

Protecting theatres
for **everyone**



Ref.: TC/960

13 April 2023

Clare Appleyard
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Archway Road
Huyton
L36 9FB

By e-mail: planning@knowsley.gov.uk

Application: 23/00171/KMBC1 & 23/00173/LBC

Site: Prescott Picture Palace 8-14 Kemble Street Prescott Knowsley L34 5SQ

Proposal: DEMOLITION OF 4 NO. EXTENSIONS AND MAKING GOOD OF REMAINING ELEVATIONS, ALTERATIONS TO FRONT ELEVATION INCLUDING THE REINSTATEMENT OF THE FORMER CINEMA ENTRANCE AND HISTORIC SHOPFRONTS, BRICKING UP OF AUDITORIUM WINDOWS AND REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING WINDOWS WITH DOUBLE GLAZED SASH WINDOWS TOGETHER WITH OTHER ASSOCIATED WORKS

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 **Website** theatrestrust.org.uk **Twitter** @TheatresTrust

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Chair Dave Moutrey OBE

Director Jon Morgan

Trustees Paul Cartwright, James Dacre, Suba Das, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Lucy Osborne, Jane Spiers, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

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

Comment:

These applications for planning permission and listed building consent have come to the attention of the Trust because they are seeking to make alterations in association with restoring the Prescott Picture Palace back to active use. We have been aware of plans for this building for some time through press reports, and we recently provided some advice to the applicant.

The Picture Palace opened in 1912 as a cine-variety theatre and as an early example and survivor this contributes towards its historic and architectural significance reflected in its statutory Grade II listing. It is also reflective of a time of fast transition in theatre and cinema building style. It was equipped with a stage and dressing rooms for variety shows and also functioned as a music hall. It was renamed to the Palace Cinema in 1927 but fell out of this use in 1957 when it became a carpet and furniture warehouse. Various alterations were carried out in the late 1960s and 1970s before it went to bingo use which lasted until the 1990s, then becoming used by a church group.

Despite the Picture Palace's significance and its overall plan form remaining readable, it has been subjected to insensitive alterations and additions prior to its listing. Parts of the building including its front façade are in poor and deteriorating condition. It was acquired by the Council in 2021, and we welcome that plans are being brought forward to repair and restore the building and to bring it back to active use as part of a High Streets Heritage Action Zone project.

Although there appears to be no reinstatement of earlier live performance function, Prescott has recently benefitted from the opening of the Shakespeare North Playhouse in this regard. It is not clear from the proposed plans how the various rooms and spaces will function as they carry the same labels as the existing plans, and the foyer is shown with an open WC so revision and clarification would be merited. Nonetheless it appears that there will be level access into the auditorium and that the spaces available offer potential for a flexible range of uses which would meet the overall project objectives. From a heritage perspective reinstatement of cinema provision represents an optimum viable use, and these proposals would not preclude more flexible use of the auditorium either now or in the future.

Therefore we are supportive of the granting of planning permission and listed building consent.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Adviser

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