

Our Ref.: MP/64

25 August 2010

For the attention of: Ms Pauline Shearer

Mr Andrew Pannell BA (HONS) MRTPI
Planning & Policy Manager
Environmental and Regulatory Services
Halton Borough Council
Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn
Cheshire WA7 2GW



Dear Mr Pannell,

Former Palace Theatre/La Scala, 79-83 High Street, Runcorn
Application ref: 10/00316/S73

Thank you for consulting The Theatres Trust on the above planning application to vary condition 2 (planning permission 07/00072/Ful) to extend the permission for the demolition of the former *Palace Theatre/La Scala* and the redevelopment to form a mixed use development comprising of commercial space (A1, A2 and B1 Use Classes) together with 77 apartments with residential car parking and landscaping at 79 - 83 High Street, Runcorn, for a further 3 years. The Trust **objects** to the application. Please see our detailed advice below.

Remit: The Theatres Trust is The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres. The Town & Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995, Article 10, Para (v) requires the Trust to be consulted on planning applications which include '*development involving any land on which there is a theatre.*' It was established by The Theatres Trust Act 1976 '*to promote the better protection of theatres.*' This applies to all theatre buildings. Our main objective is to safeguard theatre use, or the potential for such use but we also provide expert advice on design, conservation, property and planning matters to theatre operators, local authorities and official bodies.

Advice/comment: The Trust objects to the application in principle because we are opposed to the outright demolition of the former *Palace Theatre/La Scala*. The Trust objected and commented on the original application (planning reference 07/00072/FUL) but were not opposed in principle to redevelopment on the site. However, the front façade (and return walls) we considered had some architectural significance and historic value as a heritage asset and local landmark on the High Street. We therefore suggested that it should be retained. Buildings of this nature make a valuable contribution to the street scene and should be locally listed. We were disappointed that the application did not include the retention of this historic façade. We were also surprised that the application did not include any elevations or a Design and Access Statement.

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Director Mhora Samuel **Chairman** Rob Dickins CBE
Trustees Jason Barnes, Phil Clark, Marilyn Cutts, Venu Dhupa, Tim Foster, Penelope Keith CBE DL,
Dr Pauleen Lane CBE, Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall, Anne McReynolds, Matthew Rooke,
Chris Shepley CBE, Sam Shrouder, Ben Twist

The theatrical use of this building appears to have been quite extensive in the early years. It was built as the *Palace Theatre* by the architect W S Snell in 1897 and converted into a cinema in the 1930's when the present single-storey Art Deco entrance was added. Many original features including the stage door and box office survive. It was later converted to a ballroom in 1957. It is an interesting survival for its date and appears to be a good townscape building, something that should have been included as a locally designated heritage asset as a building of local architectural significance and historic value.

Given that Halton Borough Council has approved the previous application for demolition and redevelopment of the site, and this application is simply to vary a condition to extend the time limit for development, we assume that this application will be approved. We would, however, wish to ensure that condition 12 (recording) be transferred to the new permission.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if we may be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M J Price', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark J Price MRTPI, IHBC
Planning and Heritage Adviser

cc Richard Gray, Cinema Theatre Association