

Ref.: TC/98

05 January 2024

John Miles  
Planning, Building Control & Licensing  
Colchester Borough Council  
Town Hall,  
Colchester,  
Essex,  
CO1 1FR

By e-mail: [planning.services@colchester.gov.uk](mailto:planning.services@colchester.gov.uk)

**Application:** 232790

**Site:** Former, Odeon Cinema, Crouch Street, Colchester CO3 3ES

**Proposal:** Part demolition, retention of the north facade and reinstatement of the entrance canopy of the former Odeon cinema and construction of a 120-bed hotel together with hotel support facilities and car / cycle parking, blue/green roof, drainage and landscaping

**Remit:**

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'.

**Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

**Telephone** 020 7836 8591 **Email** [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk) **Website** [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk) **Twitter** @TheatresTrust

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**Chair** Dave Moutrey OBE

**Director** Jon Morgan

**Trustees** James Dacre, Suba Das, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Lucy Osborne, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

### **Comment:**

This application for planning permission has come to the attention of Theatres Trust through press reports because it is seeking to redevelop the former Odeon/Regal. This will see demolition of parts of the building but retention of its front façade to Crouch Street and reinstatement of its entry canopy. We were engaged by the applicant at pre-application stage, indicating that in principle their scheme would enable us to remove previous objections to development proposals at this site.

The building originally opened as the Regal in 1931, designed by renowned cinema and theatre architect Cecil Massey. Although it predominantly operated as a cinema it was equipped with full theatre and stage facilities including dressing rooms and orchestra pit. In its early years it had an extensive theatre programme including regular pantomimes, typical of cine-variety theatres of the time. Its capacity was 1,446 which reduced to 1,200 in 1962 followed by sub-divisions in 1974, 1987 and 1991. It closed in 2002 when Odeon moved to a nearby site on Head Street and has been vacant since that time.

Internally the auditorium was decorated in a Mediterranean style. Although the building is not statutorily listed, architecturally it is unique in Essex with an impressive principal façade in a Spanish-American style as well as being a rare and important survivor of Massey's provincial work. It is on the Council's adopted List of Local Architectural or Historic Interest. Notwithstanding its vacant and deteriorating state we consider it is a positive contributor to the Colchester Town Centre Conservation Area and is recognised by the Conservation Area Character Appraisal as one of the more interesting buildings in Crouch Street. Restoration offers the potential to positively enhance character and townscape in this part of the town centre.

Our previous objections have been on the basis of total loss of the original building. Permission for the last scheme was refused and a subsequent appeal was dismissed. We therefore welcome that this submission has positively reflected on the reasons for refusal, as well as feedback from our meeting with the applicant, and will now retain and sensitively restore the original front part of the building, in particular the significant Spanish-American façade. We also welcome that a canopy will be reinstated to the main entrance and this represents a heritage benefit.

Demolition plans show that almost everything behind the front façade will be lost. Whilst this building is not statutorily listed and there has been considerable deterioration it does nonetheless have significance and interest as a work of Massey and we therefore urge inclusion of a full recording report as a condition of planning

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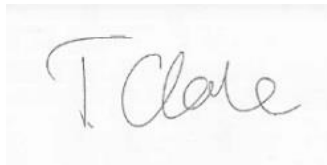
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permission. We recommend that Theatres Trust and Cinema Theatre Association are consulted prior to discharge.

Subject to the condition cited above we can now support the granting of planning permission.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or should you wish to discuss this representation in greater detail.



Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Adviser

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The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres. The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund co-operates with the Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697