hampson, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Jane Spiers, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

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theatre. Paragraph 92 of the NPPF (2019) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for venues of this nature.

There has been an ongoing programme of works and restorations at the Curzon. The Trust commented on and supported proposals in 2014 (and subsequent amendments) which converted the mews building to the rear into a bar/restaurant. There were also applications for glazing, doorways, layout of WCs and windows around that time we were not notified of, and more recently for roof repairs.

This proposal is part retrospective. This includes removal of the modern false suspended ceiling within the auditorium which has revealed the original skelionite panel ceiling, proscenium and stage and the auditorium's original scale. It has also reinstated the balcony. This element is particularly welcomed, and whilst clearly we would urge consent to be granted in advance of works in this instance there are mitigating considerations because clear and considerable heritage and public benefits were able to be achieved whilst utilising the Curzon's enforced closure due to Covid-19 to the venue's advantage. This will avoid further closure and disruption to the Curzon's programme and lost income, in turn supporting its ongoing preservation and viability at a time when receipts will be critical.

Works and repairs to the roof have also been carried out, although water ingress, condensation and corrosion have caused damage to some of the skelionite panels. Again, the repairs are a heritage benefit because it will help preserve the building and minimise further damage until damaged panels can be fully repaired which will be important given the particular heritage benefit of the panels. Therefore we support the temporary fixings pending future repair, and note that an inspection has been carried out with the report appended to the Heritage Statement.

The addition of a new fire and acoustic lobby to the second floor gallery is required to provide safe access, although altering the original plan form creates some degree of harm this is mitigated by the public benefits referred to above of revealing the original ceiling and reinstating the gallery which is what makes this lobby necessary.

Again, alteration to the gallery doors also creates some harm to the building's historic character given these were from the original 1912 building but the installation of fire resistant glass around them is necessary for reasons of fire safety.

There are also some general repairs and alterations proposed. The Heritage Statement describes the modern felt roof to the foyer as being in very poor condition and proposes a replacement metal sheet covering with zinc finishes to windows to which we have no objection as this would be similar to original materials. Similarly window repairs which have already been carried out due to fixings being missing and frames rotten are supported as this assists with the general maintenance and upkeep of the Curzon, and reinstatement of sashes returns to the original appearance.

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In conclusion we are supportive of the works included within this application which support the Curzon as a cultural and heritage asset, in particular the retrospective elements relating to revealing the ceiling and original form of the auditorium. Therefore we would support the granting of listed building consent.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you wish to discuss these comments in further detail.

Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser

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