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408/587

Dear Sir or Madam:

FORMER WALKERS BINGO HALL / HIPPODROME, GREEN LANE, DERBY.

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT INCORPORATING JUSTIFICATION FOR DEMOLITION.

We have been instructed by Mr C Anthony to make an application for Listed Building Consent.

In justifying the demolition of a listed building paragraph 3.19 of PPG15 – Planning Policy Guidance: Planning and the Historic Environment, expects the relevant planning authority to address the considerations contained in paragraph 3.5.

In addition there are three further considerations to be taken into account 3.19 (i), (ii) and (iii).

Paragraph 3.5 itself has four sub headings (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv). In dealing with the justification for demolition each of these sections is addressed.

In effect the primary requirement of paragraph 3.19 is to take account of the relevant considerations contained in paragraph 3.5(i) is ipso facto a review of the strength of the original listing.

Whilst circumstances surrounding the listing are not clear, it is not the intention to question those circumstances except to include the file of paperwork to provide relevant background information.

However, in respect of this building it is entirely appropriate to refer to the conclusions of English Heritage in advising the Listing Branch of The Department of National Heritage whose advice is summarised in their letter of the 3rd December 1992.

This is included in the file referred to above and gives reasons for their, then decision not to list the Hippodrome.

Paragraph 3.5 (i)

A buildings importance in terms of intrinsic architectural interest and rarity is defined in paragraph 6.11. This section of PPG 15 is now deleted and replaced by Communities and Local Government Circular 01/2007.

This circular makes reference to specialist guides published by English Heritage and in the instance of the subject building English Heritage 'Culture and Entertainment Buildings Selection Guide' is the relevant

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publication. The section of this guide expressly covering theatres is more a brief history of theatre evolution than a definitive guide to what is worthy of preservation. However this guide indicates that the subject property is of a common type for the period. The proposition of rarity being a prime consideration, for listing, is in the circumstances a somewhat weak argument.

Paragraph 3.5 (ii)

The description issued at the time of listing attributes the design to Marshall and Tweedy. Drawings held by the Derby City archivist are indeed attributed to Marshall and Tweedy but these drawings are not reflected in the construction.

It is believed that the actual design was by a local architect Alexander Macpherson and whilst reflective of the design by Marshall and Tweedy it is substantially different.

The listing description refers to a continuous original canopy now obscured by late 20th Century cladding. This is incorrect as early photographs show there was no original canopy. Reference is also made to richly decorated plasterwork but no mention is made of the quality. No mention is made of the coating applied to the plasterwork and virtually all wall and ceiling surfaces (see appended photographs).

This coating has obliterated any sharpness or detail that the plasterwork did have. The coating is 'artex' or a similar product and was applied probably in the 60's or 70's to obscure cracks and other faults. Finally the description describes the property as,

'A complete early 20th C variety theatre, which represents a significant stage in the evolution of the building type which became the dominant design for cinema construction in the late 1920s'.

The buildings completeness and originality is therefore questionable.

It is in fact much modified from its original form to accommodate the use first as a cinema, which required the addition of the projection box which sits uncomfortably over the roof of the front elevation and subsequently as a bingo hall which necessitated the drastic remodelling of the orchestra pit and stalls.

It should also be noted that due to lack of maintenance over many years many features have been irretrievably lost caused by leaking roofs. Furthermore the requirements to deal with asbestos contamination will inevitably require the removal of much more detail.

Paragraph 3.5 (iii)

The provisions contained in this clause do not directly apply in this instance

Paragraph 3.5 (iv)

The provisions contained in this clause would actually favour demolition to aid economic regeneration which is desperately needed in this location.

Paragraph 3.19 (i)

The condition of the building is highlighted in the attached reports particularly those of consulting engineers HSP Consulting who conclude that re-commissioning the existing building and facilities for public use is not possible on safety grounds. (Structural Appraisal-Addendum. Paragraph 5.05). This report demonstrates that the building could only be re-used in its original role by effectively demolishing and rebuilding. There is also a



significant problem with asbestos contamination. This problem cannot be left indefinitely as the owner is obliged to comply with legal responsibilities under the asbestos regulations and health and safety regulations.

As a consequence of the professional advice received the owner is faced with having to pay the very substantial cost of complying with the requirement to remove the asbestos hazard and then being left with a building which by reason of its structural safety cannot be used.

The removal of the asbestos contamination will involve further removal of features impacting on the nature and character of the building. The above considerations are now further aggravated by notifying the building insurers of the content of these reports, which is a requirement of the insurance policy. The insurers have now withdrawn all public liability insurance.

A fundamental problem with the subject building is that it was constructed for a niche use, 'a variety theatre', and as such with the demise of this genre the building is left without a role. The accommodation is inadequate and not suited as a modern performing arts facility. This problem is revealed in the Locum Consulting Report (attached) commissioned for Derby City Council.

Paragraph 3.19(i) says that historic buildings,

'may offer proven technical performance, physical attractiveness and functional spaces that, in an age of rapid change, may outlast the short-lived and inflexible technical specifications that have sometimes shaped new developments.'

Paradoxically the subject building in this case represents a classic example of a building whose design demonstrates all the constraints attributed to those 'that have sometimes shaped modern developments.'

Having regard to the various reports and technical analysis of this building, advice has been sought from Quantity Surveyors Watts and Partners Plc. who conclude that because of the advice of the structural engineers (see addendum report and explanatory letter) it is not possible to cost a refurbishment of the building but it would be possible to cost the works required to stabilise the building subsequent to the asbestos removal (but of course the building could not be used).

A rebuilding cost estimate is given in the sum of £19,000,000 (19 million pounds).

Paragraph 3.19 (ii)

The efforts made to maintain the building in use have gone on for many years. In terms of viability, the history of the building tells its own story. Built originally as a variety theatre the building initially enjoyed success but with the advent of competition from cinemas failed and closed. The owners then took the strategy of significantly modifying the building for use as a cinema.

However bigger, newer and, more importantly, purpose designed cinemas came along and consequently the building again was not viable. An attempt was then made to revive the venue as a variety theatre but times move on and with the advent of the cinema and then television there simply was no demand for this type of variety entertainment, consequently the venture failed yet again and the building was closed.

The last use as a bingo hall, was an opportunistic attempt to get some use out of a building that did not have a viable role. Being unable to warrant the expense of maintaining the building for this, the used area was progressively diminished and eventually this operation was no longer viable and was forced to close.

The previous owners made a number of attempts to market the building. They were however faced with somewhat of a dilemma. If they made open announcements of their attempts to sell the building this would have affected their trade making it more difficult to carry on with the business and consequently hastening the denouement of the building.

The only interest was understood to be from the Derby New Theatre Association. It is understood that this group were hoping for funding from public or charitable sources but this did not prove possible to them.

It is considered that there is no viable use for the current structure and that considering its listed status and current condition marketing the building would be a futile exercise. However it should be pointed out that this property was marketed by the previous owner for over a year before purchase by the present owner.

The whole history of this building reflects the mammoth efforts made, over many years, to try and find a useful role for it.

Paragraph 3.19 (iii)

Proposals for future use of the site following demolition should accord with the policies contained in the 'City of Derby Local Plan Review' and complement development proposals for the Beckett Well Policy Area (Policy CC4). The former Hippodrome is set immediately adjacent to this area.

CC4 Becket Well Policy Area

The Becket Well Policy Area is identified as a major mixed-use regeneration opportunity. Planning permission will only be granted for proposals that:

Contribute to, and do not prejudice, the comprehensive redevelopment and improvement of the area;

Support and contribute to the objectives of the City Centre Strategy (Policy CC1);

Provide a mix of uses consistent with the nature and function of the City Centre;

Exhibit a high quality of design and layout, and;

Provide adequate car parking and servicing facilities. Improvements to the fabric and environment of Green Lane will be undertaken and a pedestrian link will be achieved from Green Lane to St Peter's Street.

In the event of proposals involving the redevelopment of the Central United Reformed Church, the City Council will seek to enter into a Section 106 Obligation to secure its replacement on an appropriate site in the City Centre.



Conclusion

This statement is made in support of the application to demolish the above building.

The detailed reasons for the above are given in the attached independent professional reports.

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Associate Director