

Plaza, Port Talbot

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

Prepared for: Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

(385)1902-GWP-Rev 01

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Prepared by: AD

Checked by: RT



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I.0 INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES OF REPORT

I.1 Introduction and Purpose

This Heritage Impact Statement is written by GWP Architecture on behalf of the owners of the site and the heritage asset, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, to inform, and subsequently seek to justify, proposals for Planning and Listed Building Consent applications being submitted by GWP Architecture.

The proposed ‘development site’ is the existing Plaza Cinema, within the centre of Port Talbot, on the corner between Talbot Road (the A48) and Eagle Street.

The ‘development’ is already underway, and nearing completion, based upon information submitted for LBC consent re: P2019/5238. This Heritage Impact Statement relates simply to two aspects of the project for which a change to the consented scheme is now proposed. These two changes are:

- Relocation of some rooftop plant;
- Insertion of security shutter within existing opening.

The work has already been undertaken on site, and so this Statement relates to an application for retrospective consent.

The Statement seeks to establish the historic development of the site and its setting, and provide an evaluation of the significance of the building, to inform the development of an appropriate heritage-led scheme for the site. It considers the proposals and evaluates the heritage impact that the proposals would have and, where appropriate, identifies potential mitigation.

I.2 Authorship

This document has been produced for GWP Architecture by Ashley Davies, an RIBA-accredited Specialist Conservation Architect, an Affiliate Member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation and a member of the RIBA Conservation Register Steering Group, following a visits to, and appraisals of, the site during the period 2019 to 2022.

Ashley is also a Chartered Architect and has undertaken Building Conservation courses at SPAB, the RIBA, the RSAW and the CEW as well as a hand-on practical course at Ty Mawr. He has delivered many heritage-led projects over his career involving the repair, restoration and adaptation of many grade I, II* and II listed buildings.

In the last ten years, Ashley has written 110no. Historic Building Reports for the 72no. historic buildings/sites, including 50no. Heritage Impact Statements.

I.3 Policy Context

The policy context against which the Planning and Listed Building Consent applications must be determined, insofar as the heritage context is concerned, is as follows:

- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Paragraph 16(2) indicates that, in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

- The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Wales) Regulations 2012
- The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2021
- The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016.
- Planning Policy Wales – 10th Edition – December 2018.
- Planning Policy Wales ‘Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment’, dated May 2017

[Note: Previously important Welsh Office Circulars ‘60/96 Planning and the Historic Environment: Archaeology’; ‘61/96 Planning and the Historic Environment: Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas’; and ‘1/98 Planning and the Historic Environment: Directions by the Secretary of State for Wales’ have all been superseded by TAN 24].

- Planning Policy Wales ‘Technical Advice Note 12: Design’, dated March 2016.

For the Local Policy Context, please refer to the Planning Statement, produced by Asbri Planning.

I.4 The Objectives of this Heritage Impact Statement

A Heritage Impact Statement must be submitted with any Listed Building Consent application and any Conservation Area Consent application.

The objective of the Listed Building Justification Statement (or Heritage Impact Statement) is to establish the historic development of the site and its setting, and provide an evaluation of the significance of the building and its context, to inform the development of an appropriate heritage-led scheme for the site. Planning Policy Wales 'Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment', dated May 2017, states:

“5.12 Applicants for listed building consent are required to provide a heritage impact statement. This presents the results of a heritage impact assessment, which is a process designed to ensure that the significance of the building is taken into account in the development and design of proposals for change. Heritage impact assessments should be proportionate both to the significance of the listed building, and to the degree of change proposed, and the statement should provide enough information to allow the local planning authority to judge significance and impact when considering applications for listed building consent.”

The Welsh Government's 'Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales' document has been used as a guide to preparing the Statement. This sets out the general principles to consider when planning changes to historic assets and applying for listed building, and states:

“Your heritage impact assessment should take into account sufficient information to enable both the significance of the asset and the impact of change to be understood.”

“The basic stages of heritage impact assessment, whatever the size and scope of the project, are:

- 1. explaining your objective and why changes are desirable or necessary;*
- 2. understanding the significance of your historic asset;*
- 3. identifying your proposed changes;*
- 4. assessing the impact of your proposals;*
- 5. setting out the reasoning behind your preferred option, including your design concepts and principles, in the light of the assessment process.*

Once you are clear about stages 1 and 2, stages 3, 4 and 5 may be repeated until you find the best proposal that meets your objective and has the maximum benefit for your historic asset.”

I.5 The Structure of the Heritage Impact Statement

In line with the previously-mentioned guidance within the Welsh Government's 'Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales' document, this Heritage Impact Statement has been set out in six main sections with an Executive Summary.

- Section 1 explains the objective of the project and why changes are desirable or necessary.
- Section 2 - 'Understanding the Heritage' - seeks to summarise the key information known about the study location – its historical development and principal phases – through historical and architectural research.
- Section 3 - 'Understanding the Significance of the Historic Asset' - takes the form of a Statement of Significance, which involves appraisals based on the Evidential, Historical, Aesthetic and Communal Value of the heritage asset, drawn from what the 'Understanding the Heritage' research reveals.
- Section 4 identifies and explains the proposed changes to the heritage asset and its context.
- Section 5 assesses the impact of the proposals against the respective Values and Significances already established.
- Section 6 sets out the reasoning / justification behind the preferred option, including the design concepts and principles, in the light of the assessment process.

The Welsh Government's 'Explanatory Memorandum to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Wales) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2017' states:

“4.6 The heritage impact statement needs to be proportionate both to the significance of the building and to the degree of change proposed.”

Because this application relates to relatively minor changes to an already consented scheme, this Heritage Impact Statement is indeed a little simpler than would be for a full project; and, in light of this, it has been re-structured to make it easier to review it.

Sections 4, 5 & 6 are being inserted after Section 1, with Sections 2 & 3 following. This is because the recipient has already reviewed, in the past, Sections 2 & 3 ('Understanding the Heritage' and 'Understanding the Significance of the Historic Asset') and, whilst it is important that this information is included in this document, it is felt that the reader will wish to get straight into Sections 4, 5 & 6, which are new.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Grade II listed “as a very rare example in Wales of a building type which expresses the distinctive architectural vocabulary of 1930s cinema architecture”, the Plaza Cinema was built in 1939, although building works were not fully completed at that time due to materials restrictions as a result of the outbreak of the Second World War. The almost finished cinema finally opened in 1940. Building works were completed in 1950 when the building received its Plaza sign, faience tiles and Crittall-style metal framed windows 10 years after opening.

Its use changed to that of a combined cinema and bingo club in the early 1980s, and became just a bingo club in 1983, however, this change of use did not result in any major alterations to the interior of the building.

After re-opening as a cinema in 1985, the single-screen cinema was converted into a multi-screen operation in 1989, the year of its 50th anniversary. The stalls were converted into three separate screens with a fourth screen in the circle. It had reduced to three screens prior to closing. The cinema finally stopped operating and closed in 1999, having limped along to its 60th anniversary.

Port Talbot is a town best known for industry – primarily for its Steelworks and its Docks. Despite the demise of this once life-blood of the town, it will, for a very long time, be associated thus. This is an essential part of the historical significance of the town.

The Plaza Cinema sits within a part of the town which was the railway crossroads at a time when coal, copper, tin, iron, steel and people will have been transported backwards and forwards in huge volumes. Coal, and other materials, from further inland, will have been off-loaded by the tonne on the site of the Plaza and taken to the steelworks and the docks. The actual site of the Plaza was at the termination of at least four railway lines.

The Plaza is considered to be of regional heritage importance, however not of national importance. It is, therefore, deemed to have medium heritage value, representing an aspect of value that will have some cultural importance which makes a moderate contribution to the significance of its place. Its values are equally shared between historical, evidential, aesthetic and communal derivations.

The listing states that the Plaza is “as a very rare example in Wales of a building type which expresses the distinctive architectural vocabulary of 1930s cinema architecture”. Indeed, the Plaza is one of only six remaining cinemas from the Art Deco period of the 1920s and 1930s which have survived throughout Wales; the other surviving cinemas being the former Odeons at Llanelli, Newport and Rhyl, the Plaza in Flint and the Palace in Conwy. Some might deem this to suggest a building historically of ‘national importance’, albeit possibly so only within Wales, rather than the British Isles; however, unless there are special circumstances, ‘national importance’ is a statement more likely to be assigned to Britain’s 47,800 or so buildings at grade I, II* or A level, than one at grade II.

In material terms, therefore, the Plaza plays an important role in conveying the heritage values of the area (such as helping to maintain historical representation and historical character), however this contribution has been compromised by its 20-year dereliction.

This means that, whilst efforts should be made to protect and enhance the asset, some degree of flexibility is possible with changes to the fabric, not least in order to ensure that the building is brought back into viable and sustainable re-use, even if this necessitated adaptation. The assessment might suggest that the building’s art deco frontage and its foyer - which are in a reasonable condition - would be the more resistant to loss or change, whilst the rear auditorium - which is in a poor condition - could possibly accommodate change or loss.

Indeed, reference is made to the 2012 Condition Assessment of the Plaza from James & Nicholas Structural Engineers (particularly the summary on page 50 of this Heritage Impact Statement (HIS)) and the 2017 Condition Assessment from Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (particularly the summary on page 44 of the HIS), which states, of the rear section, that “the whole area is in a very poor state of repair and looks to have deteriorated further since the 2012 inspection. It is recommended this portion of the building is deemed potentially dangerous . . .”. This being said, the rear portion of the building - which houses the auditorium - contains some surviving features from the period of its construction, such as the art deco emergency exit signs, which should be found a home in the adapted building, whilst other aspects, such as sections of the terrazzo steps either side of the stage, could be re-used to undertake like-for-like repairs to the front portion of the building.

The part that the Plaza played in the lives the people of Port Talbot between 1939 and 1999 is considerable. It is both illustrative of, and associative with, the way people spent their leisure time for 60 years. It illustrates a pastime which is still very relevant to today, and is indeed the precursor to so much of our modern leisure activity – watching television and online entertainment, keeping up with the news, and meeting up with friends - however, it illustrates a very different way of doing so to now.

The fact that the Plaza retains so much of the provision and character which it had 80 years ago, and through its 60 year working life, simply adds to its heritage value.

Of course, a well-preserved building, still intact, in its original form, and largely unaltered will hold more heritage value than one which is not. The Plaza is principally intact, in its original form, and largely unaltered, which does add to its heritage value. However, it is in a very poor state of repair, particularly in the main body of the auditorium where a large hole in the roof has resulted in major deterioration beneath it, which has an extremely negative impact on its heritage value.

It is this level of preservation, when so many of these early cinemas no longer exist; its illustration of, and contribution to our understanding of, such a prominent part of past life; its prominence within the town; and its association with such prominent names as Richard Burton, Anthony Hopkins, Michael Sheen, Rob Brydon and Rebecca Evans; which affords the Plaza medium historical value.

Given the intactness of the original building, the Plaza’s evidential value might be deemed to be high, however, as evidential value is deemed to derive from those elements of an historic asset that can provide evidence about past human activity, it is arguable that the 1940s-1990s is recent enough for a considerable amount of other evidence – be it photography, film or memories – to still be available. As a result, the Plaza is deemed to have medium evidential value.

Its iconic frontage affords it considerable aesthetic value; its conscious Art Deco style and its use of such well-known Art Deco characteristics and features; its prominence within its setting; the love and sensory stimulation it draws from the people of the area; and the fact that it remains almost as it was when it was originally built all imbue considerable aesthetic value. However, its 20 years’ dereliction and the resultant condition it finds itself in reduces that value somewhat. Also, whilst the front third is so iconic and of high design quality, the rear two thirds, with its roughcast rendered monolithic elevations with blocked up openings and deteriorating roof, is much less appealing, even unattractive. As a result, the Plaza is considered to have medium aesthetic value, principally because of its frontage.

The Plaza figures in the memories of almost everyone who lived in and around Port Talbot between 1939 and 1999. Cinema-going, and the gleaning of news, was an enormous part of the lives of people of all ages through the 1930s, 40s and 50s. With the growing popularity of television, cinema still had its part to play in the 1950s and 60s showing live entertainment as well as cinema, with the opportunity to see the best known names of the age; and, whilst less frequented in the 1970s and 1980s, blockbuster movies continued to draw people to the cinema, as it would be some time before these films would appear on the television, or even video. Everyone has their memories of visits to the cinema, particularly insofar as they were the primary means of entertainment for many, and were frequently in large numbers with great regularity. The Plaza was one such cinema, with the 1,500 seat capacity met regularly.

It is the host of memories which it holds, some of which are recorded, some from extremely well-known figures from the area; the communal love for the building; and its source of social interaction which afford the Plaza medium communal value, however, this value is slowly ebbing away as the building further deteriorates.

The Plaza had been closed for 20 years; however, within the past 2no years Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC) and BAM Construction have been working to bring the building back into use.

NPTCBC has also brought a tenant on board to run the restored and adapted building. This is the YMCA, a not for profit organization that supports itself through charitable contributions, membership dues and programme fees.

The almost completed project has involved the repair, restoration and adaptation of the iconic front range of the building and the construction of a new replacement to the rear range.

However, two aspects of the works require a different approach. They relate to:

- The relocation of some rooftop plant;
- The insertion of a security shutter within an existing opening.

During the detailed design of the mechanical and electrical plant, it was realised that extra kit would be required and that this kit would need to be located outside the designed plant zone. Because of this, a proposal was developed to place some addition kit outside the plant enclosure.

An existing opening in part of the retained front range of the building, behind the faience-clad frontage and within the rendered side, facing south east onto Eagle Street, used to provide entry and egress into the foyer of the original building. The proposals still have that being used for emergency egress. However, it is currently a deep and covered recess directly open to the street. The Council is concerned that vagrants will see this recess as an ideal sleeping spot, that it would be a place where people could hide within and attack passers-by from, and a place where anti-social behaviour can be undertaken with little oversight. As a result, the Council wish to insert a security screen within the facade.

The location of one of the Mechanical Ventilation Heat Recovery Unit, with its affiliated ductwork, in an area not enclosed within louvred screening might have put at risk it being visible from the street.

However, the proposed location is close to the rear wall and new roof to the inner lobby section of the existing retained part of the building, which is not on the edge of the building, but relatively central on plan, so it will be not be visible from the street, due to perspective and the relatively narrow streets.

No view of it is possible from Talbot Road, due to the much taller faience-clad facade wall in front of it, nor, for the reason above, from Eagle Street.

The kit will be further back from the centre of the roof from all of the main views from Talbot Road and Eagle Street, but on the less visible Eagle Mews side of the building, however, will be set far enough into the plan of the roof to reduce any chance of it being visible from the ground from Eagle Mews.

The only impact which the location of the Heat Recovery Unit will have on the interior is a positive one, as it will minimise the amount of internal ductwork required to link the internal spaces with the unit.

The Heat Recovery Unit would be located on a new roof area and would therefore have no impact at all on the retained historic elements of the existing building and, hence, on the building's evidential value. Given the fact that it will not be visible from the street, the aesthetic value of the installation will not be impacted. There is also nothing about the building's historic or communal value which will be impacted by the installation.

The installation of the shutter will have an impact on the exterior of the building, as we will now see the shutter, when it is closed, rather than the recess and steps beyond. However, the shutter will be open at all times that the building is in use and open, as it is an emergency egress; and only closed at night and on the few days that the venue is closed. At these times, the shutter will be contained within the box hidden inside the head, and all that will be visible is the frames and channels.

This being said, when open (with frame visible) or closed (with frame and shutter visible), the appearance of the shutter is understated and blends well into the surrounding elevation, with it being the same colour as the walls. It is, in essence, like having a door in an opening, as with all of the other openings to the building, which is open most of the time.

Insofar as one's appreciation of the whole facade is concerned, one will barely notice the shutter and/or frame.

The installation of the shutter will have an impact on the interior of the building, as we will now see the shutter, head container box and frames, when it is closed, and the head container box and frames, when it is open. However, this impact is not deemed to be of much consequence, nor in a location which people will often pass through. It is a circulation area, and one which will only ever be accessed in the event of an emergency, with a door between the circulation corridor and the access to the toilets beyond.

There was no shutter on the opening when the building was initially reviewed and the design developed, however, evidence internally suggests that there was a roller shutter on the inside of the opening at some stage, just as the proposed. No photography prior to our involvement with the project has been found which shows this opening; however, it is likely, for the same reason as one is proposed there now, that this would have been the case.

There is no reason to believe that the installation of the shutter will impact the historic value of the building, not least as there might have been a roller shutter there in the past. No evidential value would be lost by its insertion, aside from the fact that a few fixings will be inserted into the wall. The impact on the aesthetic value of the building is minimal, and not even necessarily detrimental. Indeed, it would also limit the opportunity for anti-social behaviour to damage the fabric of the building within the recess, causing vandalism and applying graffiti to it. The impact on the building's communal value, however, will be a positive one, as the recess will not be used by vagrants, not used as a hiding place to attack passers-by from; nor a place where anti-social behaviour can be undertaken with little oversight. It would also limit the opportunity for anti-social behaviour to damage the fabric of the building within the recess.

The visual impact to the facade is minimal and, indeed, is not necessarily a negative one. Nothing is lost with its insertion, and it is removable, so the installation would be reversible.

3.0 SECTION ONE - A STATEMENT THAT EXPLAINS THE OBJECTIVES FOR THE PROJECT AND WHY CHANGES ARE DESIRABLE OR NECESSARY

The Plaza had been closed for 20 years; however, within the past 20 years Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC) and BAM Construction have been working to bring the building back into use.

NPTCBC has also brought a tenant on board to run the restored and adapted building. This is the YMCA, a not for profit organization that supports itself through charitable contributions, membership dues and programme fees.

The almost completed project has involved the repair, restoration and adaptation of the iconic front range of the building and the construction of a new replacement to the rear range.

The project will provide the YMCA, and NPTCBC, along with the local community, with a series of new spaces for the benefit of the community. These will include:

- A 250-seat multi-purpose hall;
- A café, with a kitchen which will include training facilities;
- A gym, with showers and changing rooms;
- A multi-purpose dojo/yoga room;
- A digital studio and recording studio;
- A series of office spaces and meeting rooms, available for small enterprises on long-term leases and short-term hire;
- Two retail units, one possibly to sell local products specifically.

The proposals focussed on two principle elements:

1. The repair, restoration and sympathetic adaptation of the front portion of the building – the recognisable, art deco-style iconic portion which contained the foyer, projection room, offices, shops, stairs and toilets; and
2. The demolition of the rear portion of the building – the much less aesthetically pleasing roughcast rendered block with its blocked up openings and deteriorating roof which contained the bulk of the auditorium and the stage - and the building of a new 'rear portion' on the same footprint, but shorter in height.

To the front range, all the structure, fabric and most of the original finishes have been retained, repaired and restored. This included the concrete frame and brick infill construction; the curved-fronted turrets and retail units and the curved canopy; the faience tiling and Crittall-style metal-framed windows to the elevations; the terrazzo flooring, timber-frame glazed doors to the foyer; the chevron geometric decoration to the foyer cornice; the terrazzo flooring and curved glass to the retail units; the cream and eau de nil green colour scheme; the black and white checkerplate floor tiles; and the Britannic Bold font lettering, synonymous with the art deco period, on the foyer floor spelling out 'PLAZA'.

The front range has been subject to some adaptation, including the insertion of new toilet facilities; the enclosure of the base of the two staircases in order to provide protected means of escape; the removal of some of the internal partitioning to the first floor; the removal of the tight stairs between the first and second floors; and the removal of the auditorium concrete stepped floor structure which oversailed the first floor below.

Additionally, the work provided the insertion of a glazed external screen to the first floor central recess which had always been an external balcony.

To the rear portion, the works removed the concrete frame, rendered brick infill panels, concrete floor and asbestos cement sheet roof, and replaced it with a new steel-framed structure with infill panels of masonry, glass and lightweight framing; a reinforced concrete ground floor; composite concrete upper floors; and a concrete flat roof.

However, the above being said, the works retained the first two bays of the two side elevations beyond the faience cladding, and to re-render them, as these two bays form the external façade of the stairs and toilets either side of the inner foyer.

However, two aspects of the works require a different approach. They relate to:

- The relocation of some rooftop plant;
- The insertion of a security shutter within an existing opening.

During the detailed design of the mechanical and electrical plant, it was realised that extra kit would be required and that this kit would need to be located outside the designed plant zone. Because of this, a proposal was developed to place some additional kit outside the plant enclosure.

An existing opening in part of the retained front range of the building, behind the faience-clad frontage and within the rendered side, facing south east onto Eagle Street, used to provide entry and egress into the foyer of the original building. The proposals still have that being used for emergency egress. However, it is currently a deep and covered recess directly open to the street. The Council is concerned that vagrants will see this recess as an ideal sleeping spot, that it would be a place where people could hide within and attack passers-by from, and a place where anti-social behaviour can be undertaken with little oversight. As a result, the Council wish to insert a security screen within the facade.

4.0 SECTION 4 – EXPLANATION OF THE PROPOSALS

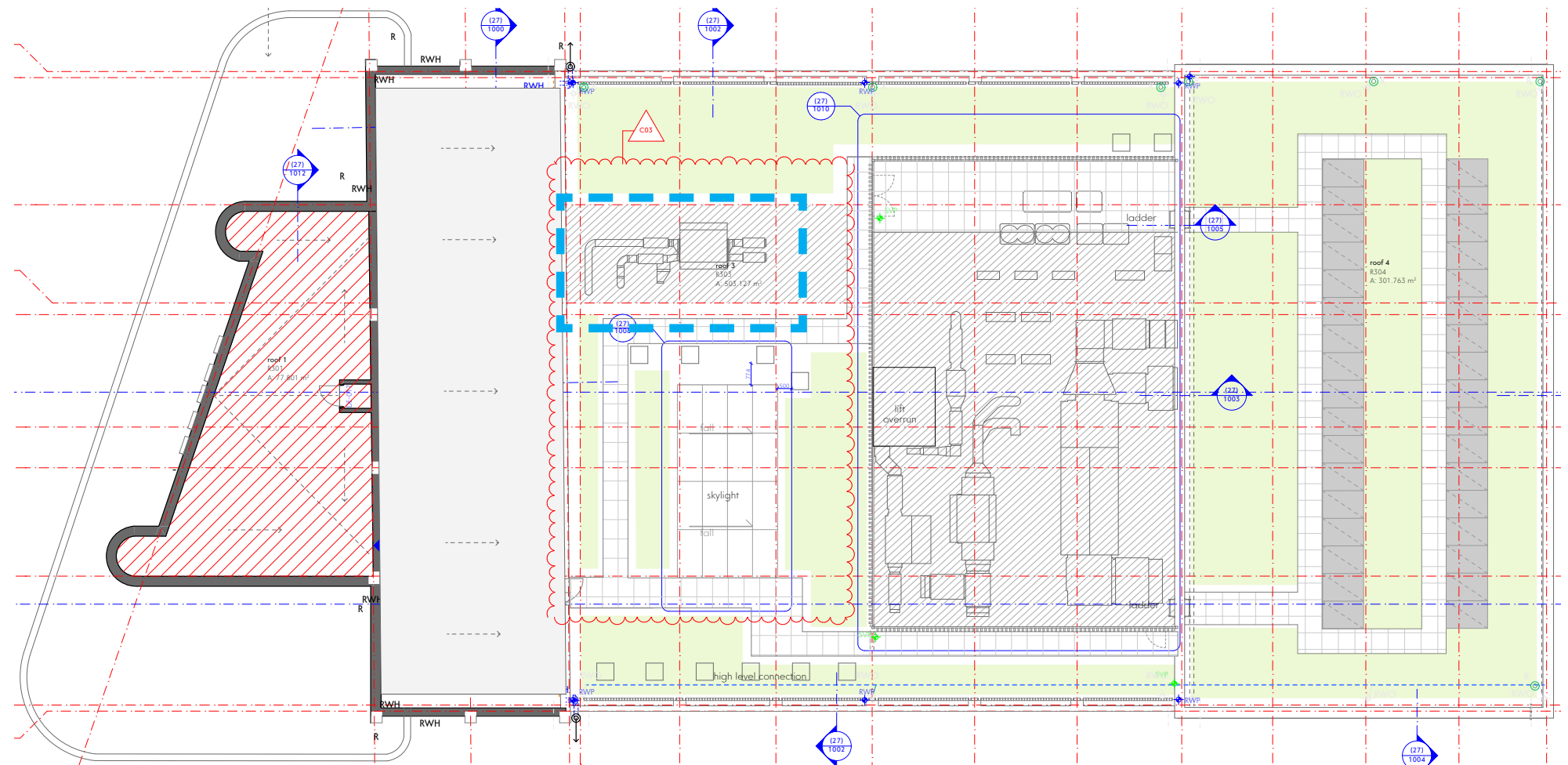
4.1 RELOCATE ONE OF THE MVHR UNITS ON THE ROOF

For the consented scheme proposed roof plan, a zone was identified within the centre of the new extension building within which it was anticipated that all of the roof-top mechanical plant would be located. This area was to be set back from all edges of the building, however, was also to be shielded from any possible view from the street with louvred screening. There was no indication of there being any mechanical plant outside this enclosure.

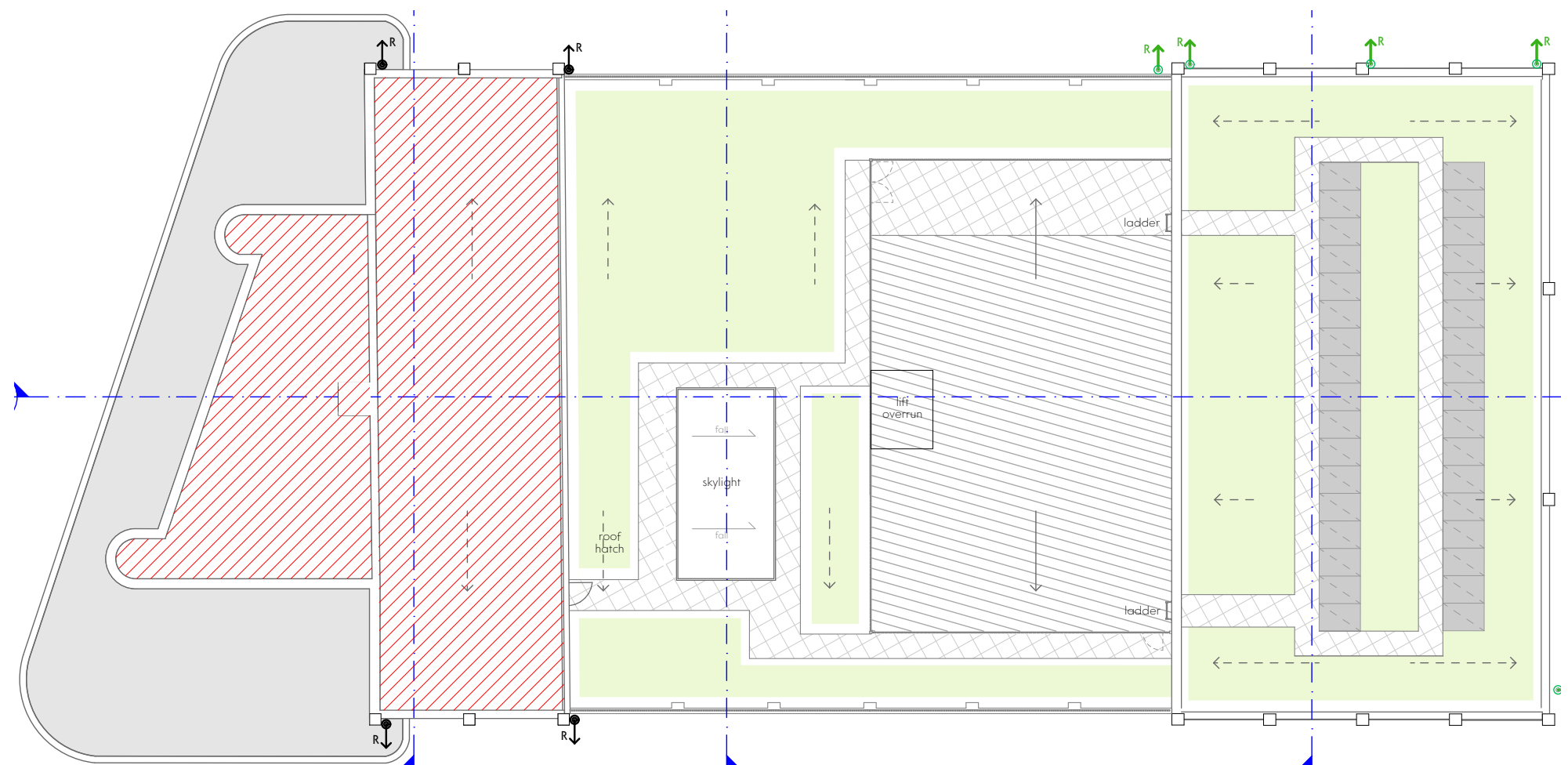
We are herewith seeking consent to locate one Mechanical Ventilation Heat Recovery Unit, with its affiliated ductwork, on the same section of roof as the rest of the plant, however, in an area not enclosed within louvred screening. This will also be in an area closer to the rear wall and new roof to the inner lobby section of the existing retained part of the building. It will be on the less visible Eagle Mews side of the building, however, will be set far enough into the plan of the roof to considerably limit any chance of it being visible from the ground.

Please refer to the drawings on this page to show the variation, which include the consented west elevation and the new proposed west elevation. The MVHR Unit is identified within a cyan blue box on the Proposed New Roof Plan.

These same Consented Proposed Roof Plan and Proposed New Roof Plan are included, in full, on the next two pages.

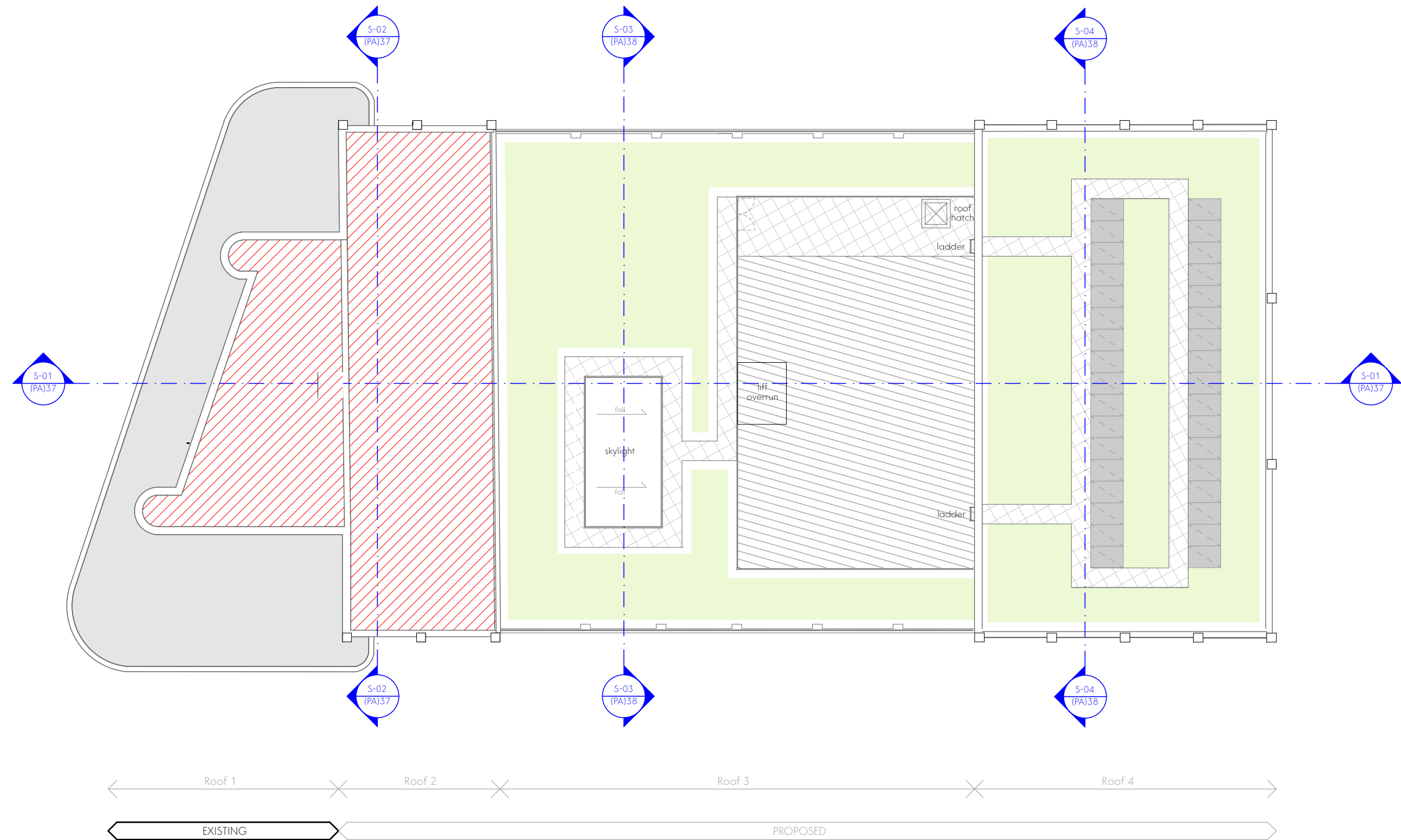


Proposed New Roof Plan - see dotted blue box to location of plant kit



Consented Proposed Roof Plan

4.1.1 CONSENTED PROPOSED ROOF PLAN



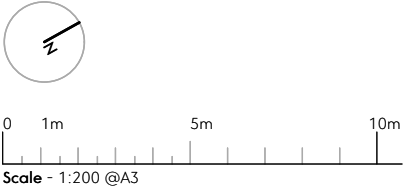
PROPOSED ROOF PLAN
Scale 1:200

This drawing is the property of GWP Architecture. Copyright is reserved by them and the drawing is issued on the condition that it is not copied, reproduced, retained, or disclosed to any unauthorised person, either wholly or in part, without the consent in writing of GWP Architecture.

All drawings and specifications should be read in conjunction with the project health and safety plan, any possible conflicts should be presented to the Planning Coordinator.

All work to be carried out in accordance with current Building Regulations. Contractors must verify all dimensions at the job before commencing any work or making shop drawings.

Written dimensions should be taken.
Do not scale off drawing.
Do not take digital dimensions from this drawing.
Any discrepancies to be reported to the Architect.



- Green Roof
- Solar panel
- Plant Area
- Access Walkway
- New membrane roof to ex-surfaces

P08	18.07.19	Updated position of plant louvres	CT	RT
P07	10.07.19	General Updates	DT	RT
P06	21.06.19	General Updates	UKD	RT
P05	31.05.19	General Updates	DT	RT
P04	28.05.19	update as per planning consultant's comments	CT	RT
P03	24.05.19	roof hatch and ladders added	DT	RT
P02	07.05.19	General Updates	DT	RT
P01	02.05.19	Draft Issue	DT	RT
Rev	Date	Comment	Dr	Ch



CHARTERED ARCHITECTS
INTERIOR DESIGNERS
SPACE PLANNERS
PROJECT MANAGERS
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

15th Brunel House 2 Fitzalan Road Cardiff CF24 0EB
+44(0)2921 303 322 (H) | #Contract Fax (H)
architecture@gwp-arch.com | www.gwp-arch.com

GWP Job Reference PPT

Job Title Plaza Port Talbot

Client Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

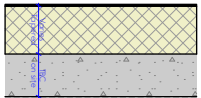
Proposed Roof GA Plan

Name PPT-GWP-01-03-DR-A-(PA)-0034

Scale	1:200@A3	Revision	08
Drawn/Checked	DT/RT	First Issue	01.05.2019
Drawing Status	S - Work in Progress		

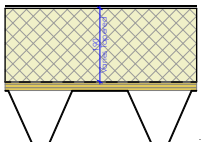
BMcloud: BM/Server-HP - BMcloud Basic for ARCHICAD 22/13511902-GWP-01-XX-M3-A-18-PortTalbot-P01

Roof 1 - NBS J31/130A



- Hydrotech waterproofing system. Installed in full accordance with recommendations. Taken up and over top of parapet and lapped with waterproofing/roof finishes as indicated. System bonded to up stands. Proprietary collars used to roof penetrations, vent ducts and SVP's.
- Tapered insulation to specialist details to achieve U -value $\leq 0.18 \text{ W/m}^2\text{K}$.
- Vapour control layer
- Existing slab stripped and repaired inline with roof system manufacturers requirements.

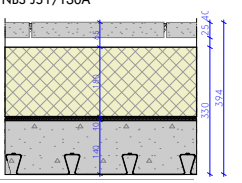
Roof 2 - NBS J31/130A



- Hydrotech waterproofing system.
- Installed in full accordance with recommendations.
- Taken up and over top of parapet and lapped with waterproofing/roof finishes as indicated. System bonded to up stands. Proprietary collars used to roof penetrations, vent ducts and SVP's.
- Tapered insulation to specialist details to achieve U -value $\leq 0.18 \text{ W/m}^2\text{K}$.
- Vapour control layer
- Min 18mm th. Exterior Ply (Details by SE)
- D137 Tota roof deck (Details by SE)
- Suspending ceilings as noted on (35) series drawings

Anticipated Acoustic Result N/A
U-Value => 0.18 W/m2K
60 Minute Fire Resisting Construction

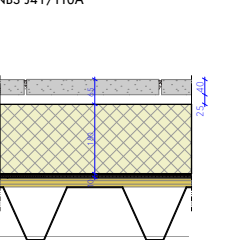
Roof 3
1120 171 1001



- 40mm Concrete Paving tbc
- Alumac harmer uni ring paving support
- Alumac Hydrodrain sub-surface drainage layer,
- Alumac Polyethylene Separator Sheet,
- 180 mm Alumac XPS Extruded Polystyrene thermal insulation, thickness to achieve U value 0.18 W/m²K
- Insulation to take plant loading
- Hydragard protection Sheet,
- Hydrotech 6125 waterproofing system incorporating Flexlath F polyester reinforcement
- 140mm thick composite concrete deck (TBD by SE)

Anticipated Acoustic Result N/A
U-Value => 0.18 W/m2K
60 Minute Fire Resisting Construction

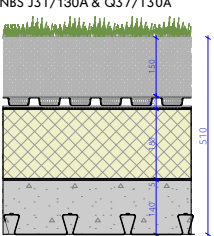
Roof 4



- 40mm Concrete Paving tbc
- Alumasc harmer uni joint paving support
- Alumasc Hydrodrain sub-surface drainage layer,
- Alumasc Polyethylene Separator Sheet
- 180 mm Alumasc XPS Extruded Polystyrene thermal insulation,
- thickness to achieve U value 0.18 W/m²K
- Hydroguard protection Sheet
- Hydrotech 6125 waterproofing system incorporation
- FlexFlash F polyester reinforcement
- Min 18mm th. Exterior Plp (Details by SE)
- D137. Tota roof deck (Details by SE)

Anticipated Acoustic Result N/A
U-Value => 0.18 W/m2K
60 Minute Fire Resisting Construction

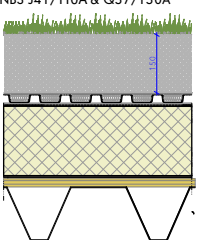
Roof 3



- Extensive Biodiverse Planting Scheme, as specified by the roofing sub contractor. (Subject to planning approval)
- 150mm (TBC) Blackdown Biodiverse Substrate
- Filter Fleece
- Blackdown 20mm Drainage Layer,
- Blackdown FF300 Moisture retention fleece
- Infill Drainage Layer with Blackdown Crushed Brick Mix
- Blackdown FF Filter sheet, loose laid over the drainage layer, with 150mm unseeded laps.
- Root Resistant Waterproofing
- 180 mm Alumatic Extruded PolyStyrene thermal insulation, thickness to achieve U value of 0.18 W/m2K
- Insulation to take plant loading
- 2mm Hydrogard 20 ANTI ROOT protection layer (2mm)
- 3mm (min) 4000 425 waterproofing membrane incorporating Flexiflex F polyester reinforcement
- 140mm thick composite concrete deck (TBD by SE)

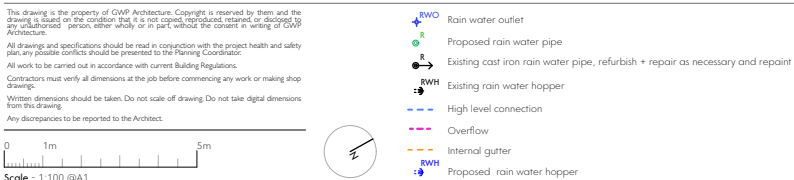
Anticipated Acoustic Result N/A
U-Value => 0.18 W/m2K
60 Minute Fire Resisting Construction

Roof 4



- Extensive Biodiverse Planting Scheme, as specified by the roofing sub contractor. (Subject to planning approval)
- 150mm (TBC) Blackdown Biodiverse Substrate
- Filter Fleece
- Blackdown 20mm Drainage Layer,
- Blackdown PF300 Moisture retention fleece
- Infill Drainage Layer with Blackdown Crushed Brick Mix
- Blackdown FF Filter sheet, loose laid over the drainage layer, with 150mm unsealed laps,
- Root Resistant Waterproofing
- 180 mm Alumatic Extruded Polystyrene thermal insulation , thickness to achieve U value of 0.18 W/m²K

Anticipated Acoustic Result N/A
U-Value => 0.18 W/m2K



LATEST CONSTRUCTION ISSUE					
C04	20.10.21	Latest Construction Issue	FF	BP	
C03	01.12.20	MVHR unit added	DT	BP	
C02	09.10.20	'Roof 2' and 'Roof 4' amended	DT	BP	
C01	20.08.20	Construction Issue	DT	BP	
P08	22.07.20	Projecting volume encasement removed following Value Engineering	CT	BP	
P07	04.12.19	Green roof type update	BP	BP	
Rev	Date	Comment	D	Ch	

GWP ref PPT

Job Title Plaza Port Talbot

Client Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Proposed Roof Plan	
Name PPT-GWP-01-03-DR-A-(00)-0004	
Scale 1:100@A1	Revision C04
Drawing Status A - Final Data	
First Issue 30.07.2019	

QWP

CHARTERED ARCHITECTS
INTERIOR DESIGNERS
SPACE PLANNERS
PROJECT MANAGERS
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

1 Brunel House 2 Fizan Road, Cardiff CF24 0EB
+44(0)2921 303 322 (H) | #Contact Fax (F)
hitecture@qwp-arch.com | www.qwp-arch.com

4.1.3 PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE BUILDING FROM THE STREET SHOWING THAT THE UNIT IS NOT VISIBLE FROM THE STREET



View from Talbot Road / Eagle Street junction to South of building



View from Eagle Street to East of building



View from Talbot Road to West of building



View from Eagle Street to North East of building

4.2 INSERT SECURITY SHUTTER INTO EXISTING OPENING

An existing opening in part of the retained front range of the building, behind the faience-clad frontage and within the rendered side, facing south east onto Eagle Street, used to provide entry and egress into the foyer of the original building. The proposals still have that being used for emergency egress. However, it is currently a deep and covered recess directly open to the street. The Council is concerned that vagrants will see this recess as an ideal sleeping spot, that it would be a place where people could hide within and attack passers-by from, and a place where anti-social behaviour can be undertaken with little oversight. As a result, the Council wish to insert a security screen within the facade.

The shutter would be of powder-coated steel, coloured RAL 7004 to match the render around it. The motor and enclosure for the rolled up shutter would all be inside the opening, meaning that what would be visible from outside would be the shutter and the frames and guide channels only.

There was no shutter on the opening when the building was initially reviewed and the design developed, however, evidence internally suggests that there was a roller shutter on the inside of the opening, just as the proposed. No photography prior to our involvement with the project has been found which shows this opening.

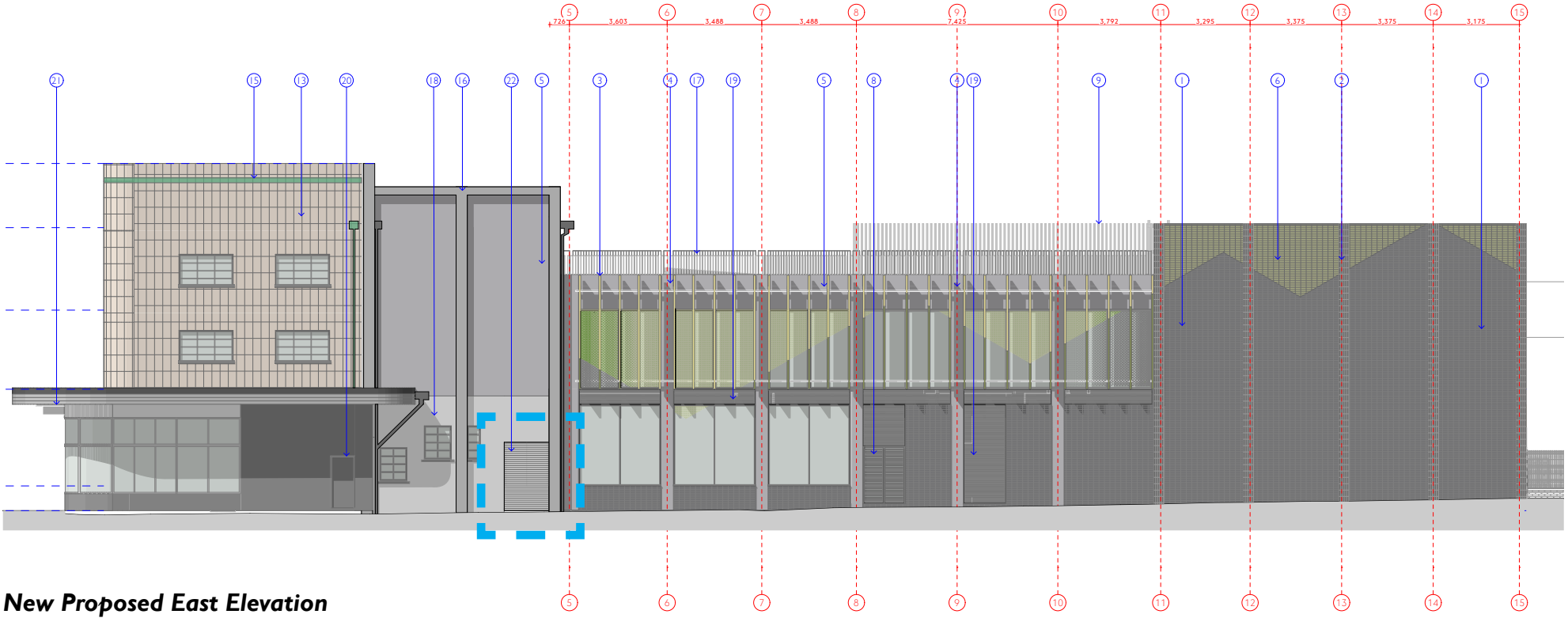
The shutter will be open at all times that the building is in use and open, as it is an emergency egress. It will be closed at night and at times the building is closed which, as a community facility, will not be often. Because the opening is a emergency exit, the roller shutter mechanism is linked to the fire alarm system, however; and there is also provision for emergency egress, should someone be inside when the door is closed; as well as the provision for opening from the outside with a key.

Please refer to the drawings on this page to show the Consented Proposed East Elevation (bottom) and the New Proposed East Elevation (top) which shows the location and context of the proposed security shutter.

These same Consented Proposed East Elevation and New Proposed East Elevation are included, in full, on the next two pages.

Also on following pages are:

- The Consented Proposed Ground Floor Plan, showing the location of the opening;
- Detailed Proposed Plan, Section & Elevation for the shutter;
- The Manufacturer’s Detailed Plan & Section for the shutter;
- A photograph of the installed security shutter;
- Photographs of the opening and the installed security shutter.



New Proposed East Elevation



Consented Proposed East Elevation

The floor plan illustrates a complex building layout with a grid system (A-K, 1-15) for reference. The plan is divided into several functional zones, each with specific rooms and areas:

- Entrance and Reception:** Includes the main entrance (R001, A: 56.755 m²), entrance lobby (R002, A: 65.167 m²), and reception 1 (R042, A: 8.550 m²).
- Studios and Control Room:** Features studio 1 (R024, A: 65.272 m²), studio 2 (R020, A: 23.117 m²), and a control room (R019, A: 11.361 m²).
- Hall and Corridors:** A large hall (R022, A: 302.547 m²) and several corridors (R021, R023, R025, R026, R027, R028, R029, R030, R031, R032, R033, R034, R035, R036, R037, R038, R039, R040, R041, R042, R043, R044, R045, R046, R047, R048, R049, R050, R051, R052, R053, R054, R055, R056, R057, R058, R059, R060, R061, R062, R063, R064, R065, R066, R067, R068, R069, R070, R071, R072, R073, R074, R075, R076, R077, R078, R079, R080, R081, R082, R083, R084, R085, R086, R087, R088, R089, R090, R091, R092, R093, R094, R095, R096, R097, R098, R099, R100, R101, R102, R103, R104, R105, R106, R107, R108, R109, R110, R111, R112, R113, R114, R115, R116, R117, R118, R119, R120, R121, R122, R123, R124, R125, R126, R127, R128, R129, R130, R131, R132, R133, R134, R135, R136, R137, R138, R139, R140, R141, R142, R143, R144, R145, R146, R147, R148, R149, R150, R151, R152, R153, R154, R155, R156, R157, R158, R159, R160, R161, R162, R163, R164, R165, R166, R167, R168, R169, R170, R171, R172, R173, R174, R175, R176, R177, R178, R179, R180, R181, R182, R183, R184, R185, R186, R187, R188, R189, R190, R191, R192, R193, R194, R195, R196, R197, R198, R199, R200, R201, R202, R203, R204, R205, R206, R207, R208, R209, R210, R211, R212, R213, R214, R215, R216, R217, R218, R219, R220, R221, R222, R223, R224, R225, R226, R227, R228, R229, R230, R231, R232, R233, R234, R235, R236, R237, R238, R239, R240, R241, R242, R243, R244, R245, R246, R247, R248, R249, R250, R251, R252, R253, R254, R255, R256, R257, R258, R259, R260, R261, R262, R263, R264, R265, R266, R267, R268, R269, R270, R271, R272, R273, R274, R275, R276, R277, R278, R279, R280, R281, R282, R283, R284, R285, R286, R287, R288, R289, R290, R291, R292, R293, R294, R295, R296, R297, R298, R299, R300, R301, R302, R303, R304, R305, R306, R307, R308, R309, R310, R311, R312, R313, R314, R315, R316, R317, R318, R319, R320, R321, R322, R323, R324, R325, R326, R327, R328, R329, R330, R331, R332, R333, R334, R335, R336, R337, R338, R339, R340, R341, R342, R343, R344, R345, R346, R347, R348, R349, R350, R351, R352, R353, R354, R355, R356, R357, R358, R359, R360, R361, R362, R363, R364, R365, R366, R367, R368, R369, R370, R371, R372, R373, R374, R375, R376, R377, R378, R379, R380, R381, R382, R383, R384, R385, R386, R387, R388, R389, R390, R391, R392, R393, R394, R395, R396, R397, R398, R399, R400, R401, R402, R403, R404, R405, R406, R407, R408, R409, R410, R411, R412, R413, R414, R415, R416, R417, R418, R419, R420, R421, R422, R423, R424, R425, R426, R427, R428, R429, R430, R431, R432, R433, R434, R435, R436, R437, R438, R439, R440, R441, R442, R443, R444, R445, R446, R447, R448, R449, R450, R451, R452, R453, R454, R455, R456, R457, R458, R459, R460, R461, R462, R463, R464, R465, R466, R467, R468, R469, R470, R471, R472, R473, R474, R475, R476, R477, R478, R479, R480, R481, R482, R483, R484, R485, R486, R487, R488, R489, R490, R491, R492, R493, R494, R495, R496, R497, R498, R499, R500, R501, R502, R503, R504, R505, R506, R507, R508, R509, R510, R511, R512, R513, R514, R515, R516, R517, R518, R519, R520, R521, R522, R523, R524, R525, R526, R527, R528, R529, R530, R531, R532, R533, R534, R535, R536, R537, R538, R539, R540, R541, R542, R543, R544, R545, R546, R547, R548, R549, R550, R551, R552, R553, R554, R555, R556, R557, R558, R559, R560, R561, R562, R563, R564, R565, R566, R567, R568, R569, R570, R571, R572, R573, R574, R575, R576, R577, R578, R579, R580, R581, R582, R583, R584, R585, R586, R587, R588, R589, R590, R591, R592, R593, R594, R595, R596, R597, R598, R599, R600, R601, R602, R603, R604, R605, R606, R607, R608, R609, R610, R611, R612, R613, R614, R615, R616, R617, R618, R619, R620, R621, R622, R623, R624, R625, R626, R627, R628, R629, R630, R631, R632, R633, R634, R635, R636, R637, R638, R639, R640, R641, R642, R643, R644, R645, R646, R647, R648, R649, R650, R651, R652, R653, R654, R655, R656, R657, R658, R659, R660, R661, R662, R663, R664, R665, R666, R667, R668, R669, R670, R671, R672, R673, R674, R675, R676, R677, R678, R679, R680, R681, R682, R683, R684, R685, R686, R687, R688, R689, R690, R691, R692, R693, R694, R695, R696, R697, R698, R699, R700, R701, R702, R703, R704, R705, R706, R707, R708, R709, R710, R711, R712, R713, R714, R715, R716, R717, R718, R719, R720, R721, R722, R723, R724, R725, R726, R727, R728, R729, R730, R731, R732, R733, R734, R735, R736, R737, R738, R739, R740, R741, R742, R743, R744, R745, R746, R747, R748, R749, R750, R751, R752, R753, R754, R755, R756, R757, R758, R759, R760, R761, R762, R763, R764, R765, R766, R767, R768, R769, R770, R771, R77

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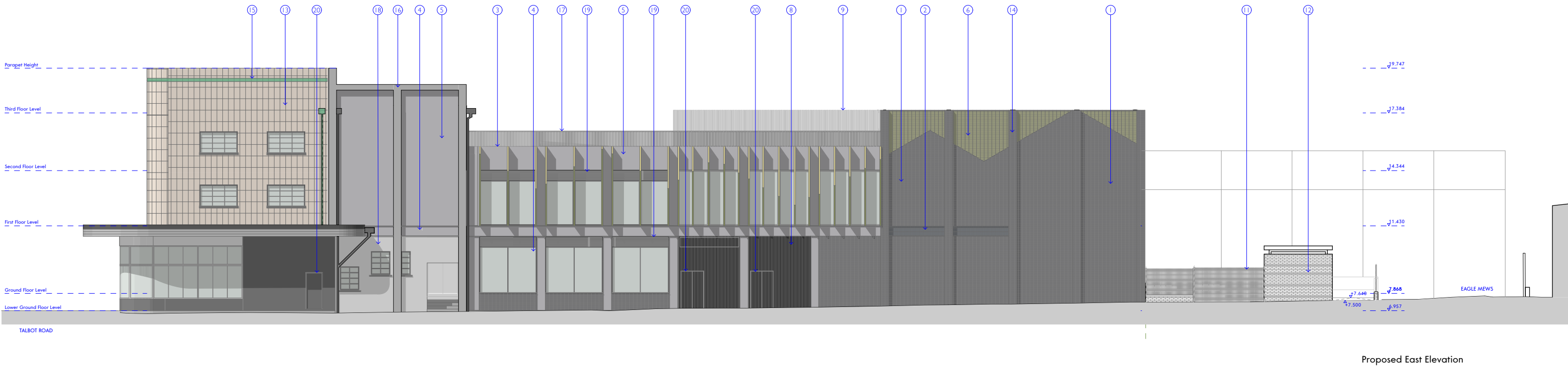
All drawings and specifications should be read in conjunction with the project health and safety plan, any possible conflicts should be presented to the Planning Coordinator.

All work to be carried out in accordance with current Building Regulations.

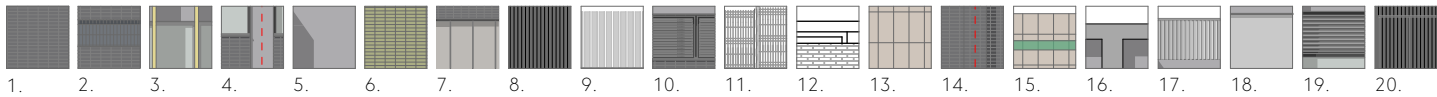
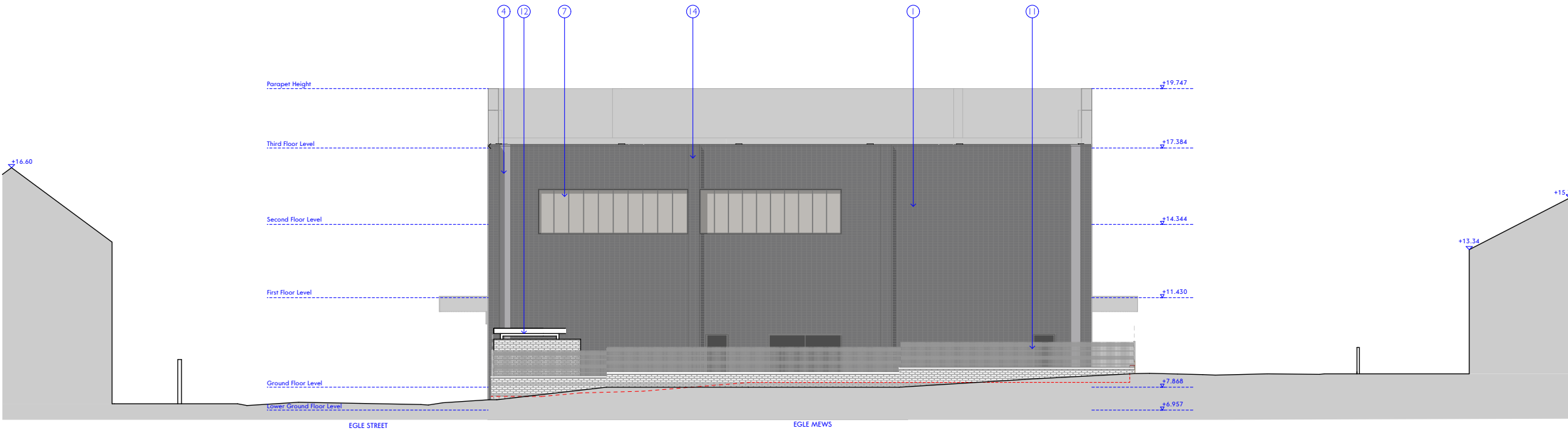
Contractors must verify all dimensions at the job before commencing any work or making shop drawings.


13

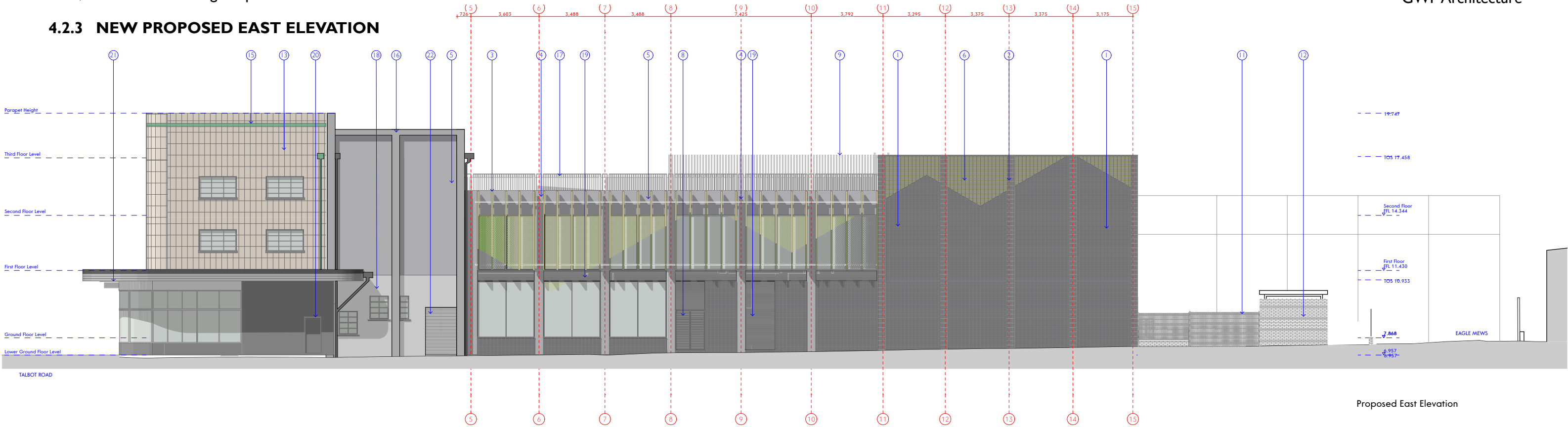
4.2.2 CONSENTED PROPOSED EAST ELEVATION



- GENERAL MATERIALS KEY**
- 1. slate grey/blue bricks stack bond with slate grey/blue-coloured mortar
 - 2. slate grey/blue bricks doublesoldier course with slate grey/blue-coloured mortar
 - 3. vertical louvre system
 - 4. powder coated aluminium
 - 5. propriety self coloured grey render
 - 6. feature brick detail
 - 7. polycarbonate system glazing
 - 8. louvred screen with integral doors
 - 9. louvred rooftop plant screening
 - 10. spandrel panels
 - 11. security fence on brick wall
 - 12. bin store
 - 13. existing faience tiles
 - 14. brickwork ribs
 - 15. existing faience tiles in Eau de Nil colour
 - 16. existing elements to be retained
 - 17. metal railing 1100mm high
 - 18. re-rendering of existing surface
 - 19. louvre vents
 - 20. flood resistant door



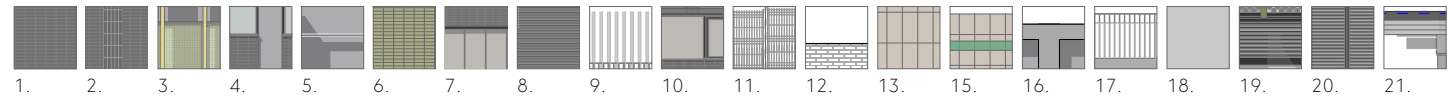
4.2.3 NEW PROPOSED EAST ELEVATION



Proposed East Elevation

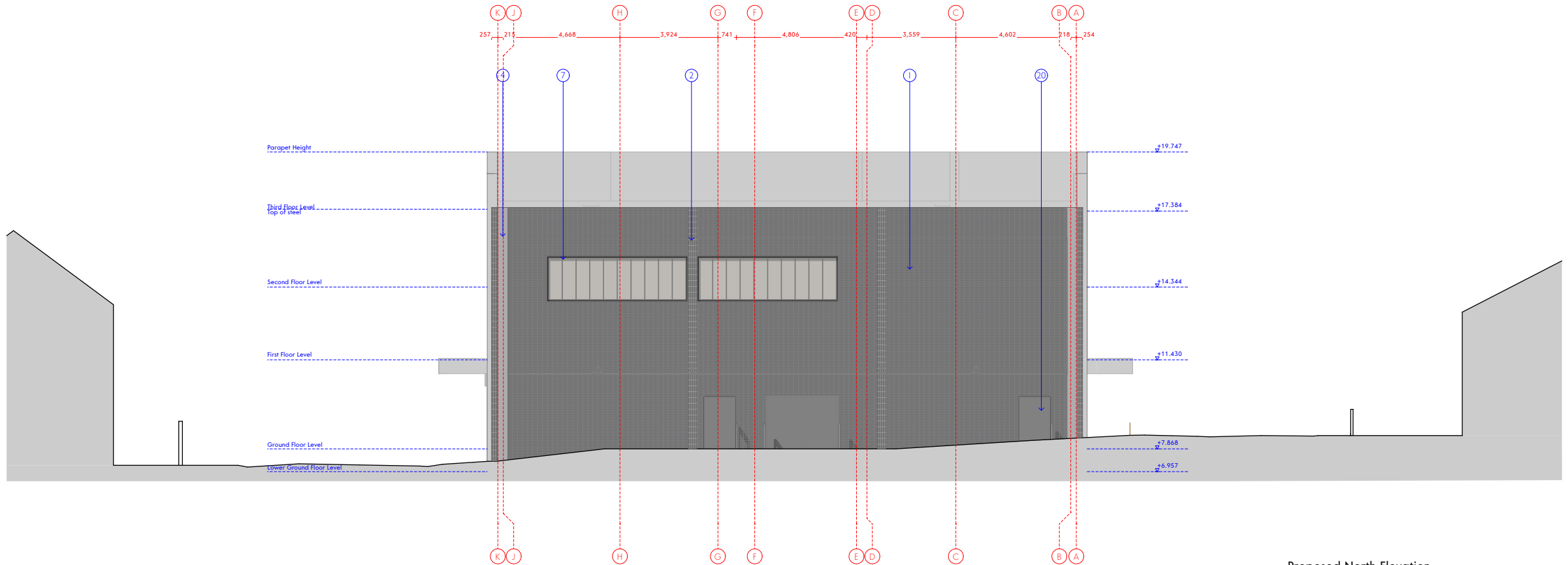
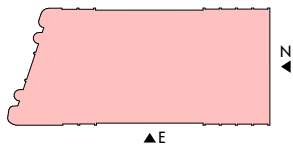
GENERAL MATERIALS KEY

1. slate grey/blue brick slips stack bond with slate grey/blue-coloured mortar (F10/130)
2. slate grey/blue brick slips laid in a soldier stack bond 'piers' with slate grey/blue-coloured mortar (F10/130)
3. vertical brise soleil 'fins' (L10/670)
4. powder coated aluminium panel/recess pier. (H92/115)
5. propriety self coloured grey render. (M21/210)
6. feature colour brickslip & mortar (F10/130)
7. polycarbonate system glazing (H10/120A)
8. louvred screen with integral flood doors (L20/285A)
9. louvred rooftop plant screening
10. spandrel panels (L10/330)
11. security fence on brick wall (Q40/127)
12. bin store
13. existing faience tiles
15. existing faience tiles in Eau de Nil colour
16. existing concrete frame elements to be retained
17. metal railing 1100mm high (Z11)
18. re-rendering of existing surface (M20/160A)
19. louvre vents (L10/660)
20. flood resistant door (L20/285A)
21. metal downstand to canopy replicated using like-for-like detailing - Ref (21) 0026
22. security roller shutter



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Scale - 1:100 @A1



Proposed North Elevation

LATEST CONSTRUCTION ISSUE			
CD4	04.11.21	Latest Construction Issue	DE RT
CD3	20.10.21	Latest Construction Issue	FF BP
CD2	14.09.21	Security roller shutter added, key updated	ES BP
CD1	27.07.20	Plant room door omitted and louvers extended	CT BP
PD4	22.07.20	Projecting column encasement removed following Value Engineering	CT BP
Rev	Date	Comment	Dr Ch

GWP Ref	PPT
Job Title	Plaza Port Talbot
Client	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

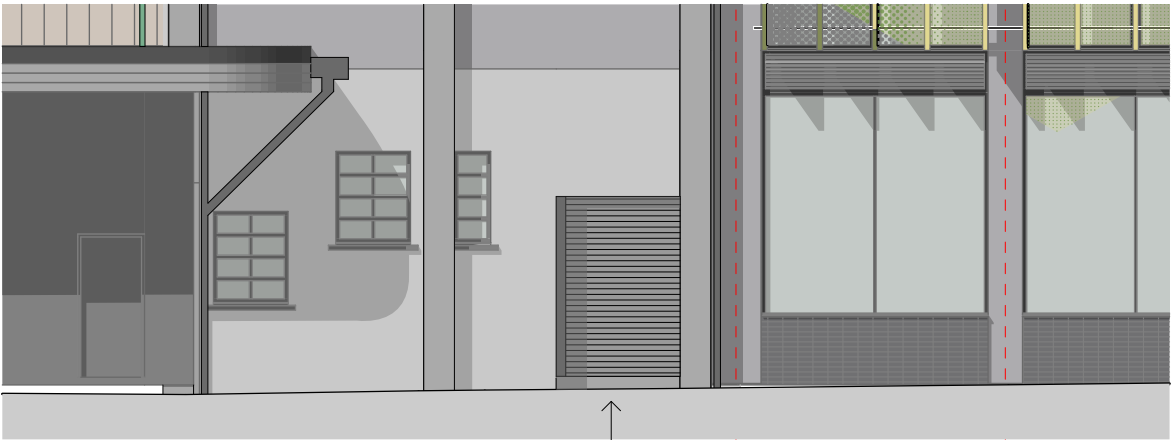
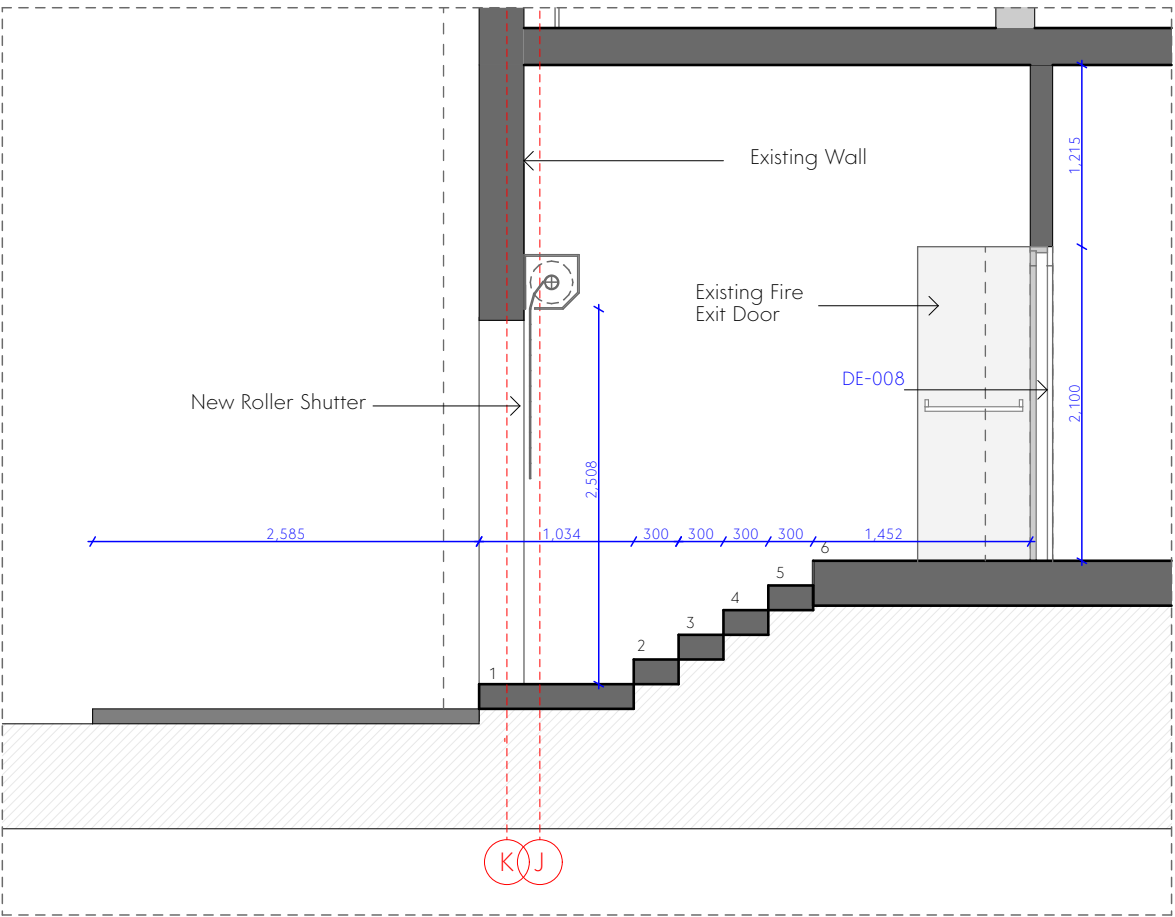
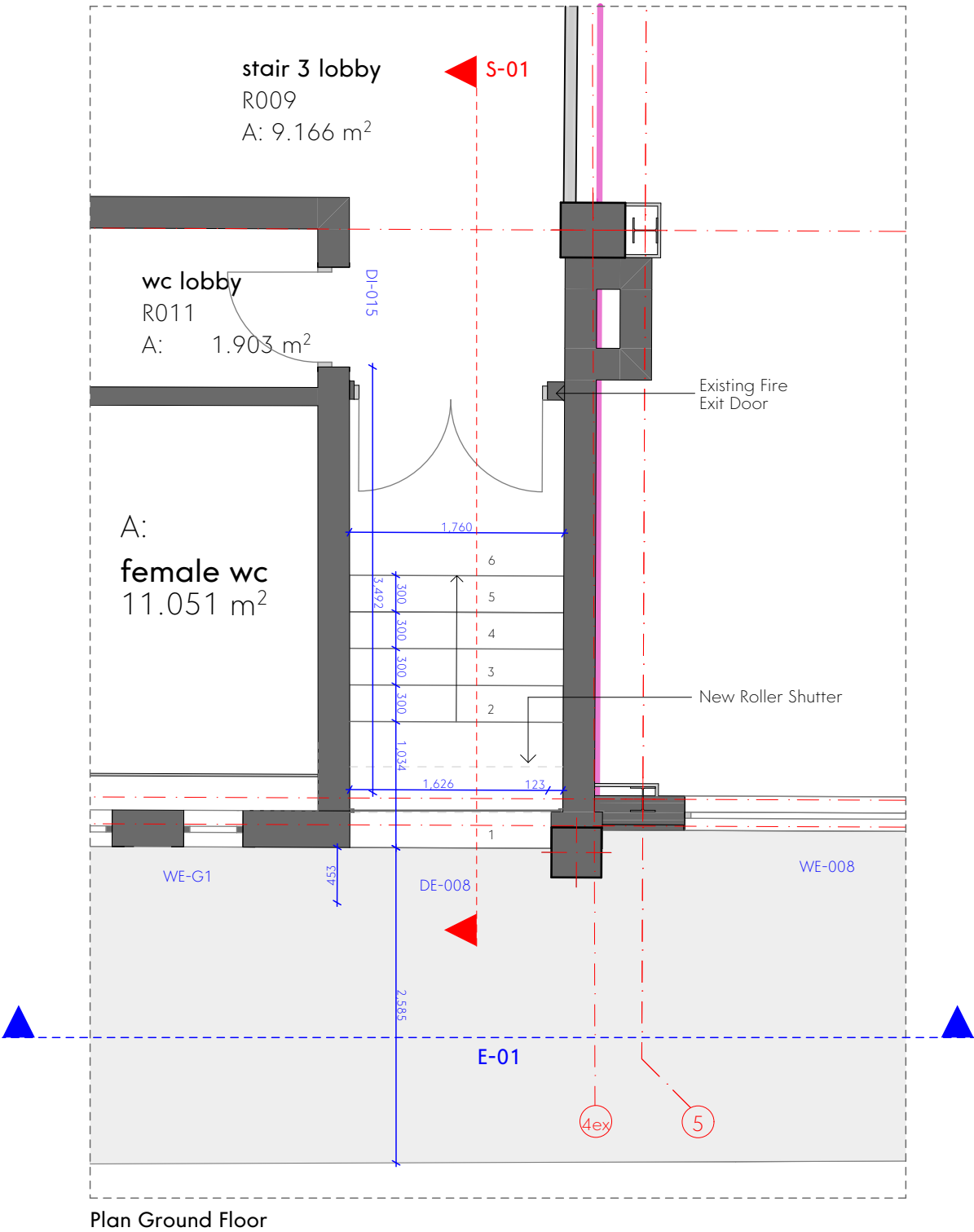
Proposed North & East Elevations			
Name	PPT-GWP-01-XX-DR-A-(00)-0005		
Scale	1:100@A1	Revision	C04
Drawn/Checked	DT / RT	First Issue	31.07.2019
Drawing Status	A - Final Data		



CHARTERED ARCHITECTS
INTERIOR DESIGNERS
SPACE PLANNERS
PROJECT MANAGERS
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

15th Brunel House 2 Fitzalan Road Cardiff CF24 0BB
+44(0)2921 303 322 (n) | eContact Fax (f)
architectural@gwp-arch.com | www.gwp-arch.com

4.2.4 NEW PROPOSED PLAN, SECTION & ELEVATION FOR THE SHUTTER



Scale - 1:100 @A3

Proposed Roller Shutter
See Manufacturers Drawing:
BC-PPT-RSD-0004
Shutter Colour RAL 7004

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All work to be carried out in accordance with current Building Regulations.

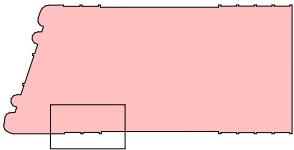
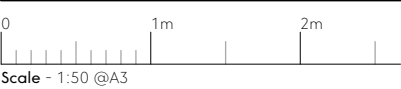
Contractors must verify all dimensions at the job before commencing any work or making shop drawings.

Written dimensions should be taken.

Do not scale off drawing.

Do not take digital dimensions from this drawing.

Any discrepancies to be reported to the Architect.



Key Plan

Rev	Date	Comment	Dr	Ch



CHARTERED ARCHITECTS
INTERIOR DESIGNERS
SPACE PLANNERS
PROJECT MANAGERS
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

15th Brunel House 2 Fitzalan Road Cardiff CF24 0EB
+44(0)2921 303 322 (t) | #Contact Fax (f)
architecture@gwp-arch.com | www.gwp-arch.com

GWP Job Reference PPT

Job Title Plaza Port Talbot

Client
Neath Port Talbot County
Borough Council

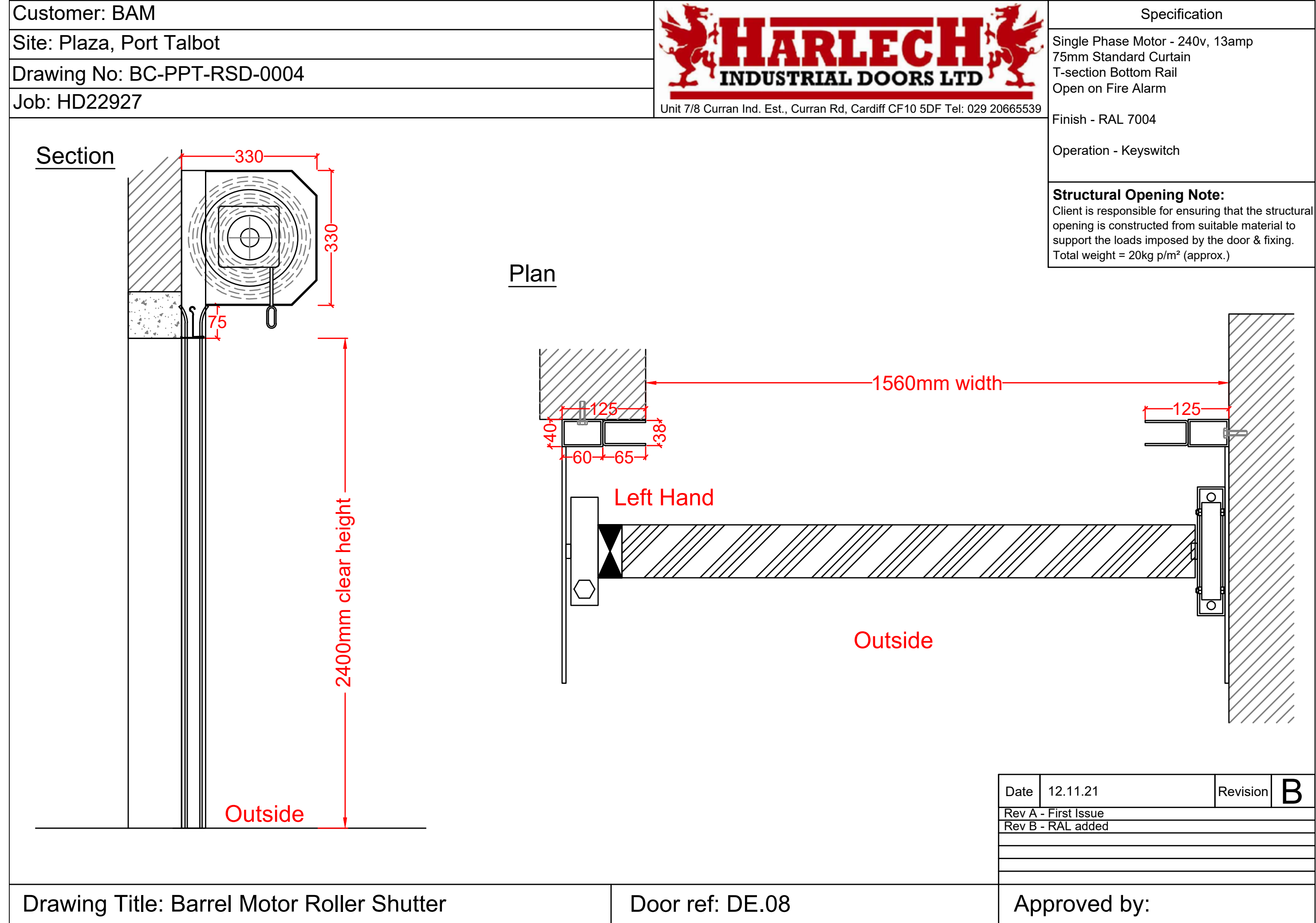
External Shutter Details

Name PPT-GWP-01-XX-DR-A-(100)-1010

Scale 1:50	Revision C01
Drawn/Checked DC/BP	First Issue 17.11.21
Drawing Status A -	

BMcloud - DESKTOP-HZCIC0HA - BMcloud Basic for ARCHICAD 25/Plaza Port Talbot - (385)1902-GWP-01-XX-M3-A-18-PortTalbot-P05

4.2.5 MANUFACTURER’S DETAILED PLAN & SECTION FOR THE SHUTTER



4.2.6 PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE OPENING (LEFT) AND THE INSTALLED SECURITY SHUTTER (RIGHT)



**4.2.7 PHOTOGRAPH OF PREVIOUS SITUATION
INTERNALLY**



5.0 SECTION 5 – ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT OF THE PROPOSALS

5.1 Impact on the Exterior

The location of one of the Mechanical Ventilation Heat Recovery Unit, with its affiliated ductwork, in an area not enclosed within louvred screening might have put at risk it being visible from the street.

However, the proposed location is close to the rear wall and new roof to the inner lobby section of the existing retained part of the building, which is not on the edge of the building, but relatively central on plan, so it will be not be visible from the street, due to perspective and the relatively narrow streets.

No view of it is possible from Talbot Road, due to the much taller faience-clad facade wall in front of it, nor, for the reason above, from Eagle Street.

The kit will be further back from the centre of the roof from all of the main views from Talbot Road and Eagle Street, but on the less visible Eagle Mews side of the building, however, will be set far enough into the plan of the roof to reduce any chance of it being visible from the ground from Eagle Mews.

The installation of the shutter will have an impact on the exterior of the building, as we will now see the shutter, when it is closed, rather than the recess and steps beyond. However, the shutter will be open at all times that the building is in use and open, as it is an emergency egress; and only closed at night and on the few days that the venue is closed. At these times, the shutter will be contained within the box hidden inside the head, and all that will be visible is the frames and channels.

This being said, when open (with frame visible) or closed (with frame and shutter visible), the appearance of the shutter is understated and blends well into the surrounding elevation, with it being the same colour as the walls. It is, in essence, like having a door in an opening, as with all of the other openings to the building, which is open most of the time.

Insofar as one's appreciation of the whole facade is concerned, one will barely notice the shutter and/or frame.

5.2 Impact on the Setting

As a result of the statements made above, the two changes will have no real impact on the setting of the building and its appreciation within its context.

5.3 Impact on the Interior

The only impact which the location of the Heat Recovery Unit will have on the interior is a positive one, as it will minimise the amount of internal ductwork required to link the internal spaces with the unit.

The installation of the shutter will have an impact on the interior of the building, as we will now see the shutter, head container box and frames, when it is closed, and the head container box and frames, when it is open. However, this impact is not deemed to be of much consequence, nor in a location which people will often pass through. It is a circulation area, and one which will only ever be accessed in the event of an emergency, with a door between the circulation corridor and the access to the toilets beyond.

5.4 Impact on the Significance of the Asset

The Heat Recovery Unit would be located on a new roof area and would therefore have no impact on the building's evidential value. Given the fact that it will not be visible from the street, the aesthetic value of the installation will not be impacted. There is also nothing about the building's historic or communal value which will be impacted by the installation.

There was no shutter on the opening when the building was initially reviewed and the design developed, however, evidence internally suggests that there was a roller shutter on the inside of the opening at some stage, just as the proposed. No photography prior to our involvement with the project has been found which shows this opening; however, it is likely, for the same reason as one is proposed there now, that this would have been the case.

There is no reason to believe that the installation of the shutter will impact the historic value of the building, not least as there might have been a roller shutter there in the past. No evidential value would be lost by its insertion, aside from the fact that a few fixings will be inserted into the wall. The impact on the aesthetic value of the building is minimal, and not even necessarily detrimental. Indeed, it would also limit the opportunity for anti-social behaviour to damage the fabric of the building within the recess, causing vandalism and applying graffiti to it. The impact on the building's communal value, however, will be a positive one, as the recess will not be used by vagrants, not used as a hiding place to attack passers-by from; nor a place where anti-social behaviour can be undertaken with little oversight.

6.0 SECTION 6 – JUSTIFICATION & MITIGATION BEHIND THE PROPOSALS

The location of one of the Mechanical Ventilation Heat Recovery Unit, with its affiliated ductwork, in an area not enclosed within louvred screening is simply a matter of practicality which will have little or not impact on the building and the views of the building from the street. It will also have no impact at all on the retained historic elements of the existing building.

The Council wishes to insert a security shutter into this recess as it is concerned that vagrants will see this recess as an ideal sleeping spot, that it would be a place where people could hide within and attack passers-by from, and a place where anti-social behaviour can be undertaken with little oversight. From a safety perspective, this is a significant concern. It would also limit the opportunity for anti-social behaviour to damage the fabric of the building within the recess.

The visual impact to the facade is minimal and, indeed, is not necessarily a negative one. Nothing is lost with its insertion, and it is removable, so the installation would be reversible.

7.0 SECTION TWO – UNDERSTANDING THE HERITAGE

7.1 Location & Setting

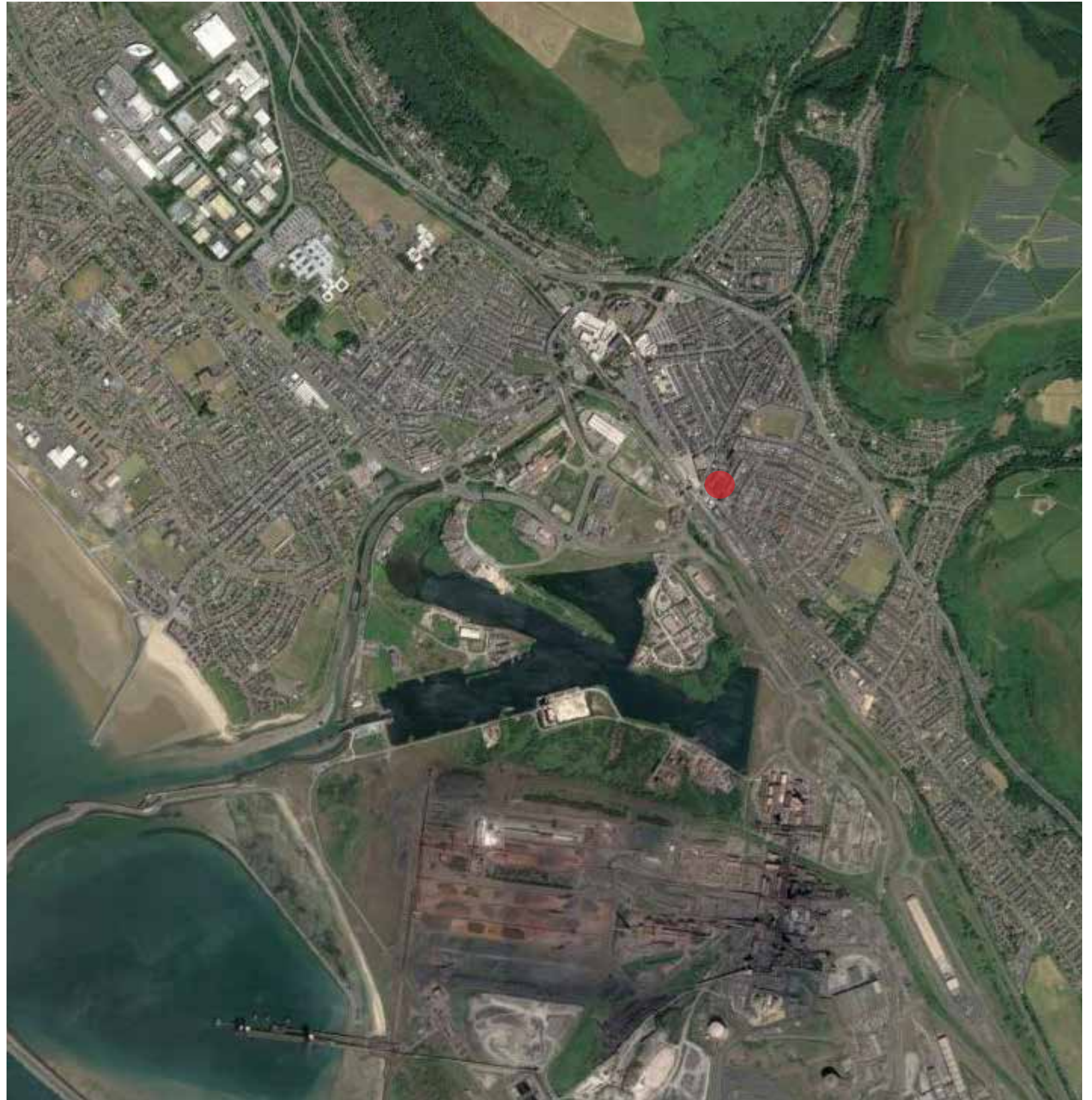
The development site's address is:

Plaza Cinema
14 Talbot Road
Port Talbot
SA13 1DT

The development site is within the centre of Port Talbot, on the corner between Talbot Road (the A48) and Eagle Street.

Its 'front' entrance elevation onto Talbot Road faces south south west and its longer elevation onto Eagle Street faces south east east.

Its OS Eastings is 276856; its OS Northings is 189606 and its OS Grid reference is SS768896.



GoogleEarth aerial photograph of Port Talbot with the Plaza highlighted in red

7.2 Use

The Plaza was built in 1939 as a single-screen cinema, opening on 25th March 1940.

The early 1980s saw the building being run as a combined cinema and bingo club.

It closed as a cinema in June 1983, with its use changing exclusively to that of a bingo club.

The bingo club closed after 2 years in July 1985.

Its use then changed back to that of a single-screen cinema, re-opening on 18th October 1985.

In 1989 the interior of the cinema was converted into a multi-screen operation.

It closed as a cinema on 4th January 1999.

The building has been empty and unused ever since.

In 2009 Neath Port Talbot Council acquired the cinema with the aim of safeguarding the building and developing a future use.

7.3 Age

The Plaza Cinema was built in 1939, although building works were not fully completed at that time due to materials restrictions as a result of the outbreak of the Second World War. The almost finished cinema finally opened in 1940.

Building works were completed in 1950 when the building received its Plaza sign, faience tiles and Crittall-style metal framed windows 10 years after opening.

Its use changed to that of a combined cinema and bingo club in the early 1980s, and became just a bingo club in 1983, however, this change of use did not result in any major alterations to the interior of the building.

After re-opening as a cinema in 1985, the single-screen cinema was converted into a multi-screen operation in 1989, the year of its 50th anniversary. The stalls were converted into three separate screens with a fourth screen in the circle. It had reduced to three screens prior to closing. The cinema finally stopped operating and closed in 1999, having limped along to its 60th anniversary.



Plaza exterior approx 1950 - building receiving sign, tiles and windows 10 years after opening (source: Port Talbot Historical Society)

7.4 Statutory Designations

7.4.1 Listing

The Plaza Cinema is protected by a grade II listing, which was designated on 4 August 1999 and last amended on 7 September 2000.

The listing (with a Cadw ID No. of 22136) states:

History

Built in 1939. Opened Easter 1940, but due to war completion delayed.

Exterior

Modernist style with Art Deco influences. Front elevation in cream faience tiling with band in eau-de-nil; leadwork scallops below capping of parapet; tiles painted black beneath canopy. Projecting central block with partially obscured tripartite window (metal glazing bars), projecting turrets to ends; side elevation to R has 2 broad windows on 2 levels (metal glazing bars where visible); side elevation to L has 3 windows at upper level, and broad window below. Walls to sides, screening body of cinema, also faced in faience. Original full-width canopy, entrance doors boarded over; to each side, doors and semi-circular convex shopfronts. Plain roughcast side elevations with tall ribs and small windows infilled with concrete. Large lean-to to rear.

Interior

Outer doors lead to lobby, terrazzo steps (inscription "Plaza"), lead to central group of 3 sets of doors with horizontal glazed panels, long brass handles, glazing above; similar single set of doors to each side of central group. Foyer has cornices with art-deco decoration, cream and eau-de-nil floor tiles; stair to each side, ticket booth at entrance to auditorium. Auditorium has ceiling with square panels, some with ventilator grilles, some (original?) lamps; moulded cornice. Moulded proscenium surround to stage and screen area. Balcony area retains its seating; seating removed from stalls.

Reasons for Listing

Listed as a very rare example in Wales of a building type which expresses the distinctive architectural vocabulary of 1930s cinema architecture, and whose interior has escaped subdivision or major changes.

7.4.2 Other Statutory Protection

The site is not situated within a Conservation Area, nor is it designated with any other specific protection.



7.5 Outline History of Port Talbot

Much of the information within this section has been established thanks to various sources, particularly:

- The Port Talbot Historical Society's website 'historicalporttalbot.com';
- John Newman's 'The Buildings of Glamorgan';
- The 'wikipedia.org' website.

Whilst the area around Port Talbot has presented evidence of human occupation as far back as the Bronze Age, with farming ditches discovered on the side of Mynydd Margam from 4,000 BC, and suggestions of Roman presence, the present town grew out of the medieval borough of Aberafan and the surrounding communities of Baglan, Bry, Cwmafan and Margam, which was noted for its fine Cistercian abbey, founded in 1147. Margam Abbey was dissolved in 1535-7 and, in 1750, it passed to the Talbot family of Lacock Abbey.

The English antiquarian John Leland made an extensive journey through Wales c.1536-39 of which he recorded an itinerary. He passed through Aberafan, which he describes as a 'poor village' surrounded by barren ground, though he also describes the area as heavily wooded, not much of which remains today. He mentions the use of the river mouth as a port. His portrayal of Aberafan as a small, struggling village suggests that the port was not in great use, especially as traffic to and from Margam Abbey would have ceased following its dissolution in 1536.

The Talbot family, who were related to the pioneer photographer, William Henry Fox Talbot, became major local landowners. As well as a patrons of Margam Abbey, in 1834-6, Christopher Rice Mansel Talbot (1803-1890), a Liberal Member of Parliament for Glamorgan from 1830 until his death, had Margam Castle built, using Thomas Hopper as his architect. In 1941, the Castle became uninhabited, however, in the early 1970s, Margam was bought by the Local Authority and became a country park.

Although the monks of Margam mined coal, and Lord Mansel's Forge was in existence by 1717, the major industrial development of the area began when the English Copper Company set up a works at Taibach in 1770. In 1820, the Margam Tinplate Works opened near Aberafan, whilst, at the same time, iron production was beginning in the lower Afan Valley. In 1835, the English Copper Company moved to Cwmafan, and their works at Taibach were taken over by the Vivian Family of the Hafod and Morfa Copperworks in Swansea. This rapid growth of industry meant that the old medieval harbour, the Bar of Afan, was no longer adequate and, in around 1836, Christopher Rice Mansel Talbot saw the potential of his property as a site for an extensive ironworks, which opened in early 1831, joined with others to create a new dock complex. The main line of the South Wales Railway reached what was being called Port Talbot in 1850, with Talbot as the Chairman and major shareholder.

The first reference to the name 'Port Talbot' dates to 1837, as the name of the new docks built on the south-east side of the river Afan by the Christopher Rice Mansel Talbot.

Modern Port Talbot is a town formed from the merging of multiple villages, including Baglan, Margam, and Aberafan, which was the historic centre, where the Afan River exits from the mountains. Over time, the name came to be applied to the whole of the emerging conurbation.

By the end of the 19th century, iron and steel production had overtaken copper as the main local product, with coal also a major export. By 1898, the docks once more required upgrading; Miss Emily Talbot led these upgrades. In 1906, the Port Talbot Steelwork opened, and, in 1916, the Margam Works began production. By 1947, the site had been developed into an integrated steelwork of international importance. At the same time, the BP chemical plant was opened up at Baglan Bay. Since the Second World War, Port Talbot has been, with Llanwern, one of the two major sites for the rationalised steel industry in Wales.

The building of the M4, in 1966, and of the Aberafan Centre, in the early 1970s, meant that most of the old town of Aberafan was lost.

As a result, the town's population had soared and, in the early 1950s, the vast Sandfields estate was created to house the influx of workers and their families.

Whilst Port Talbot is synonymous with industry, it has a long and distinguished history of culture and invention, with the 20th and 21st centuries seeing major figures in the acting world coming out of Port Talbot, including Richard Burton, Anthony Hopkins and Michael Sheen.



7.6 Appraisal of Historic Maps

The earliest historical map found dates to 1877. Here, the Mansel Tinplate Works, the Afan-vale Tinplate Works and the Port Talbot Chemical Works are all evident, along with the Port Talbot Docks and the South Wales Railway. All of this is a little to the north west of a small sets of structures clustered around the junction of the main South Wales Railway line, running south east to north west, and a secondary line running from the north to the docks in the south. At this crossing were the remains of a Chapel, the Port Talbot Train Station, a series of signal posts, the Eagle Inn, a Smithy and two clusters of buildings called 'Upper Court' and 'Lower Court'. This is the area which was to become the centre of Port Talbot town and the location of the Plaza Cinema. Running parallel with the main railway line was a road which would become know at Talbot Road and/or the A48.

By 1897, much of the space in between the Works and the Railway Crossing of 1877, had been eaten up by residential development, however, there remained only a small cluster of structures around the railway crossing. Adding to those structures identified on the 1877 plan, by 1897, are a Hotel, a Post Office, a building on the corner of the new Eagle Street which we assume to be the Custom House, a Saw Mill and one or two unidentified buildings. Further to the south, on the other side of the main railway line, the Taibach Tin Plate Works had been developed. Whilst in 1877, there appeared to be only one railway line to the north-south run, by 1897, there appears to be three new line terminating just short of the crossing, which bend to the east and form the new Port Talbot Railway. These three line terminated right by the Central Station and the Hotel, just to the north of what would become Talbot Road, but was now Court-Ucha Terrace. It is the termination point of these three railway line which was to become the site of the Plaza Cinema 42 years later.

By 1914, the area around the future site of the Plaza Cinema was considerably more developed again. To the east and north east of the site, a vast new residential development had been built, in the form of terrace housed streets, with a series of more considerable detached houses north of the Port Talbot Railway line. The site still included the Central Station and the adjacent hotel, by now known as 'Temperance Hotel', and the building on the corner of Eagle Street now identified as Custom House, and, to the east was now a long terrace of houses facing onto Eagle Street and the Central Station and railway line terminations of the Port Talbot Railway. Adding to this, were the Grand Hotel and Police Station to the west of the site, the New Theatre and a number of Schools to the east, and a large new Athletic Ground to the north. The site of the future Plaza Cinema remained railway land and the termination point of what appears now to be four lines.

In the year that the Plaza Cinema was built, 1939, a further map was produced, however, the Plaza had clearly yet to be constructed as it does not appear. There had not been considerable change between 1914 and 1939 (unlike the periods between 1877 and 1897 and 1897 and 1914), however, a series of new buildings had appeared along Talbot Road and just behind, and to the west of, the Central Station.



Map of area, dated **1877**, with future site of Plaza identified as a red dot



Map of area, dated **1897**, with future site of Plaza identified as a red dot



Map of area, dated **1914**, with future site of Plaza identified as a red dot



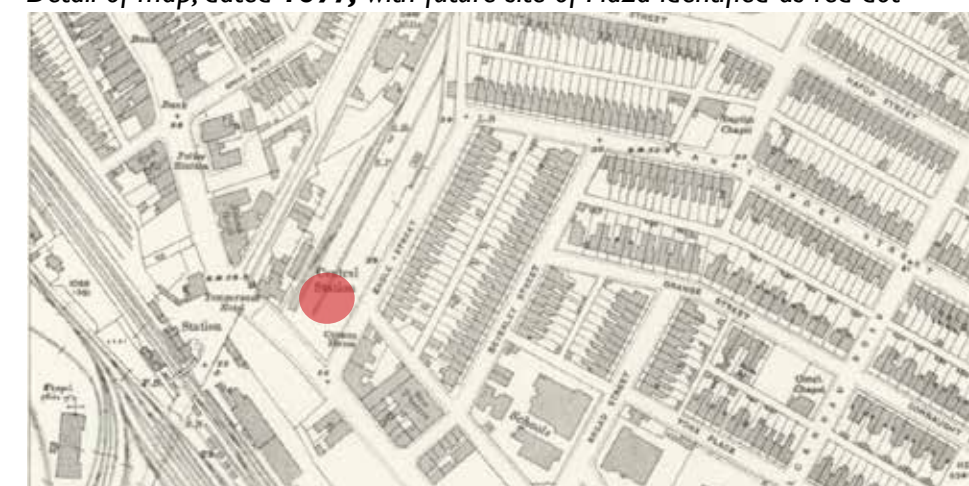
Map of area, dated **1939**, with future site of Plaza identified as a red dot



Detail of map, dated **1877**, with future site of Plaza identified as red dot



Detail of map, dated **1897**, with future site of Plaza identified as red dot



Detail of map, dated **1914**, with future site of Plaza identified as red dot



Detail of map, dated **1939**, with future site of Plaza identified as red dot

The 1947 map is the first to show the Plaza Cinema on the junction of Talbot Road and Eagle Street. It is known that the frontage of the Plaza followed the line of Talbot Road when it was built, and the building was never truly rectangular, so this map is a little inaccurate. However, the plan does show a section of the building at the rear with what appears to be a different roof form. Assuming that this is suggestive of the lean-to section of the roof to the north end, this would confirm that this rather strange anomaly in the roof form is likely to have been original and not an alteration.

What is particularly interesting about the 1947 map is the fact that the Plaza Cinema was, in 1947, surrounded by railway line termination points. The site, which was, from as far back as 1877 a railway siding and, by 1897, a railway termination point for three or four lines from the new Port Talbot Railway, was still serving the same purpose, however, a large isolated cinema building had been built on top of part of that land. The two railway lines which, in 1939, had terminated short of the end were still thus, and the two railway lines which had run up to the road were still thus, and ran all the way passed the north west elevation of the new Plaza Cinema, sandwiched between it and the Railway Station. Two small railway structures appear just to the north of the Plaza.

By 2006, as seen in the GoogleEarth map, Eagle Mews had been formed and residential buildings had appeared where the two longer railway lines were to the west of the Plaza and light industrial buildings to the north, where the two terminated lines were.

Between 2006 and 2018, a new railway station had been built west of the Plaza and the road structure around this area had altered somewhat. It may also be the case that the Custom House on the corner of Talbot Road and Eagle Street was, between 2006 and 2018, demolished and replaced with a new, also called Customs House.



Map of area, dated **1947**, with the site of the Plaza identified as a red dot



Detail of map, dated **1947**, with the site of the Plaza identified as red dot



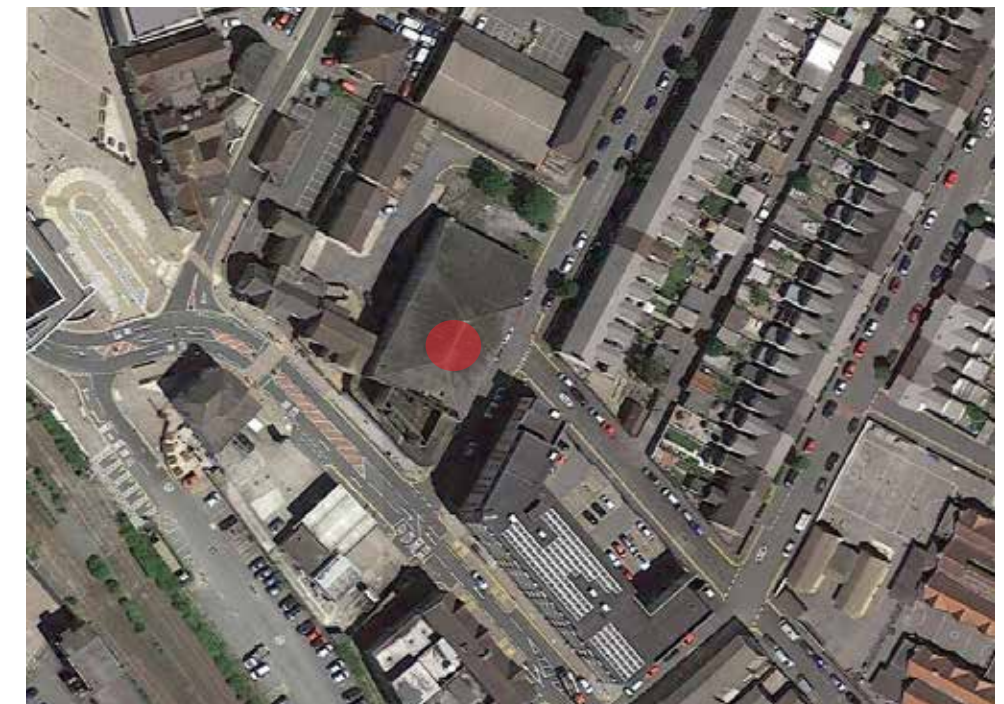
GoogleEarth aerial view, dated **2006**, with site of Plaza identified as a red dot



GoogleEarth detailed view, dated **2006**, with site of Plaza identified as red dot



GoogleEarth aerial view, dated **2018**, with site of Plaza identified as a red dot



GoogleEarth detailed view, dated **2018**, with site of Plaza identified as red dot

7.7 Setting and Context of the Plaza

The Plaza is in the centre of the town of Port Talbot, on the corner of Talbot Road (the A48) and Eagle Street.

Its 'front' entrance elevation onto Talbot Road faces south south west and its longer elevation onto Eagle Street faces south east east. Its 'rear' and other side elevation face onto Eagle Mews.

To the west of the site is the main railway station, which was redeveloped in 2016, and a bus station, along with an area of recently improved hard landscaping, forming a pedestrian friendly area. The Grand Hotel still overlooks this area.

To the east of the site is still a large residential area, with schools, which leads from the terrace on Eagle Street eastwards.

The north end of the site is laid out as a car park, rectangular in plan, with the light industrial buildings of the Royal Mail Group beyond.

To the south of the site, overlooked by the Plaza's front, and by far most prominent, elevation is a fairly wide pavement to Talbot Road (the A48) and a petrol station with forecourt and eatery. Further to the south is a narrow car park and then the main railway line.

The area is built up in all directions, however, not heavily built up in either density or height. There are a number of areas unbuilt upon land, be that road, car park, railway, bus station, pedestrian area, football ground or, a little further away to the south open land around the once-busy docks.

Most of the buildings around the Plaza are of a similar height. The result of this is that the Plaza's frontage is visible from a number of positions in the town, and is clearly apparent when driving through the main road of the town.

Whilst there remains the core of Victorian and Edwardian hotels and residential terraces and the one other listed building in the area (the grade II listed Grove Place Chapel, built in 1904, albeit listed principally for its interior), the architecture of the area is a rather varied, with many more recent inclusions to the streetscene, and with the Plaza as the one Art Deco style building in the area.



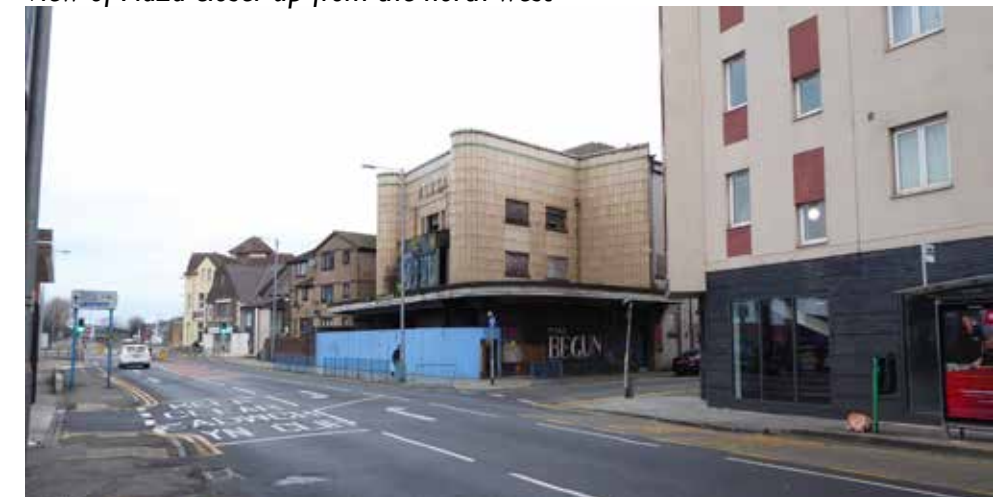
View of Plaza from the Railway Station to the north west



View of Plaza closer up from the north west



View of Plaza from down Talbot Road to the south east



View of Plaza closer up from the south east



View of Plaza from down Eagle Street to the north east



View of Plaza from Eagle Mews to the north west



View of Plaza from down side street off Eagle Street to the east



View of Plaza from hammerhead off Eagle Mews to the west

7.8 Historical Background of The Plaza and its context

Much of the information within this section has been established thanks to various sources, particularly:

- BBC Radio 4 documentary by Michael Sheen entitled 'Port Talbot Paradiso';
- The pamphlet 'Ninety Years of Cinema in Newtown, Welshpool and Port Talbot' by Brian Hornsey;
- The book 'Real Port Talbot' by Lynne Rees;
- The book 'The Actors' Crucible' by Angela V. John;
- The 'theguardian.com' website, article entitled 'Port Talbot's once grand Plaza cinema due for major revamp';
- The 'theguardian.com' website, article entitled 'Five of the best Art deco cinemas';
- The 'theguardian.com' website, article entitled 'The mogul's monuments – How Oscar Deutsch's Odeon cinemas taught Britain to love modern architecture' by Jonathan Glancey;
- The 'walesonline.co.uk' website, article entitled 'Port Talbot's derelict Plaza cinema to get a new lease of life';
- The 'walesonline.co.uk' website, article entitled 'The now derelict cinema where Richard Burton watched early movies is considered for £5m revamp';
- The 'bbc.co.uk' website, article entitled 'Port Talbot's Plaza cinema set for community hub revamp';
- The 'bbc.co.uk' website, article entitled 'Michael Sheen's Port Talbot Passion play 'crucifixion'';
- The 'bbc.co.uk' website, article entitled 'Banksy confirms Port Talbot 'Season's greetings' piece is his';
- The 'bbc.co.uk' website, article entitled 'Graffiti artist Ame72 in surprise Port Talbot street art';
- The 'spectator.co.uk' website, article entitled 'Welsh noir: How Port Talbot became the drama capital of Wales';
- The 'cinematreasures.org' website;
- The 'retrowow.co.uk' website;
- The 'parliament.uk' website;
- The 'historyandpolicy.org' website;
- The 'whateversleft.co.uk' website;
- The '28dayslater.co.uk' website;
- The 'derelictplaces.co.uk' website;
- The 'jannaludlow.co.uk' website, article entitled '1930s Cinemas – The age of the 'Odeon''!';
- The 'architecture.com' website, article entitled 'Art Deco' by Suzanne Waters;
- The 'screenonline.org.uk' website;
- The 'wikipedia.org' website;
- The 'imdb.com' website;
- The 'bing.com' website for images.

Many of the photographs within this section are also included courtesy of these websites.

Building work began on the Plaza in 1939, just before the outbreak of the second World War. The 1930s had been a boom time for cinemas and many large 'super-cinemas' were being built. The Plaza was the second super-cinema to be built in Port Talbot within 18 months, with 'The Majestic' on Forge Road being first.



Plaza exterior 27th July 1948 - not complete 8 years after opening due to material restrictions during WW II (source: cinematreasures.org)



Photograph taken of three unknown gentlemen on the top of the canopy roof, probably also dating to 1948

Original plans were for the Plaza to open in 1939, however, its opening was delayed until Easter 1940 due to materials restrictions as a result of the war. However, even by East 1940, works were still far from complete. However, despite this, the Plaza opened on the 25th March 1940 as a single-screen cinema originally seating around 1,467 people.

It was not until 10 years later, in 1950, that the building work was finished with the Plaza sign being erected, faience tiling added and Crittall-style windows installed.

The Plaza complex also had two shop units, one either side of the main entrance; a Ladies fashion boutique and an Italian café. The café was extremely popular with courting couples!



Plaza exterior approx 1950 - building receiving sign, tiles and windows 10 years after opening (source: Port Talbot Historical Society)



The Plaza in the early 1980s in its bingo days (source: Port Talbot Historical Society)

Despite extensive archival research, we are unable to confirm the name of the Plaza's architect, however, one suggestion has been Howard Williams.

However, the external architecture of the Plaza is very similar to that of many Odeon cinemas in the 1930s, with its curves, faience cladding and Crittall-style windows so we can at least tell where the architect might have taken inspiration from. Six such examples are pictured on this page.

The Odeon cinema chain was founded by Oscar Deutsch (1893-1941) in Birmingham in 1930 and the increasing popularity of cinema-going amongst the British public allowed the Odeon chain to grow to 258 cinemas throughout Britain by his death in 1941, more than half of them in new buildings. The company almost exclusively built its cinemas in an Art Deco style, and although no two cinemas were identical, the company's house style was bold and innovative incorporating soaring towers and fins; dynamic, curved canopies; facades clad in black and buff-coloured faience pierced with horizontal bands of coloured faience; curved and semi-circular wings; and extensive use of neon lighting.

The original 'odeons' were the popular amphitheatres of ancient Greece. The name 'Odeon' had been appropriated by cinemas in France and Italy in the 1920s, but Oscar Deutsch was to make it his own. Odeon, said his publicity team, stood for 'Oscar Deutsch Entertains Our Nation'.

Odeon Cinema, Sutton Coldfield built 1935-6 designed by Harry Weedon & Cecil Clavering soon after opening Grade II listed (source: bing.com images)



Odeon Cinema, Harrogate built 1936 designed by Harry Weedon now Grade II listed (source: bing.com images)



Odeon Cinema, Muswell Hill, London built 1935-6 designed by George Coles now Grade II listed (source: bing.com images)



Odeon Cinema, Kingstanding, Birmingham built 1935-6 designed by Harry Weedon & Cecil Clavering now Grade II listed (source: bing.com images)



Odeon Cinema, York built 1937 designed by Harry Weedon & Robert Bullivant shortly after opening now Grade II listed (source: jannaludlow.co.uk)

Odeon Cinema, Scarborough built 1936 designed by Cecil Clavering & Robert Bullivant now Grade II listed (source: bing.com images)

By the middle of the 1930s, some 18 million people a week in Britain went to the cinema and it was undoubtedly the most popular commercial leisure time activity of the decade. By the end of the 1930s, three national cinema chains had emerged to dominate British film exhibition:

- Associated British Cinemas opened 93 new cinemas in the decade, reconstructed several others, took over existing circuits (including a major competitor, Union Cinemas in 1937), and at maximum operated around 460 cinemas, the largest total of any company in this country. Its cinemas used a variety of names, with Regal, Rex and Savoy being the favourites.
- Gaumont entered the decade with a larger number of properties than ABC (including the Provincial Cinematic Theatres (PCT) circuit) and had less need to expand. Nevertheless, it constructed 51 new cinemas, including many opulent Gaumont Palaces. It had 303 cinemas by the end of the decade.
- The Odeon circuit opened its first sites in 1930, but rapidly expanded, adding 136 new cinemas and taking over nearly as many existing properties, reaching a total of 255 properties by 1940. The brainchild of entrepreneur Oscar Deutsch, it particularly epitomised the modern, streamlined look in architecture and fittings.

However, rather than being built for a large chain, the Plaza was built for the independent Cardiff syndicate of Woodavon Cinema Company (according to 'Ninety Years of Cinemas in Newtown, Welshpool and Port Talbot' by Brian Hornsey).

The Plaza opened on Monday, 25th March 1940 with the film 'Babes In Arms' starring Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland (poster to the right) with 'Girl from Rio' as the supporting feature. There was a full-page article in the Port Talbot Guardian on Friday, 22nd March 1940 announcing the opening of 'Port Talbot's New Luxury Super-Cinema'. The article (pictured to the right) went on to say:

"The new Port Talbot Cinema, the Plaza, which is one of the most imposing buildings in the town and commands a foremost position on Station Road, will be opened next week. This event, which has been eagerly awaited by the residents, will take place on Easter Monday with a brilliant opening show.

It is one of the most luxurious cinemas in the district and will bear comparison with the best in Wales. Its position near the Port Talbot General Railway Station could not be more admirably situated for the convenience of passengers on all omnibuses. The reinforced concrete canopy which surrounds the front of the building will be a welcome feature, as a protection for patrons in inclement weather.

The building, which is modern in design, has the main façade carried out in reconstructed stone. The main entrance is approached by a loggia flanked by two lock-up shops. After passing through the main entrance doors there is a spacious foyer complete with kiosk.

The foyer, tastefully decorated in various shades, with fibrous plaster enrichments in gold and green, has two staircases leading to the balcony, and three double entrance doors to auditorium. Cloak rooms and lavatories are arranged under the balcony staircases and entered from the foyer.

The floors of auditorium and balcony are finished in oregon pine flooring laid in mastic, and with boards secret nailed, and five frame Wilton carpet is laid to all gangways. The proscenium and window curtains are in velour of a petunia shade with satin screen curtain in old gold, and the seats are covered in moquette of a green shade. The interior decorations are treated to harmonise with the furnishings. A car park has been provided for the convenience of patrons.

The seat capacity is about 1,500, including 376 in the balcony.

THE GUARDIAN, FRIDAY, MARCH 22, 1940

PORT TALBOT'S NEW LUXURY SUPER-CINEMA

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THE SAND
USED IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW
PLAZA CINEMA, PORT TALBOT
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H. Gwynne Jones
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**MODERN BUILDING ON
MAIN ROAD**

BRILLIANT OPENING ON EASTER MONDAY

THE new Port Talbot Cinema, the Plaza, which is one of the most imposing buildings in the town and commands a foremost position on Station Road, will be opened next week. This event, which has been eagerly awaited by the residents, will take place on Easter Monday with a brilliant opening show.

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**Plaza Cinema
PORT TALBOT**

**All The Week
COMMENCING
Mon., March 25th**

**Mickey Rooney
AND
Judy Garland
IN
BABES
IN
ARMS**

WONDERFUL ENTERTAINMENT - MODERN COMEDY IN THE MODERN FORM.
SHOWING AT 11.15, 2.15, 5.15, 8.15

AND MOVIE & WARREN HILL
IN
Girl from Rio

SHOWING AT 11.15, 2.15, 5.15, 8.15

**Main Contractors for
New Plaza Cinema
Port Talbot**

GRIFFITH DAVIES & CO. LTD.

Paxton Yard :: SWANSEA

THOSE: THE SWANSEA GRAVELS - KEYSTONE, SWANSEA

WE HAVE BEEN PLEASED TO HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED WITH THE ERECTION OF THIS CINEMA AND TO HAVE ENJOINED ITS COMPLETION TO THE SATISFACTION OF ALL CONCERNED IN A LITTLE MANNER WITH PREVIOUS CINEMAS ERECTED BY US.

CONTRACTORS TO ALL MINISTERS, WAR DEPT., H.M. TREASURY OF WORKS, ETC.

NUMEROUS IMPORTANT BUILDINGS ERECTED IN SOUTH WALES BEING RECENT YEARS.

ALL MODERN PLANS AND MATERIALS TO COPE WITH ALL MODERN CONSTRUCTION EITHER SMALL OR LARGE.

Babes In Arms 1940 advert (source: Port Talbot Historical Society)

The frame work, staircases, floors, balcony and flat roofs are constructed in reinforced concrete, with wall panels in 1 in. cavity brickwork between piers and beams; while the roof is carried by steel trusses and covered with asbestos sheets, with concrete flat roof to main entrance and shops.

The operator's box and staff rooms are over the foyer and under the balcony: the placing of the box in this position gives a horizontal throw of the picture on to the screen and obviates distortion."

The newspaper article continues with further details of the ceiling, heating and ventilation, sound system (R.C.A.), opening attractions, the main contractors (Messrs. Griffith Davies and Co. Ltd., Paxton Yard, Swansea), reinforced concrete specialists (Messrs. A.G. Thompson and D. Manolopoulos Ltd., Gower Chambers, Swansea), brick suppliers (New Eagle and Bryn Brickworks Company Ltd., Lloyd's Bank Chambers, Port Talbot), heating system installers (Messrs. J.G. Proger and Sons Ltd., 17 St. Andrews Crescent, Cardiff) and suppliers of sand (Messrs. H. Gwynne Jones and Co., sand and gravel merchants, Port Talbot). With large adverts for all these companies.



12 - Babes in Arms poster 1939 (source: imdb.com)

The opening of the Plaza is documented in the actor Richard Burton's diary for Monday, 25th March 1940 as follows "Went down to Uncle Ben's this morning to fetch stones for the cement bed. Dilwyn came with me. Went to Majestic to see 'King of the River'. Plaza opened today and it was all crowded out". Although the Plaza was so busy on opening night that Richard Burton went elsewhere, his diary shows he made it to the Plaza later that year to see George Formby in 'Come on George'.

The Plaza opened as a single-screen cinema originally seating around 1,467 people with a proscenium opening of 38 feet in width. From the foyer there were two staircases leading up to the balcony, known as the circle. The seats in the main theatre were known as the stalls with different prices depending on where you sat – the front stalls were the cheapest because necks cricked looking up at the screen and the back stalls were the most expensive, a price courting couples were happy to pay!

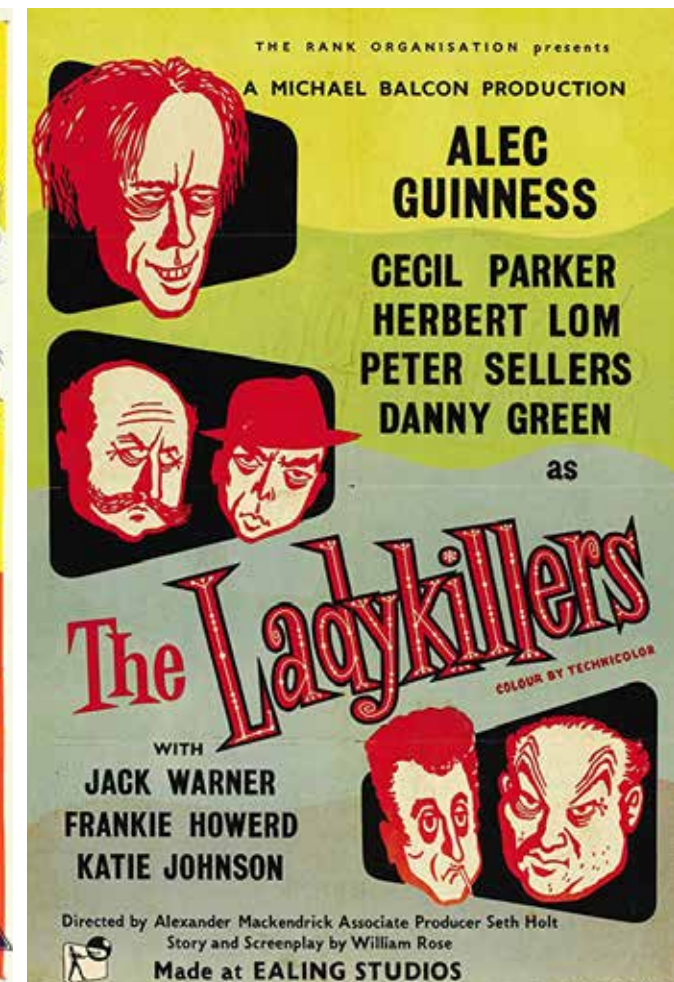
With the introduction of Cinemascope in the 1950s, a process that produces an image two-and-a-half times as wide as it is high, seating capacity was reduced to around 1,440 in order to provide good sightlines of the new large screen with some seats at the front sides being taken out.

During the 1940s, British cinema enjoyed a golden age as wartime film-makers found a new freedom to reflect the national mood. Audiences turned to Ealing comedy films, escapist melodrama often from Gainsborough Pictures and World War II propaganda.

To the right are six examples of films probably shown at the Plaza, with images sourced from 'imdb.com' and 'bing.com' websites.

That said, the age was less golden in other respects. When it began, Britain had been formally at war with Nazi Germany for nearly four months, but the conflict began in earnest in 1940. One of the immediate upshots of war being declared was that Britain's cinemas were closed due to concerns that they might be attractive air raid targets. However, they quickly reopened, not least because the government realised that the cinema was an ideal vehicle for propaganda via its newly-created Ministry of Information (MOI). Cinema-going became a national obsession during the Second World War, with attendances rising by 50% between 1939 and 1942. Two reasons are given for this increase: people flocked to see the latest news from the War and, paradoxically, to seek escapism from it. High levels of employment and rising incomes also played a role.

Although the war ended in 1945, the rest of the decade was a time of extreme national hardship, as a shattered Britain began the lengthy and expensive process of rebuilding itself. Cinema was extremely popular as the only other form of cheap entertainment with the same potency was radio. Audiences peaked in 1946, with total cinema admissions reaching 1.6 billion, equivalent to every man, woman and child in the UK going to the pictures 33 times that year.



The town of Port Talbot has been synonymous with steel since the early 1900s when the first steelworks were founded there in 1902. In 1923 a second Margam works was opened and, in 1947, construction of the Abbey Steelworks commenced with its official unveiling in 1951. The effect of the new steelworks was to transform Port Talbot into a largely mono-industrial economy. In its heyday in the 1960s the steel industry employed around 18,000 people in Port Talbot and the town grew up around it. Work could also be found at the docks which received the iron ore for the steelworks and in the British Oxygen Company built in 1951 to supply oxygen and nitrogen, chiefly to the steelworks.

Port Talbot was dubbed a 'boom town' as workers from throughout South Wales and beyond moved to the area in search of the plentiful and well-paid jobs available at the plant. Between 1939 and 1961, the town's population increased by 10,000. To accommodate this large influx of workers to man the new plant, the local council embarked upon an ambitious program of house building. Between 1945 and 1951 over 1,000 homes had been built and over 3,500 homes by 1957. Most of these new houses were built on the Sandfields Estate, a housing development that grew to be the second largest estate in Wales. By 1960, almost 4,000 steelworks employees called this new estate home.

Port Talbot's steelworkers became amongst the best paid manual workers in Britain and had access to employee leisure and welfare facilities that ranked amongst the finest in Wales, with the steelworks becoming known as 'Treasure Island'. Facilitated by the Betting and Gaming Act 1960, gambling mogul George Alfred James opened the Casino Club in Port Talbot in 1961 which is believed to be Britain's first legal casino. Also, the Afan Lido on Aberavon Seafront was opened in 1965 by the Queen and boasted a 50m Olympic standard pool. Graham Jenkins, the brother of Hollywood actor Richard Burton was the Lido's first manager. The glamour of the Plaza was a complement to these other facilities.



Port Talbot Dock (source: bing.com images)



Workers leaving the shift at the newly-formed Steel Company of Wales in Port Talbot 1949 (source: bbc.co.uk)



Steelworks (source: bbc.co.uk)



Sandfields Estate, Port Talbot (source: bing.com images)



George Alfred James, Casino Club founder (source: bing.com images)



Port Talbot in its heyday in the mid 60s (source: bbc.co.uk)



Worker measures a roll of steel 1961 (source: bbc.co.uk)



Afan Lido, Aberavon Seafront, Port Talbot mid 1960s (source: bing.com images)

Cinema attendances began to fall in the late 1940s and early 1950s. This decline was accelerated as television ownership became widespread. One of the most watched events on television in the early 50s was the Queen's Coronation in 1953 with many people coming together to watch the event on a friend's set. The Coronation seemed to ignite people's interest in television and was a catalyst for its growth in popularity. In 1955, a third of households had a television and, by 1970, over nine in ten owned one. Cinema couldn't compete, and admissions fell by 85% over the same period.

During the late 1950s the Plaza would have live entertainment during the film intervals. Opera singer Rebecca Evans says in 'Port Talbot Paradiso' that her aunt had spoken of a formidable lady called Madame Miriam Joseph James who would put on evenings of song and dance during the film intervals and that she had a brother, Jacky Jones, with a band that would play there too. Also, during the 1960s, the Plaza would host live shows such as Mike and Bernie Winters and an unexpected use was for Saturday night wrestling which was apparently well attended. They would build a platform and ring at the front of the stalls where it was flat. So, the Plaza was an adaptable space and a community hub even back then.



TV 1950's Family watching television at home
(source: theguardian.com)



TV 1970s in colour (source: theguardian.com)



Queen's Coronation 1953 (source: bing.com images)



TV 1963 A little boy watches Andy Pandy (source: theguardian.com)



Mike and Bernie Winters (source: bing.com images)

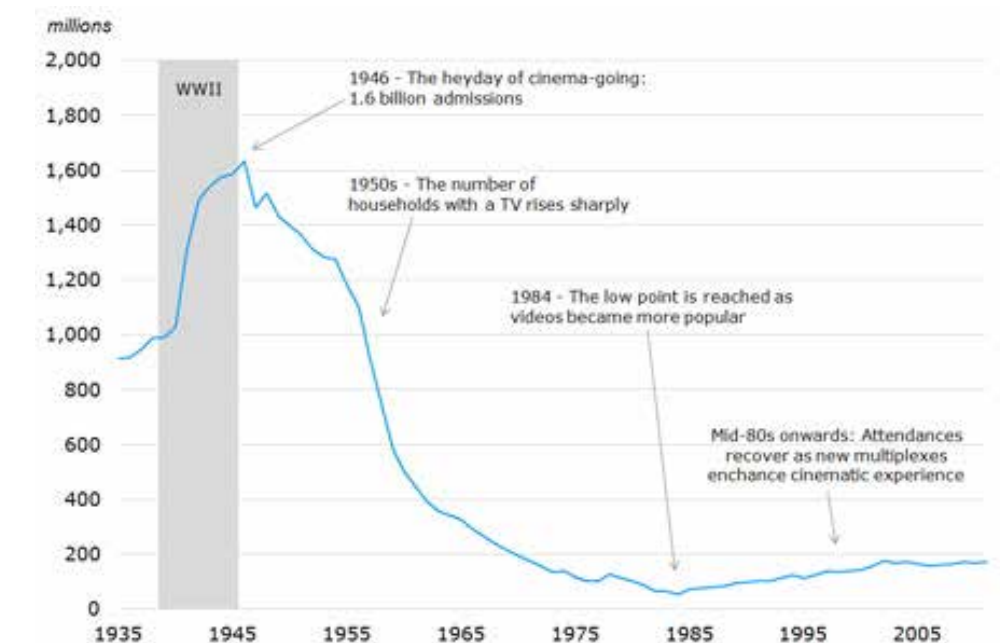


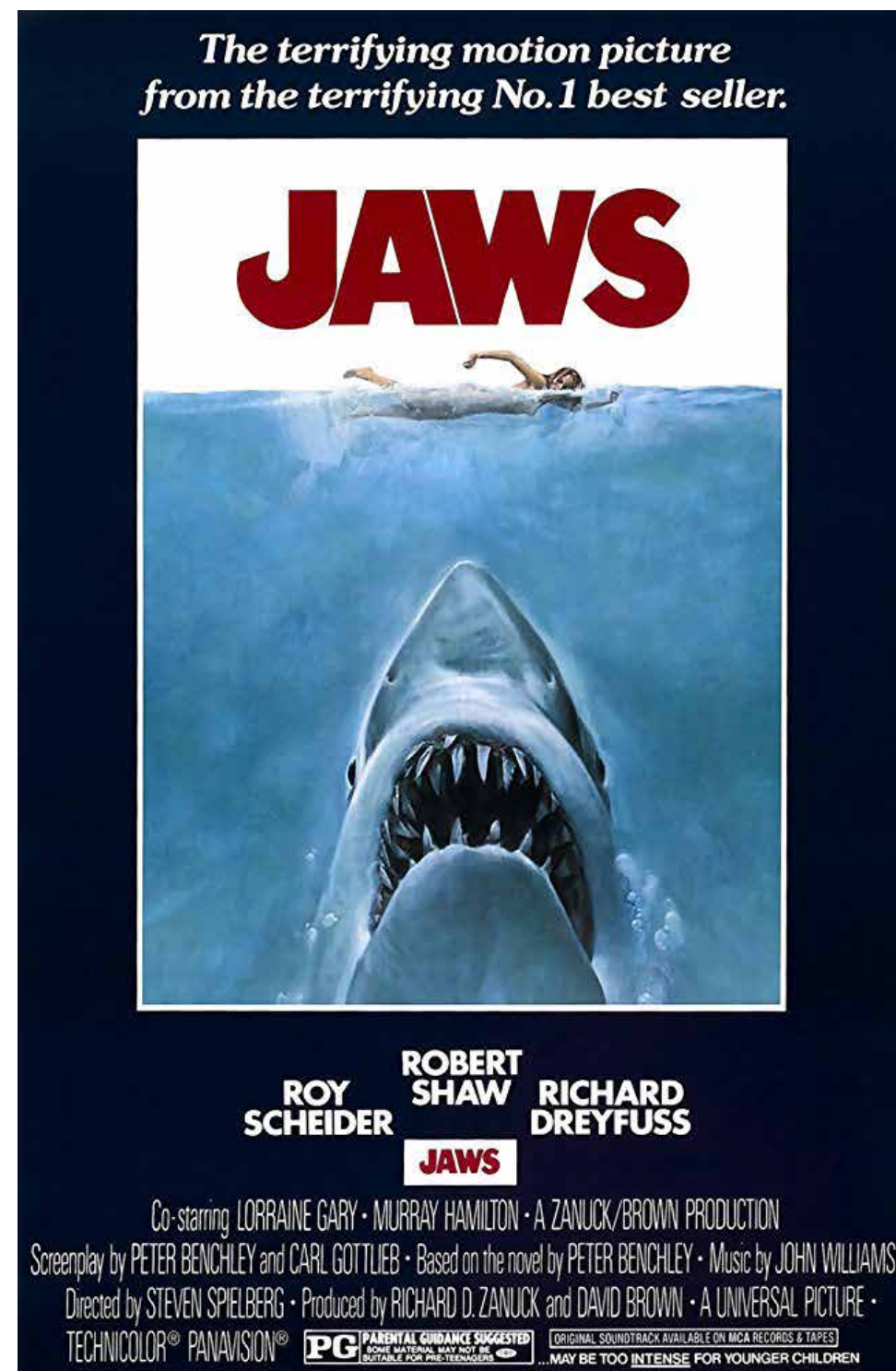
Chart of cinema attendance 1935 onwards (source: parliament.uk)

The Betting and Gaming Act 1960, also allowed commercial bingo halls to be set up, provided they were established as members-only clubs.

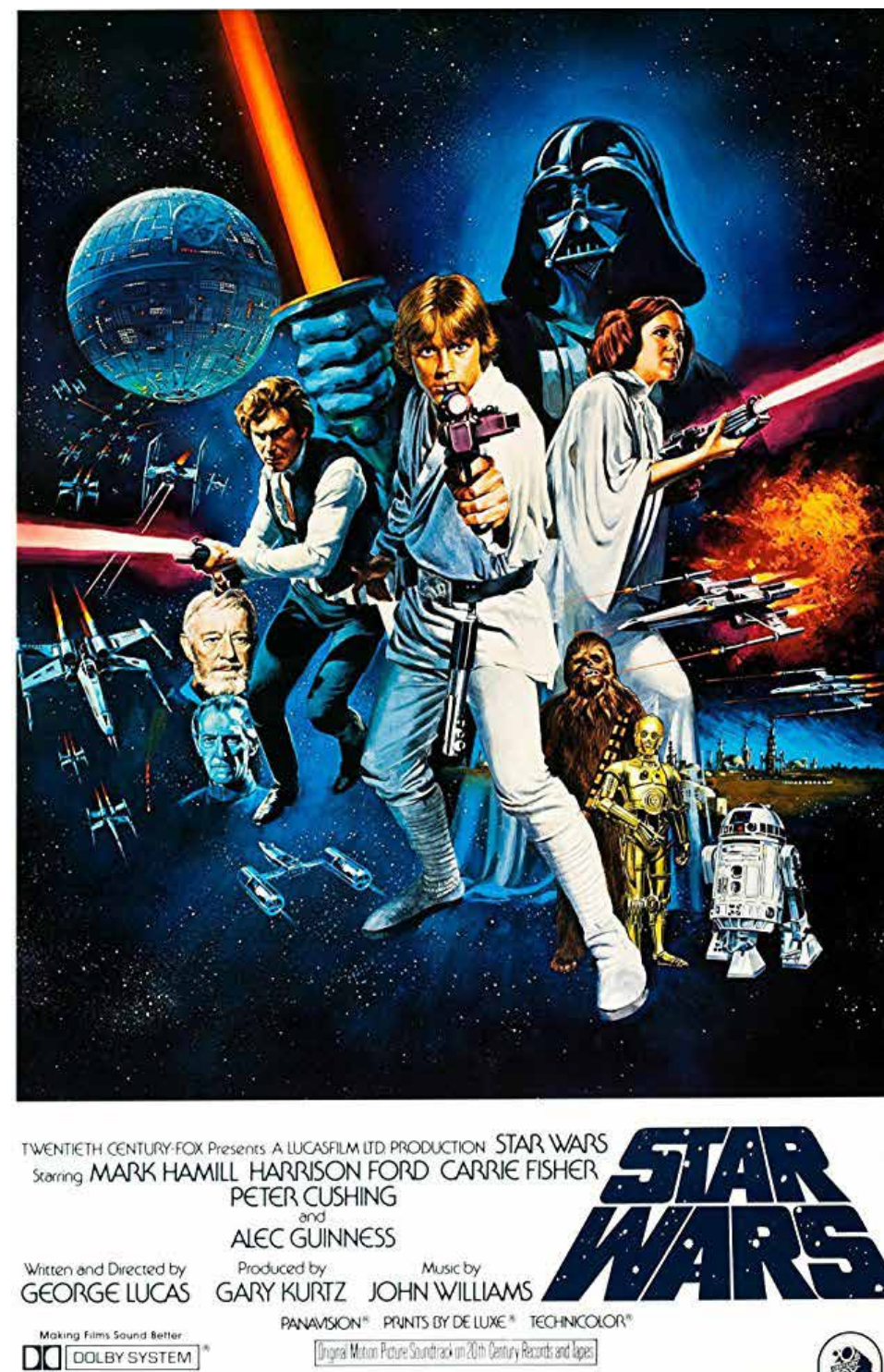
In response to the declining cinema audiences of the 1960s, as a result of the increased popularity of television, many cinemas changed their premises into Bingo Clubs and this was the case in Port Talbot also. The Grand, Majestic (renamed Odeon in 1947) and Taibach Picture Palace (renamed Picturedome in 1918) all converted to Bingo Clubs. Ironically, every time another cinema closed it boosted the fortunes of the Plaza as people had fewer options. This trend continued and, by 1972, the Plaza was the only cinema in town. Even so, the Plaza eventually went to evening only performances in response to declining audiences.

There were some big blockbuster films during the 1970s such as 'Jaws' in 1975, 'Star Wars' in 1977 and 'Grease' in 1978.

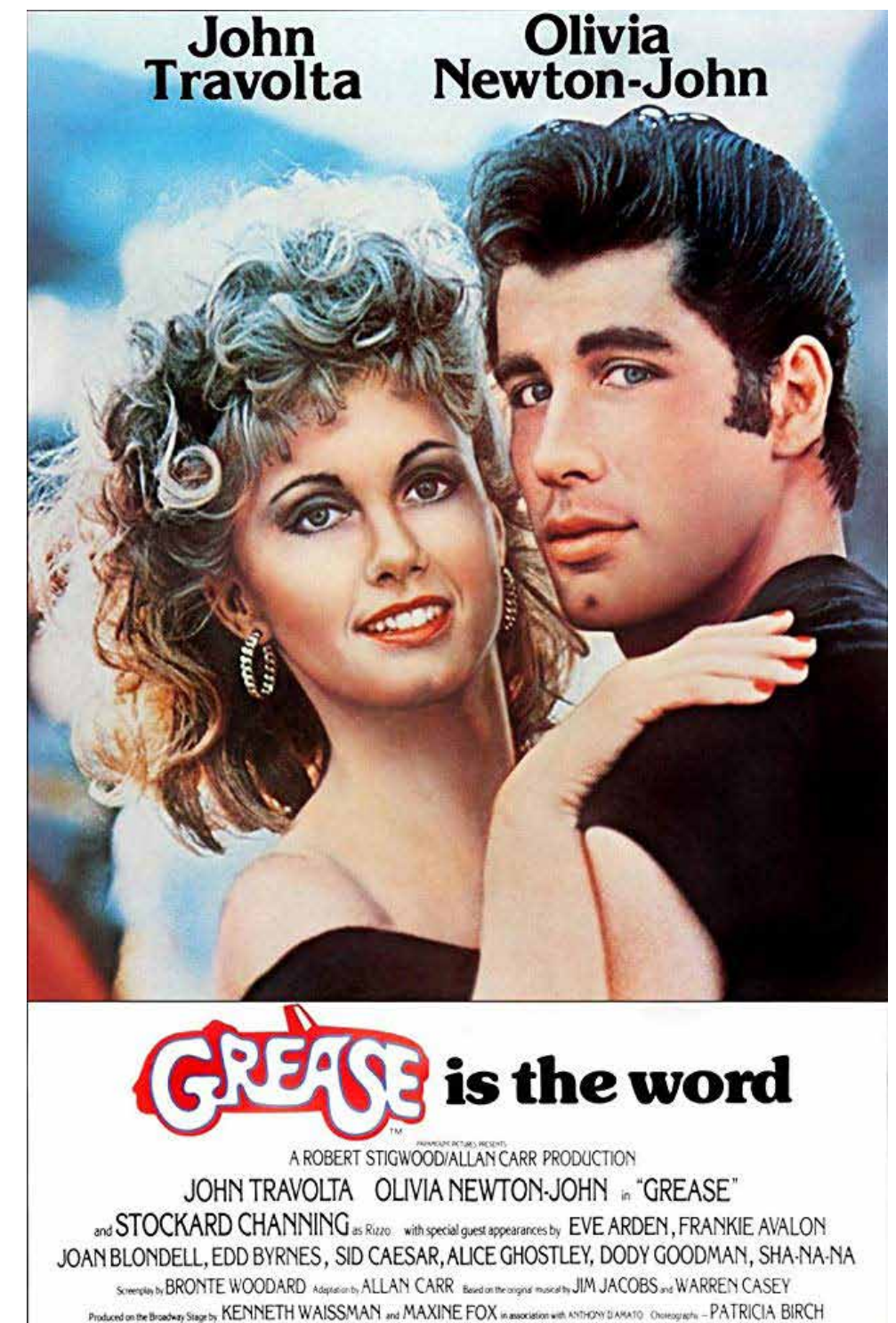
In the Radio 4 production 'Port Talbot Paradiso' a documentary headed by Michael Sheen telling the story of the Port Talbot Plaza cinema, internationally successful soprano Rebecca Evans (originally from Pontrhydyfen) remembers seeing 'Jaws' and 'Grease' at the Plaza. In fact she admitted to knowing all the words to Grease and dancing and singing along to the film in the Plaza. Michael Sheen recalls people queuing round the block and all the way down Station Road to see 'Star Wars' there.



1975 Poster for 'Jaws' (source: imdb.com)



1977 Poster for 'Star Wars' (source: imdb.com)



1978 Poster for 'Grease' (source: imdb.com)

In the early 1980s another source of competition was introduced in the form of the Videocassette Recorder (VCR) and the ability to watch blockbuster films at home. Cinema attendances in the UK reached their lowest point in 1984, when only 54 million tickets were bought: less than one trip per person over the whole year. The Plaza started to operate as a combined cinema and bingo club in the early 1980s with films being shown less and less until there was just one film night per week and then they ceased altogether. The Plaza closed as a cinema in 1983 and became a full-time bingo club. It showed its last film, 'Tootsie' in June 1983. The Plaza only operated as a bingo club for 2 years before closing completely in July 1985.

In 1985 cinema was in the doldrums, so film distributors and exhibitors in the UK organised British Film Year, designed to reverse the dramatic decline in cinema audiences. A number of events took place in the period from April 1985 to March 1986 including a touring exhibition of the 'Stars of the British Screen', the release of commemorative film star stamps and the inauguration of a Hollywood-style 'Walk of Fame' in London's West End. British Film Year was a hugely successful marketing campaign and by the end of 1985 cinema audiences in the UK had increased by 35%.

Following its closure, the Plaza was in the process of being boarded up when a young Alex Jones was visiting Port Talbot to look at the Majestic (renamed Odeon) with the aim of re-opening it as a cinema. The Majestic needed too much work and money spent on it to make it an appealing venture. So Alex Jones took a walk up to the Plaza, saw it being boarded up and phoned the owners the next day. Whilst looking around the inside the Plaza, he found that the projection equipment was relatively new and in good working order, the curtains still opened and revealed that the 38 foot screen was still in place. Alex Jones decided to take on the task of re-opening the Plaza and running it as a cinema again.

The Plaza re-opened on 18th October 1985, after a refurbishment, as a single-screen cinema with Walt Disney's 'Peter Pan'. Alex had hoped for audiences of a few hundred each day, however, his expectations were exceeded when around 10,000 people had visited in the first 7 days. There was a new appetite for the big screen and in Port Talbot the word Plaza was synonymous with Cinema. Most people said "We're going to the cinema" but in Port Talbot they said "We're going to the Plaza".



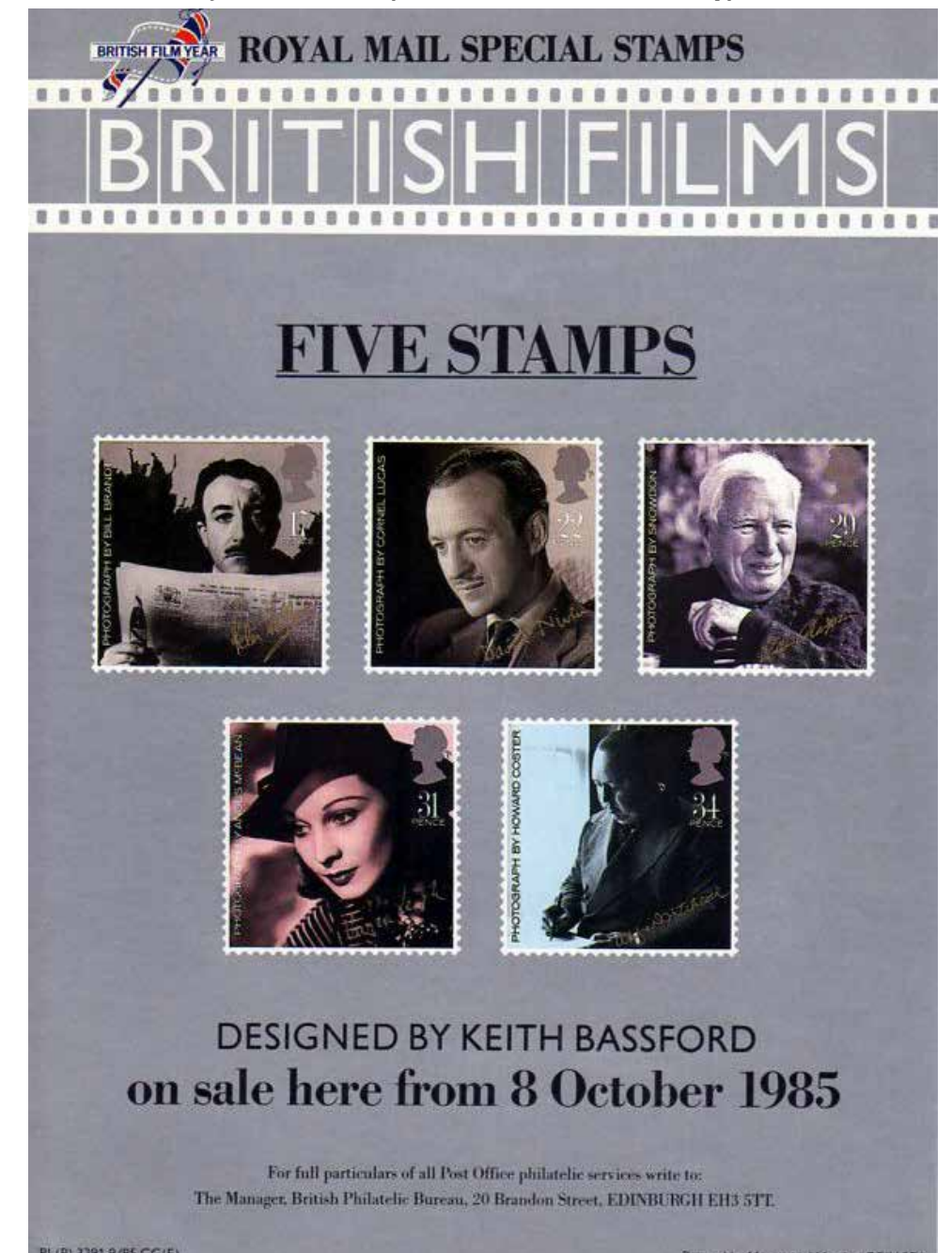
'Tootsie' poster 1982 Plaza closing July 1983
(source: bing.com images)



Walt Disney's 'Peter Pan' Plaza re-opening October 1985
(source: imdb.com)



The Plaza Projection room (source: Historical Society)



1985 British Film Year commemorative stamps
(source: bing.com images)



The Plaza in 1980 (source: Port Talbot Historical Society)



The Plaza in 1981 (source: walesonline)



The Plaza in the early 1980s in its bingo days



The Plaza in 1985



The Plaza in 1985 (source: Port Talbot Historical Society)



The Plaza in 1987 (source: Port Talbot Historical Society)



The Plaza in 1988

The Plaza converted to a multi-screen operation around 1988 with the last film to be shown in the single-screen cinema being 'Fatal Attraction'. In 'Port Talbot Paradiso' Alex Jones talks about there being a packed house that night and how he was at the front of the cinema for the final scene when Michael Douglas has drowned Glenn Close and she re-emerges from the bath unexpectedly and how 1,700 people jumped and screamed in unison.

Initially the cinema was converted into 4 screens, one screen in the circle, another in the front stalls with the rear stalls being split in half to create two further screens. The two small screens in the rear stalls had an ingenious periscope arrangement for projectors in the main projector booth to project the film on to an angled mirror which was then deflected by a second mirror onto the screen on the floor below. Soon after, the front stall floor was found to be rotten and the cinema was converted into a three-screen affair with the original upper stalls acting as main screen with the two smaller screens below.



1987 - Fatal Attraction last film as a single-screen cinema (source: imdb.com)



Plaza interior of projection room (source: walesonline.co.uk)



Plaza interior Circle when single-cinema (source: Historical Society)



Plaza interior front stalls (source: Port Talbot Historical Society)



Plaza interior rear stalls screen with mirror forming part of periscope system (source: Port Talbot Historical Society)



Plaza interior rear stalls screen (source: Port Talbot Historical Society)



Plaza interior rear stalls screen (source: Port Talbot Historical Society)



Plaza interior rear stalls screen with mirror forming part of periscope system (source: Port Talbot Historical Society)

A lot of time and effort was put into promoting the Plaza and enticing audiences in. Press nights were held, a Saturday morning film club for youngsters was introduced, with a darkly clad phantom who threw custard pies, and theme nights for the adults. Alex Jones turned the Plaza back into a thriving business during the late 1980s.



Plaza foyer 23rd June 1988 Crocodile Dundee press night (source: cinematreasures.com)



1993 Abba night encouraging fancy dress (source: Historical Society)

Ironically, home videos and British Film Year had sparked a renewed interest in cinema-going along with the introduction of the Multiplex Cinema from America. The first multiplex opened in the UK in 1985 called the Point in Milton Keynes and around 500 new multiplex cinemas sprung up nationwide between 1987 and 1991, by which point British cinema admissions had risen from 55m in 1984 to 100m in 1991 and 172m by 2011. The increased choice of films, state-of-the-art technology, copious free parking spaces and vast array of snacks on offer in the multiplexes tempted audiences away from the smaller town-based independent cinemas. Plus, film distributors only wanted to give new films to the new multiplexes.

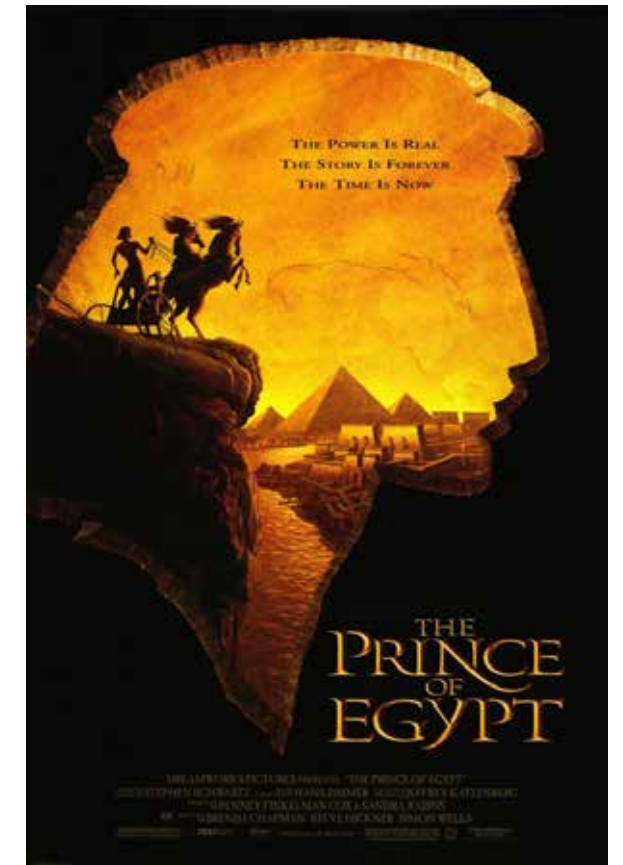


Saturday morning club at the Plaza (source: Historical Society)



The Point, Milton Keynes first multiplex cinema in the UK opened in 1985 (source: bing.com images)

Multiplex cinemas started opening up near to Port Talbot and eventually in Port Talbot itself, with the Apollo cinema opening down on Aberavon Sea Front. Audiences at the Plaza were reducing significantly, and the cinema started to lose money. It limped along until January 1999, its 60th anniversary year but finally closed on 4th January 1999. Its final show being Disney's 'Prince of Egypt'. In 'Port Talbot Paradiso' Alex Jones talks about that emotional last night "Closed the curtains at the end and as the curtains were closing there were snapshots of people taking pictures of the curtains closing and you could actually hear people sobbing in the auditorium". The building has been empty and unused ever since with Neath Port Talbot Council acquiring the building in 2009 with the aim of safeguarding it and developing a future use.



Disney's 'Prince of Egypt' last film to be shown at the Plaza 4th January 1999 (source: imdb.com)



Plaza exterior 4th Jan 1999 final night - Alex Jones removing film titles (source: Port Talbot Historical Society)



The Plaza in 1989 (source: britishlistedbuildings)



The Plaza in 1991 (source: cinematreasures)



The Plaza in 1995 (source: cinematreasures)



The Plaza at night in 1989 (source: britishlistedbuildings)



The Plaza Shop in 1993 (source: Port Talbot Historical Society)



The Plaza in 1998



The Plaza at night in 1989 (source: cinematreasures)



The Plaza in 1993 (source: britishlistedbuildings)



The Plaza boarded up after closing in January 1999 (source: Port Talbot Historical Society)

The Plaza has stood empty and unused for the last 20 years, whereas it used to be the epitome of glamour with its imposing front clad in cream tiles with a band of green, terrazzo steps up to the box office and plush carpets inside. Its Art Deco frontage is now discoloured, the entrance and shops are boarded up and there are holes in the roof letting in water.

Yet despite all this, in 'Port Talbot Paradiso' Michael Sheen said there was only one place to announce the start of The Passion in 2011 and that was on the side of the Plaza. Forty days before the performance, the words "It has begun" were painted onto the wooden boarding in big white and red letters on a black background. Its central location on Port Talbot's main street meant the public saw it and started talking about it.



The Plaza boarded up after closing in January 1999
(source: Port Talbot Historical Society)



'It has begun' 40 days before The Passion started in Easter 2011
(source: bing.com images)

Passion Plays are plays telling the Easter Story and the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. Michael Sheen's 2011 production 'The Passion' had a core cast of 15 professional actors from Port Talbot, including Sheen as 'the Teacher', a Jesus Christ-like character, and more than 1,000 locals taking part.



The play started on Good Friday and ran in 'real time' for 72 hours with the cast staying in character throughout. Different scenes took place in different locations around Port Talbot, culminating in the Crucifixion on Aberavon seafront in front of an estimated crowd of 6,000. One thing that emerged from 'The Passion' was a sense of community, and a coming together of people, something that many people thought had been lost in the town.

Scenes from 'The Passion' showing the Teacher (Michael Sheen) carrying the Cross and large crowds of onlookers
(sources: dailymail.co.uk and bing.com images)



The town of Port Talbot has long been seen as synonymous with the steel industry. Yet it also has another claim to fame - as the actors' capital of Wales. It has produced a remarkable number of actors since the inter-war years with Richard Burton, Anthony Hopkins and Michael Sheen heading the glittering cast, but there are many others too. The book 'The Actors Crucible' by Angela V. John concentrates on these three acting legends, their early life and those unsung heroes who helped to nurture their talent in schools, youth centres and youth theatre. The significance of these three actors to Port Talbot's identity can be demonstrated by the artwork (or graffiti) painted onto the wooden boards surrounding the derelict Plaza with images of Richard Burton, Anthony Hopkins and Michael Sheen painted there together with daffodils, the national symbol of Wales.



Actors & daffodils painted on Plaza exterior (source: theguardian.com)



Richard Burton 1953 in 'The Robe' (source: bing.com images)

Another star from the area is Rob Brydon, and in his BBC television series 'The Trip' 2010 he jokingly says to Steve Coogan "You've got Hopkins, me, Richard Burton and Sheen. The Port Talbot four. That's what we're known as." Before launching into his impersonations of the Port Talbot stars (especially Anthony Hopkins) that punctuate the episodes. Rob Brydon also features heavily in the Radio 4 documentary 'Port Talbot Paradiso', talking to Michael Sheen about his memories of the Plaza and how his parents supposedly met at the Italian café on the corner of the Plaza which Sheen described as "a veritable hotbed for the courting couples of Port Talbot in the post war era".



Anthony Hopkins visits the Plaza around 1991 (source: Port Talbot Historical Society)



Anthony Hopkins 1991 in 'Silence of the Lambs' (source: bing.com)

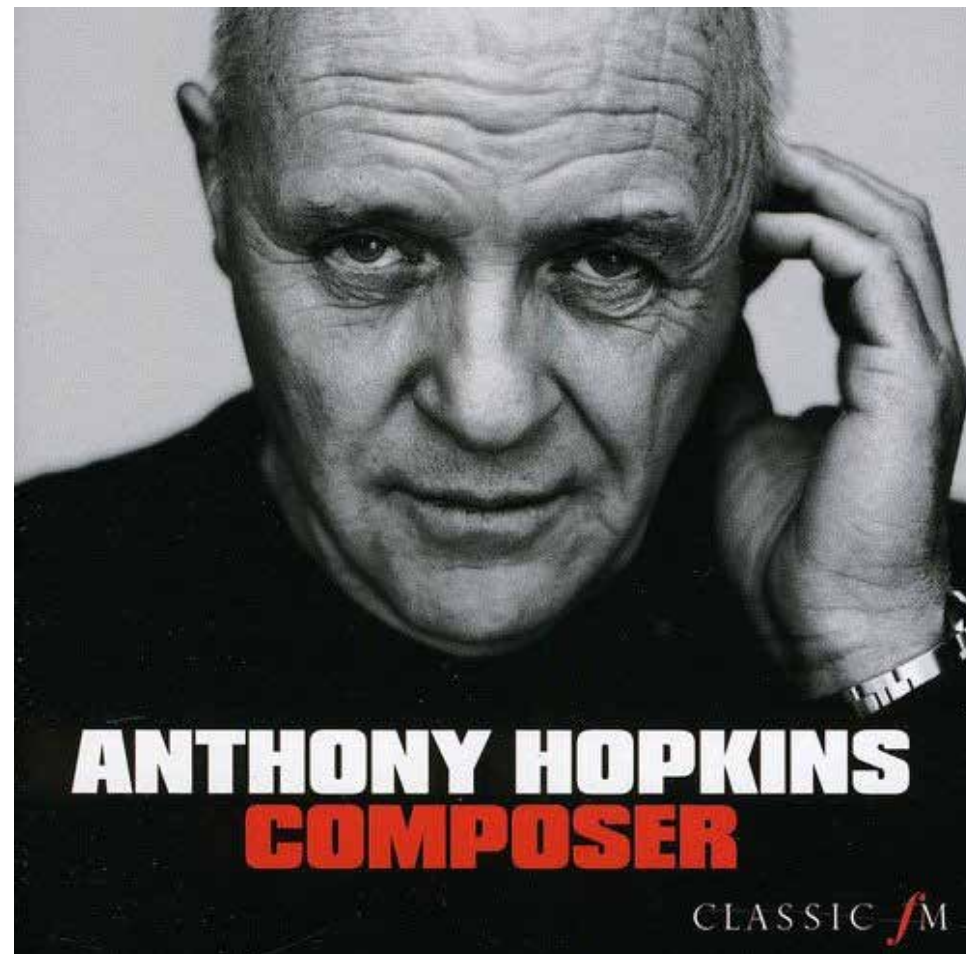


Michael Sheen (source: bing.com Images)

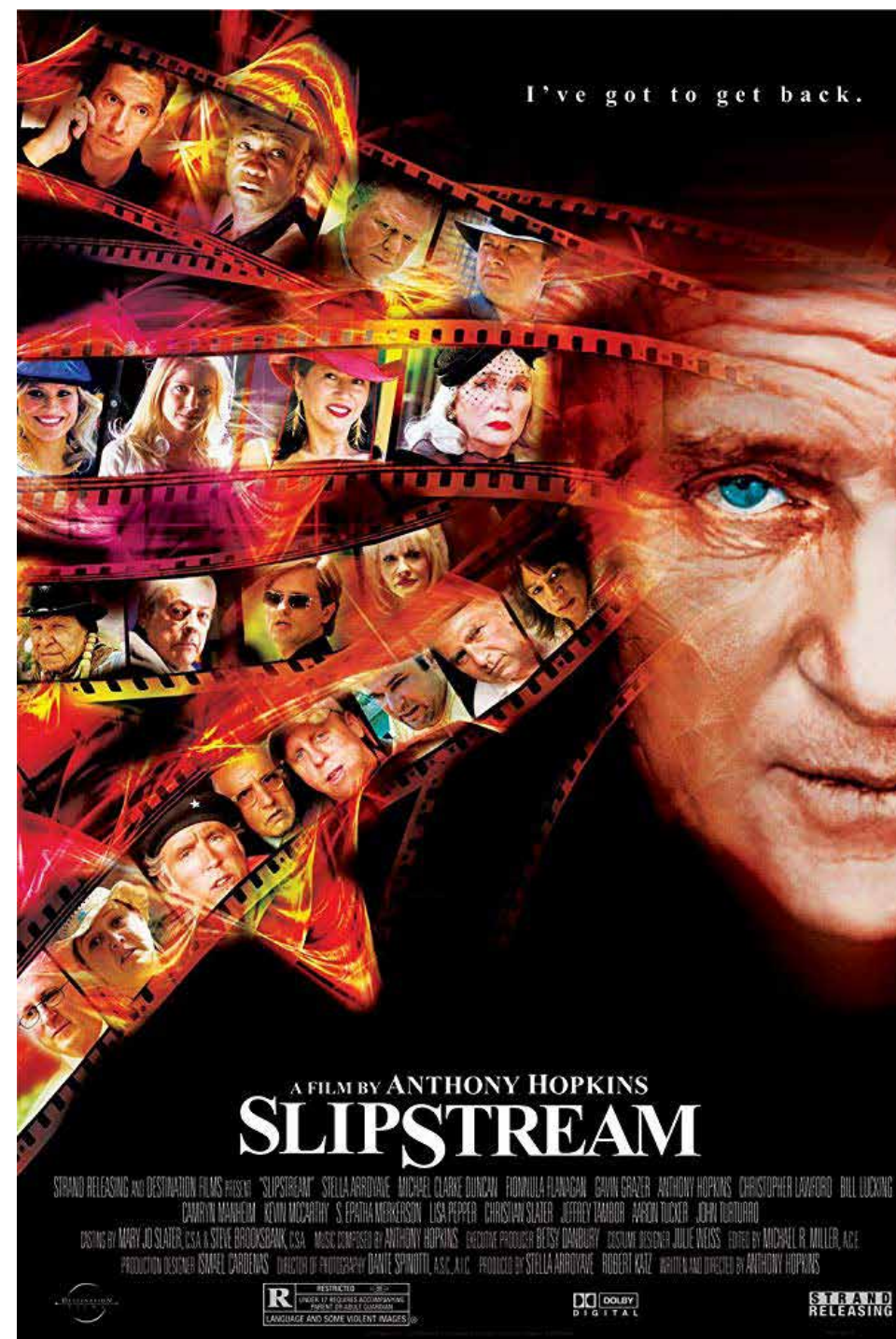


Rob Brydon 'The Trip' (source: bing.com images)

The Plaza cinema has inspired music too, with Anthony Hopkins (an accomplished pianist as well as actor) having composed classical music inspired by his childhood. In July 2011, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra recorded a live album of his orchestrated piano compositions and film scores. The album entitled 'Composer' includes a track called '1947 – The Plaza' in homage to the Port Talbot cinema that used to transport him to another world. On the sleeve notes he wrote "On Friday nights we'd go to the pictures. I loved the pictures. Sometimes the Majestic in Bethany Square or the Regent in Taibach but the Plaza was the place to go." He had originally composed the piece for a sci-fi fantasy called 'Slipstream' that he had scripted and taken to the 2007 Sundance Film Festival.



Anthony Hopkins 2011 'Composer' CD (source: amazon.co.uk)



'Slipstream' 2007 featuring Anthony Hopkins musical composition '1947 - The Plaza' (source: imdb.com)

Port Talbot continues to hit the headlines and national news for artistic reasons with the recent graffiti artwork by Banksy and Ame72. A Banksy mural appeared on the side of a domestic garage in Richmond Terrace, in the Taibach area of town in December 2018. It covered two walls, from one angle the piece shows a child in a bobble hat with a sled enjoying a snow shower and trying to catch the flakes on his tongue. But from another, it becomes clear that what is actually falling on the child is ash billowing from a bin. Thousands of people came to view this latest piece.

A second international street artist, Ame72, also left his mark on Port Talbot at the start of February 2019 with his signature Lego minifigures at Taibach rugby club and around the corner at ABC Tyres.



Graffiti - Banksy (source: bing.com images)



Graffiti - Ame72 Lego Man (source: bing.com images)

The listing for the Plaza states the reasons as “Listed as a very rare example in Wales of a building type which expresses the distinctive architectural vocabulary of 1930s cinema architecture, and whose interior has escaped subdivision or major changes.”

The Plaza managed to escape demolition or significant alteration which was the fate of other cinemas in Port Talbot as shown below.

The Grand Cinema, High Street, Port Talbot - Demolished

Located on the corner of High Street and Forge Road. The Grand Cinema was built in 1908 and was constructed at the rear of an existing building, with the entrance through a former shop front. It was enlarged in the 1920's and was able to seat 1,100 and by 1930. It was closed in the mid to late 1950's due to the downturn in cinema going. The Grand was converted into a bingo club in 1963. This closed in 1972, and the building was demolished in a redevelopment of the area.



The Grand Cinema, corner of High Street & Forge Road, Port Talbot
(source: cinematreasures.org)

New Theatre / Empire, Talbot Road, Port Talbot - Demolished

The New Theatre was built at the rear of Royal Buildings on Talbot Road and opened in 1912. The building had an entrance through the arcade of Royal Buildings on Talbot Road and a frontage on Beverley Street. It originally operated as a Leon Vint Theatre and had a 32 feet deep stage and six dressing rooms. Gracie Field appeared here before her fame grew.

By 1926, it had begun showing films and became known as the Empire Cinema. The Empire suffered a disastrous fire in 1938 which completely destroyed the building after a showing of the film 'The Firefly'. The fire was contained to just the cinema and did not spread to Royal Buildings which adjoined it. A new building was erected on the site which functioned as many things thereafter, including a garage, printers and shops. Royal Buildings, the printers and the adjoining Railway and Docks Company offices building were demolished in 2012 to make way for a new development of flats and retail units which was completed in 2013.

Vint's Palace/Palace Cinema, Water Street, Aberavon, Port Talbot - Demolished

This was the local cinema in Aberavon, a seaside suburb of Port Talbot. Opened as a live theatre by Leon Vint around 1910/1911, it was also equipped to screen films. By 1922, it was operated by Max Corne and known as The Palace Cinema. It was still open in 1937 but closed soon after although the building remained. It became a David Evans store which operated for many years. The former Palace Cinema was finally demolished in 1972.



Vint's Palace, Aberavon (after conversion to a David Evans store)
(source: cinematreasures.org)

The Picturedrome / Capitol Cinema, High Street, Port Talbot - Demolished

The Picturedrome was built and opened in 1912. By 1937, it had been re-named Capitol Cinema and was operated by Woodward's Cinemas. The Capitol Cinema closed sometime during the second world war and lay empty and unused for some years. The building was later purchased by David Evans Ltd. of Swansea and converted into a furnishing store. It was demolished due to redevelopment of the area.



The Picturedrome then Capitol, High Street, Port Talbot (after conversion to a David Evans store)
(source: cinematreasures.org)

**Ebley's Kinema / Olympic, Depot Road, Cwmavon
- now Other Uses**

The Ebley family were show people who travelled a fit-up bioscope around South Wales between 1895 and 1915. In 1915, after the outbreak of the 1st World War touring became impossible. Two members of the family, Edward and his son Lord Robert settled in the Cwmavon district of Port Talbot, and built a small 200-seat, bricks and mortar cinema with their own hands. The cinema building looks more like a double fronted terraced house with a slightly wider than usual entrance. Above the door was a stone slab bearing the legend "Cinema". In the 1920's, it was re-built as the Olympic Cinema, with 600 seats. The proscenium was 27 feet wide. The Olympic Cinema was still open in 1966, but had gone from listings by 1980, and was in other uses.



Ebley's Kinema then Olympic, Cwmavon
(source: cinematreasures.org)

Workmens Hall / Taibach Picture Palace / Picturedrome, Alma Terrace, Taibach, Port Talbot - now a Nursing Home

The Workmen's Hall was opened in October 1872. It was converted into a cinema in 1911, and gained a stage show licence in 1913 when it was re-named Taibach Picture Palace. After the end of World War I in 1918, it was re-named Picturedrome, and had a 30 feet wide proscenium. It was still open in 1966, but soon went over to bingo use, which closed in 1984. After standing derelict for a while, it re-opened as a cinema on 12th December 1986 and closed in June 1988 with Peter Ustinov in "Appointment With Death". The building is now a nursing home.



Taibach Picture Palace then Picturedrome, Taibach 1985
(source: cinema.treasures.org)

**The Majestic / Odeon, Forge Road / Bethany Square, Port Talbot
- Demolished**

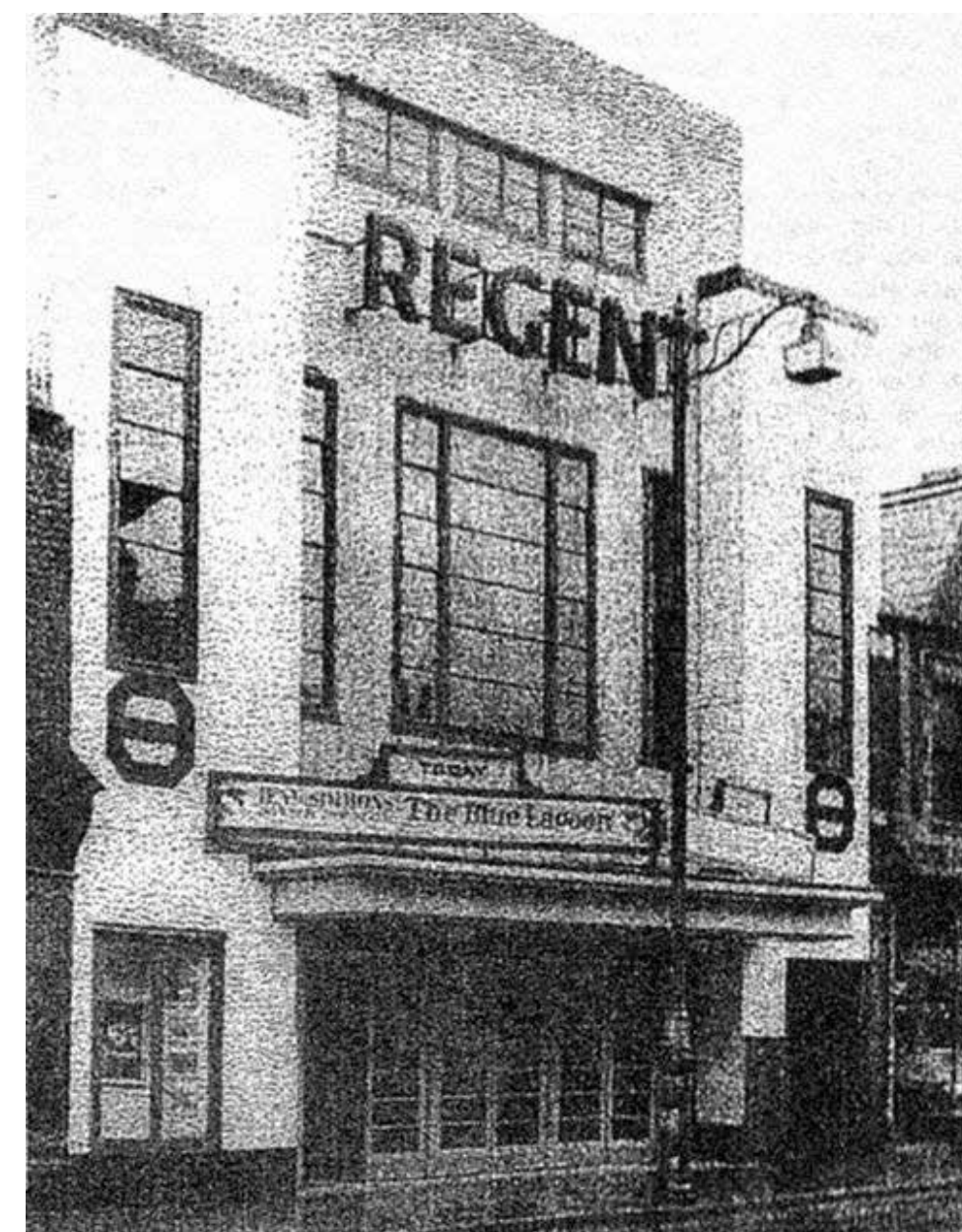
Originally opened as the Majestic Cinema on 11th January 1938 with Anna Neagle in "The Show Goes On" & Gene Raymond in "There Goes My Girl". It was planned by the Oscar Deutsch chain of Odeon Theatres Ltd. but initially operated by Max Corne of Cardiff. It was taken over by the Oscar Deutsch chain of Odeon Theatres Ltd. in 1940. The Majestic Cinema was re-named Odeon in April 1947. The building remained in cinema use until it closed on 27th March 1971, when the Rank Organisation suddenly pulled out and sold the building. It was converted into an independent bingo club, which closed on 6th September 1980. The building lay unused until its demolition in July 1995 for a new Tesco store, by which time it was in a terrible state of repair.



The Majestic then Odeon, Port Talbot (El Paso 1949)
(source: cinematreasures.org)

**The Regent Cinema, Commercial Road, Taibach
- now a Health Studio & Gym**

A small second run cinema located in the Port Talbot suburb of Taibach. It was a conversion of a building owned by the Co-Operative Society which housed a dancing academy on the ground floor and a billiards saloon upstairs on the first floor. The Regent Cinema opened on 26th October 1936 by an independent operator. It was taken over by the Oscar Deutsch chain of Odeon Theatres Ltd. on 13th December 1943 and retained its 'Regent' name. The Regent Cinema closed on 27th October 1956. The building became a Co-Op grocery store. By 1994, it had been converted into a Body Shape health studio & gymnasium, renamed Warehouse by 2014.



The Regent Cinema, Taibach
(source: cinematreasures.org)

7.9 Character, Architectural Design & Materials of The Plaza

The Plaza Cinema has remained relatively unchanged in its 80 years of existence.

- Built in 1939, as the single-screen Plaza Cinema, Port Talbot.
- In June 1983 it was turned into a bingo club but required no alterations.
- In July 1985, the bingo club closed, and the building was boarded up.
- In October 1985 it re-opened as a single-screen cinema with some minor internal refurbishment to spruce it up.
- Around 1988/89 the interior of the cinema was converted into a multi-screen operation, this meant the rear stalls were partitioned off from the front stalls and converted into two separate screens, with the balcony forming a third screen. The front stalls operated as a fourth screen for a short period of time, before being cleared due to the floor being rotten.
- In January 1999, the building was closed and boarded up and began to fall into disrepair.

The listing for the Plaza states the reasons as “Listed as a very rare example in Wales of a building type which expresses the distinctive architectural vocabulary of 1930s cinema architecture, and whose interior has escaped subdivision or major changes”. With the exterior described as “Modernist style with Art Deco influences”.

The term Art Deco was coined after the Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes (International Exhibition of Modern and Industrial Decorative Arts) held in Paris in 1925. It is a style characterised by clean lines, bold shapes, colour, geometric designs and decoration. It encompassed furniture, textiles, ceramics, sculpture and architecture. The style spread across Europe to the United States and Britain, where it became a favourite for building types associated with the modern age such as garages, airports, office buildings, department stores, power stations, factories, swimming pools and cinemas. There were overlaps with Modernism, with the use of clean lines and minimal decoration, but the style also lent itself well to buildings associated with entertainment, providing glamorous interiors for theatres, cinemas, hotels, restaurants and luxury apartments. Lighting was also a key feature with much made of neon strip lighting to emphasise the streamlined nature of the designs.

To illustrate the best of 1930's cinema architecture, an article from the Guardian online in September 2011, listed what they believed to be five of the best Art Deco cinemas.

These five Art Deco cinemas are presented on the next two pages.

Odeon Kingstanding (now Mecca), Birmingham (Grade II Listed building)

Opened 22nd July 1935. The exterior of the building is considered to be in the quintessential Art Deco ‘Odeon’ style. It has rounded corners, a central bay covered in cream faience tiles and a slender vertical fin-tower, which originally had letters on top, horizontally spelling out ‘CINEMA’. As large and glorious Art Deco cinema as you will ever see – though it’s now a bingo hall, its magnificent three fins and sweeping lines retain their allure.



The Abbey, Wavertree, Liverpool (unlisted)

Opened 4th March 1939. A truly awe-inspiring local cinema, with strip-lit frontage and curved brick battlements. Today it has kept its glorious shape, but little of its dignity, by being repurposed as a supermarket.



Odeon Leicester Square, London (unlisted)

Opened 2nd November 1937. The jewel of cinema magnate Oscar Deutsch's Odeon empire, and still the largest single-screen cinema in Britain, its original seating capacity was for 2,116. It dominates Leicester Square with its 120 feet tall tower, and the entire façade and tower covered in black granite slabs which is the exact opposite of the traditional Odeon look.



Odeon Bury, Greater Manchester (unlisted)

Opened 16th November 1936. This was a white-tiled vision from an Odeon chain at the very peak of glamour, with the square tower feature clad in faience tiles. By 1988 the building had been converted into a nightclub and has sadly been demolished since the Guardian article was written.

**Ascot Cinema, Glasgow (Scottish Listing B – façade only)**

Opened 6th December 1939. This is a magnificent example of both a large art deco cinema, and how to convert one into something useful: in this case a block of flats. The Art Deco façade has been retained so the curved towers and vertical stripes always remind its residents where they are.



The Plaza is very much a building of two parts:

The front part of the building is about one third of the overall footprint of the building. Facing onto Talbot Road, the Plaza's frontage is impressive. Clad in cream faience tiling, of a 2x1 ratio orientated vertically, the central block projects forward with half-round fronted turrets on either side, projecting further forward. To the sides, screening the two staircases, the frontage steps back, still clad in cream faience tiling. This sculpted façade is capped with a row of projected tiles sitting on a lead sheet which is scalloped as it dresses down the wall. A further course of tiling below is a band of tiles a quarter the depth of the other tiles, this time of eau-de-nil (green) in colour.

To the sides and the front of the central projected section are a series of Crittall-style steel-framed windows – four on the south side, two per floor, and two on the north side, one per floor, and a tripartite window on the upper floor of the frontage, below which is a recessed balcony area. Either side of the central windows are tall, small in plan, are projected columns which originally supported two deep relief sculptures, then supported lights, now support nothing. Above and in between these columns, onto which the lights would have been directed, is a simple sign spelling out 'PLAZA'.



Wrapping around the full frontage, sailing over the ground floor is a curved canopy, completely in keeping with so many Art Deco cinemas. Whereas the central section continues down below the canopy, with the entrance screen flanked by the curved turrets, to the sides the ground floor does not set back as the upper floor do, but following the curve of the canopy, albeit set back, are curved glazed shopfront with a masonry stall riser. Most of the masonry below the canopy, apart from the top 800mm or so, is painted black.

This front section of the building is not symmetrical. It is trapezoidal in plan, with the front face parallel to the road and the rear line parallel with the rectilinear form of the rest of the building. This makes the south side wall of the projected central section much longer than the north wall. Its roof is flat, with a very tall parapet.



The rear part of the building is about two thirds of the overall footprint of the building. In stark contrast to the frontage, this rear section is unimpressive. Its three exposed elevations, onto Eagle Street and Eagle Mews, take the form of what is assumed to be reinforced concrete columns at regular centres (supporting beam which span the full width of the cinema) with roughcast rendered masonry panels in between, set back from the face of the columns. The render is of a grey/cream colour and there are a number of openings at various levels within the bottom half of the elevations, almost all blocked up.

The roof to the main body of the building is hipped, with the easternmost hip continuing down to beyond the line of the general eaves level, making the rear elevation lower than the two sides. The two side elevations have a level eaves for three quarters of its length and then the eaves drop down to the rear elevation.

The roof to the front section is flat and covered with asphalt.

The rainwater goods are of cast iron with the downpipes round. To the rear section, the gutters are moulded half-round and both gutters and downpipes are painted black. To the front section, the flat roof drains out through holes in the faience tiling to rectangular hoppers leading to circular downpipes. Against the cream faience tiling, the rainwater goods are of eau-de-nil green.

See photograph below taken looking at the junction between the faience tiled frontage and the rendered rear, with the two different types of downpipe.



As one enters through the wide entrance, made up of three sets of timber double doors with five horizontal glazed panes above each other, the outer lobby comprises a full width set of six grey terrazzo steps, each with a run of black and white checkerboard squares a little back from the nosing. At the top step, within the terrazzo, the floor spells out 'PLAZA' in typically art deco style text. One then passes through a set of five double timber doors, the set at each end separated from the central three by a sizeable plastered concrete column, with five glazed panes each, as per the front screen doors, with long brass handles and a run of glazed overpanes.

Into the inner lobby, the flooring is again terrazzo, however, here it is made up of individual tiles, once again in a checkerboard pattern, however this time the consistent combination of cream and eau-de-nil colours. The ceiling is plastered with downstand beams with a cornice to the perimeter and beams of the space, with an art deco style chevron pattern in golden yellow. Whilst paint samples have yet to be taken, there are at a few levels of paint underneath the golden yellow, with the earliest visible colour a burgundy red.

At both ends of the inner lobby are a terrazzo staircase with the same black and white checkerplate nosing, which passes over a set of toilets, accessed from the inner lobby via a small lobby. Opposite the screen of five double doors are three sets of double doors leading into the main cinema spaces.



Originally, these doors will have led into one large space which was the cinema stalls, with a very deep balcony oversailing the first (front) section of stalls with a sloping floor, then a large full height (rear) section, with a part sloping part flat floor, and then the stage and screen. In 1989, this front section of the stalls, overhung by the balcony, was sub-divided, as it still remains, with the central doors accessing the large full height space and the stage via a corridor, whilst each of the side doors leads to a single screen cinema space with seating fixed to the sloped floor. All the seating to the front stalls area has been removed. Throughout the auditorium, the ceiling comprises an exposed grid with square ceiling panels of what appears to be wood fire, with intermittent decorative ventilator grilles and light fittings dropped from the ceiling, however set within the grid, made up of a 3 x 3 x 1 series of cubes. A moulded plaster cornice runs around the auditorium, coloured now in red, white and blue. Surrounding the curve fronted stage area is a moulded proscenium arch.

On this page are photographs of the main cinema space.



On this page are photographs of some of the details within the main cinema space.



On this page are photographs of the two single screen cinema space which were formed in 1989 within the rear stall area of the original single cinema space - the north screen in the first column and the south screen in the second and third columns.



The north screen



The south screen



The south screen



The north screen



The south screen



The south screen



The north screen



The north screen



The south screen

The two staircases lead to a first floor made up of a central projector room, a switch room and stores over the inner foyer, all which were linoleum floored; a flat roof with balcony (which used to comprise a wrought iron railing, however no longer does) over the outer foyer; and a series of office spaces within the two curve fronted turrets over the retail units below, which appear to have been wood block floored.

From the first floor, the staircases rise again, this time to the back of the upper tier balcony to the large cinema space. Here the seating remains, in its curved form, with a curved back wall of brick. It is of interest that these stairs are not of terrazzo, but finished in carpet, and the staircases both sides appear to pass through the middle of what appears to have once been a window opening, but is now blocked up. This leads on to assume that the first to second floor staircases are not original and were added in at a later time. How the balcony would have been accessed prior to this is not yet known.

From the first floor south turret section, a tight staircase leads up to second floor space behind the rear of the cinema balcony. This is one large space with the inside of the curved turrets expressed and Crittall-style windows on all three external walls.



As stated earlier, the Art Deco style is characterised by clean and sweeping lines; streamlined and bold shapes; colour; geometric designs and decoration.

The Plaza displays all of these Art Deco features:

- The clean lines of the frontage, which are set off by the familiar art deco characteristic clean edged faience tiling and Crittall-style flat steel-section slender framed windows. See Photo A.
- The sweeping lines and streamlined and bold shapes of the curved-fronted turrets, the curved-fronted retail units and the curved canopy which draws it all together; in addition to the curved bold 'exit' signage. See Photos A, C & D.
- The art deco characteristic colour scheme of cream and eau de nil green, which one sees on the main elevation, in the faience tiling, and in the lobby, with the terrazzo floor tiles. See Photos B & C.
- The black and white checkerplate tiles set into the terrazzo steps in the lobbies and up the two staircases. See Photo E.
- The chevron / zigzag geometric decoration to the foyer cornice. See Photo F.
- The linoleum flooring in other areas, such as the first floor rooms.
- The Britannic Bold font lettering, synonymous with the art deco period, on the foyer floor spelling out 'PLAZA'. See Photo G.



7.10 General Condition of The Plaza

In July 2017, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council undertook a Condition Survey / Review of the Plaza, producing a report, written by Terry Preece, Principal Structural Engineer at the Council.

This report is reproduced on the next six pages, under section 4.10.1.

Prior to that, in May 2012, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council commissioned an 'Appraisal of the Existing Structure' from James & Nicholas Structural Engineers, under section 4.10.2.

This was a longer report and so only prevalent sections of the main body of the text are reproduced over the following number of pages.

On the final three pages of this section, under section 4.10.3, are a series of plans identifying the floor, ceiling and walls materials for the Art Deco front portion of the Plaza, produced by GWP Architecture, with a summary statement as to the general condition of these materials.

7.10.1 Condition Survey / Review of the Plaza, produced by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, July 2017

1.0 Synopsis/Executive Summary

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Structures section were asked to review the condition of the former Plaza Cinema (now derelict) in relation to a condition survey carried out by external consultants in 2012. This report is to be read in conjunction with James & Nicholas report "Appraisal of Existing Structure".

This report concentrates on the facade and front portion of the building in order to evaluate any ongoing deterioration in condition. The remaining rear part of the building (main auditorium) has already been deemed as little merit for re-development and demolition recommended in the 2012 consultant's report. We have gained access to the rear portion of the building in order to re-assess its condition as a duty of care to the public to assess whether it poses a danger to the public.

An interim inspection of the external envelope only was carried out by NPTCBC Structural Engineer, Terry Preece, on the 14th June 2017 following reports of further dilapidation to the building envelope that posed a risk to the public. Emergency remedial safety works have already been carried out including removal of an external chimney, cleaning out of high level ACM gutters and hoarding off a section of the pavement to the public, all of which is covered in section 3.0 of this report. A short interim report was produced to cover these works "Plaza Cinema Port Talbot, Safety Inspection Report, Structural Survey/Risk Assessment, June 2017"

Copies of both these previous reports can be found in the appendices for reference.

The rear portion of the building (Area 2) including the main auditorium and foyer area has a substantial hole in the asbestos cement roof sheeting over the seated balcony area. Water has continued to enter the building and there are trees growing from the seats extending out of the roof. There is substantial water damage internally with the concrete slabs cracked and water permeating through down to ground floor level onto the foyer slab. The whole area is in a very poor state of repair and looks to have deteriorated further since the 2012 inspection. It is recommended this portion of the building is deemed potentially dangerous and only accessed by qualified personnel to carry out bi-annual inspections to review if there has been any further damage to key structural elements. Both a desk top and an on-site risk assessment should be carried out prior to entering this area in future. Full PPE including masks, disposable overalls and gloves need to be worn when entering the building due to potential asbestos debris, extensive dry powdery pigeon droppings and potential vermin.

The front portion (Area 1) of the building inclusive of the feature tiled facade, curved retail units and canopy are also starting to deteriorate further, however, not to the same level of extent as the rear portion of the building. The concrete roof slabs to both retail units show evidence of water ingress locally but not extensive, this must be due to the deterioration of the felt roof covering. The same can be said for the concrete canopy with the steel soffit panels badly corroded and at risk of falling. These areas will continue to deteriorate further unless the roof felt is inspected and repaired.

The steel soffit panels would need to be fully removed to properly inspect the slab soffit, however given the condition of the exposed areas the hairline cracks do not appear to have significantly worsened.

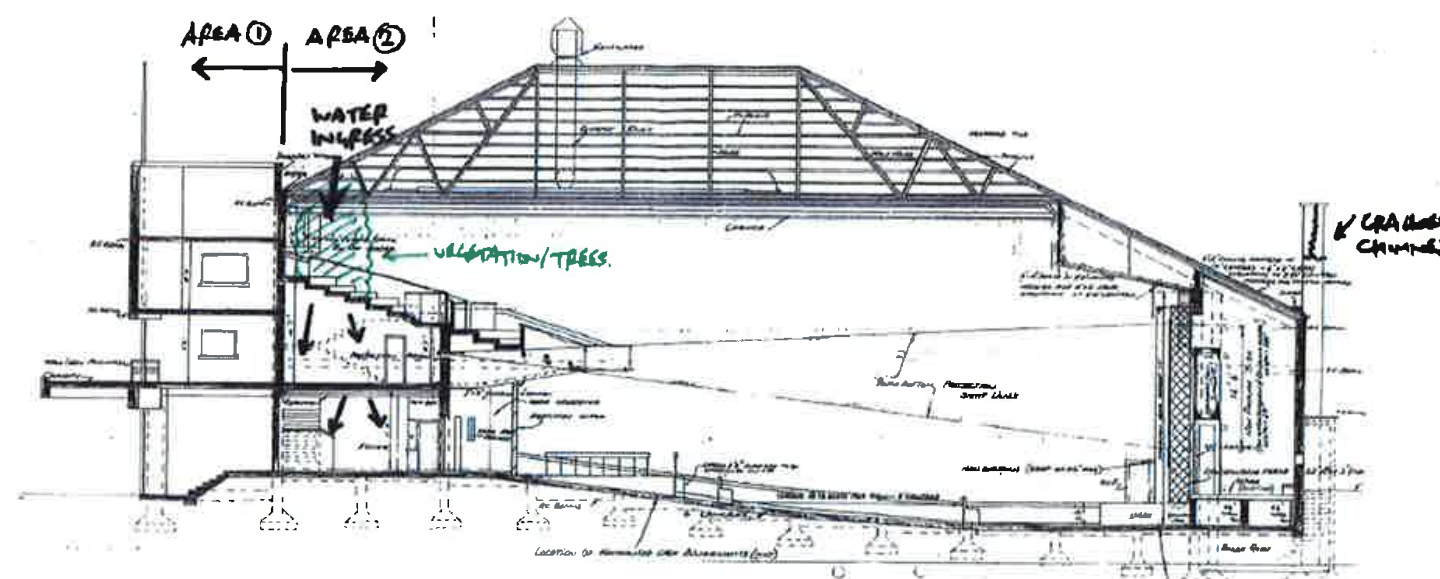
The feature tiles and lower curved concrete cladding panels appear to have deteriorated slightly but whilst they protect the structure against the elements there is no cause for concern to the structure at this moment in time.

It is recommended the front area is reviewed bi-annually until such time as it is re-developed. The building should also be inspected ad hoc externally following particularly bad weather such as gale force winds.

2.0 Review of 2012 Condition Survey Report

The 2012 J&N report was commissioned in order to provide a structural inspection and appraisal of a substantial re-modelling scheme proposed at the time.

The building is a Grade II listed structure built in 1939. It has been unoccupied since 1999 and has remained derelict since. The report splits the building into two areas. Area 1 is the front section of the building and Area 2 the remaining rear portion of the building (main auditorium). It was proposed Area 1 could be re-developed and area 2 be demolished as there was no practical merit in keeping/remodelling this due to its condition. Refer to section through building below indicating Areas 1 and 2:



Area 1 comprises of the feature tiled facade, canopy, foyer steps and curved retail units. The report identified the following key defects:

- Water/damp ingress into both retail unit concrete slab flat roofs with corroded reinforcement evident
- Concrete canopy, spalling soffit with exposed corroded reinforcement
- Metal soffit panels to canopy were badly corroded
- Ceramic feature tiles on facade, hairline cracks and concerns highlighted regarding adequate bonding of tiles and the presence of wall ties.
- Cracking of concrete cladding panels below retail unit windows

Area 2 comprises the main auditorium, balcony, projection room and boiler house to the rear. The report highlighted the following key defects:

- Broken asbestos cement roof sheeting to the front of area 2 where it meets the flat roof to Area 1. Balcony area left open to elements with substantial damage internally due to water ingress also affecting the projection room and entrance foyer below.
- Rear external brickwork chimney stack, top portion cracked and in danger of collapse.
- Render to side and rear elevations cracked and falling in patches.

3.0 Safety Inspection/Works Carried out in June 2017

(Note: Following the initial 2012 survey report urgent remedial work was carried out. The chimney stack to the rear of the property was Heras fenced off to provide an exclusion zone to protect the public should there be a collapse. Additional work was also carried out in 2016 when loose render and spalled concrete was removed on the Eagle Street elevation to remove the risk of falling onto the pavement below.)

Concerns of further deterioration to the building envelope were reported in June 2017 that instigated a site inspection to assess the extent of deterioration and potential risk to the public given the building is bounded on two sides by pavements used by the public.

During the inspection there were three main areas of concern:

Concrete Canopy (front elevation): There were badly corroded steel soffit panels, support trims and metal work hanging loose which posed a risk to the public walking below. The area has now been fenced off with 8ft solid timber hoarding to prevent access under the canopy. See photographs below:



Loose/corroded metal soffit panels (June 2017) Pavement hoarded off below (July 2017)

High level asbestos cement guttering: The guttering along Eagle Street was clearly overgrown with moss and vegetation. In one area it looked as though the guttering was sagging under the weight and if this were to fall onto a member of the public below it could cause serious injury. As a result the gutter has now been cleaned out and checked for damage including its support brackets via MEWP. The contractor has given assurances the gutter is secure. The rear and opposite side gutters were also cleaned and checked for damage. Whilst not immediately adjacent to a public highway they still pose a risk and a small length of guttering to the rear and side elevation had to be removed. See photographs below:



Overgrowth in high level gutters (June 2017) Overgrowth removed via MEWP (July 2017)



Close up of overgrowth (June 2017)



After clearing out (July 2017)

Rear Chimney: The chimney was clearly in a state of disrepair in 2012 and it was recommended to be reduced in height to a safe level in the J&N report. The chimney had deteriorated and looked extremely unstable and could potentially fall into the parking area outside the side boundary. There was a clear danger so the decision was made to remove the chimney down to a safe level. This work has been carried out and approximately 1.5m of the top section of chimney has been taken down. Refer to photographs below:



Rear Chimney cracked and leaning (June 2017) Top portion of chimney removed (July 2017)

Whilst cleaning the gutters the contractor took photographs of the roof at close range to give an indication of the condition of the roof sheeting, see photograph below:



Broken section of asbestos cement roof sheeting, exposed steel trusses (rusted) to the elements (Photograph taken from MEWP July 2017)

4.0 Site inspection

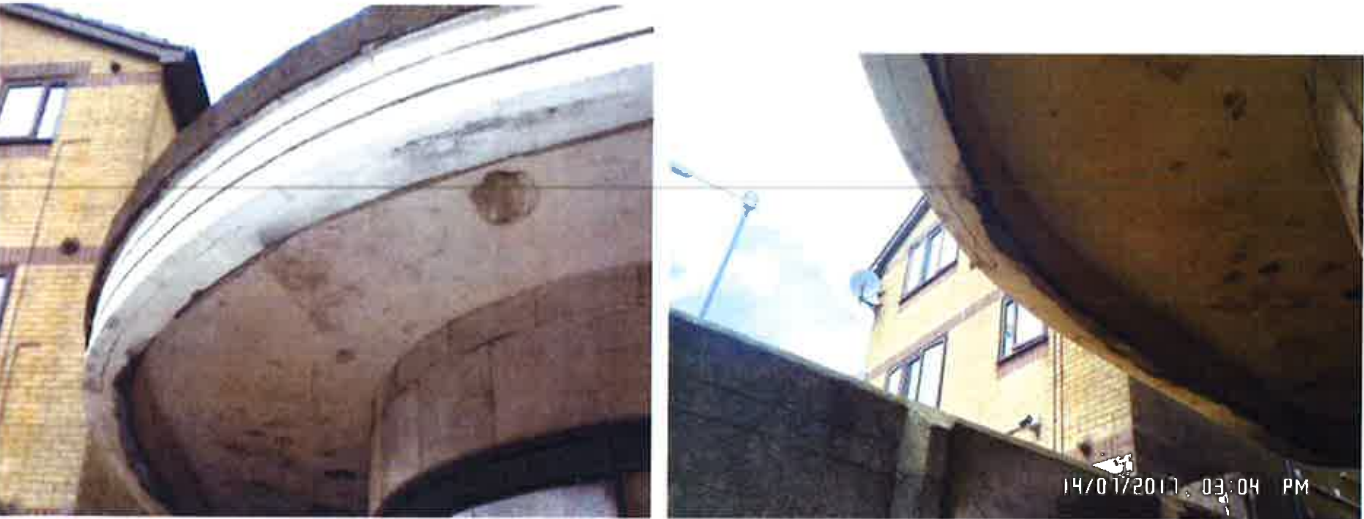
An inspection was carried out on the 14th July 2017 and the following observations were made with regard to key defects identified in J&N's report in order to draw a comparison and assess the extent and scale of deterioration since 2012.

The survey consisted of a visual inspection only from the ground. Internally the inspection was initially limited to the front portion of the building (ie; the foyer and retail units). This was due to health and safety reasons given the derelict condition of the building, presence of asbestos, pigeon droppings and potential vermin. A brief inspection of the auditorium area was carried out following and on site visual risk assessment.

Full PPE including masks and disposable overalls were worn, a full risk assessment carried out prior to entering the building from the front elevation. (A copy of the risk assessment can be found in Appendix C)

Front canopy

The exposed concrete soffit does not appear to have any additional areas of localised spalling compared to the 2012 report. There was approximately 1m of spalling along the curved down stand edge (town end) identified in 2012. Having looked at this area it appears that the edge fillet of concrete has been pushed out further by the corroded reinforcing bars within. Refer to photographs below:



Front Canopy, town end (2012)

July 2017

There is significant deterioration of the metal panels hung from the soffit which are badly corroded and delaminated around the edges including their support members. There is a corroded steel fascia section approximately 0.2 x 0.4m hanging dangerously loose that is not present on the 2012 report photograph for this area. Refer to photographs below:



Corroded metal soffit panels (2012)

July 2017

There does appear to be a few additional hairline cracks radiating around the soffit on Eagle Street and what appears to be additional calcium carbonate stalactites hanging from the cracks in comparison with 2012 photographs for this area. Refer to photographs below:



2012

July 2017

There are metal brackets and signs under the canopy that are also very badly corroded. It is difficult to assess whether they have deteriorated since 2012 (without testing by hand), however, 5 years of exposure to the elements would most probably lead to further deterioration.

The majority of the concrete soffit hidden by the metal panels is not visible for inspection. Given the deterioration of the metal soffit panels it cannot be ruled out that the concrete canopy itself has also deteriorated underneath.

There is clear evidence that the roof felt covering to the canopy has deteriorated along the edge compared with 5 years ago, it would follow that the felt in general will be in poor condition which would account for the additional hairline cracks and stalactites.

Front Elevation ceramic feature tiles:

The 2012 report made no mention of any defects to the tiles, however, it did suggest a detailed inspection would be required to assess if they still had adequate bond to the wall. During our inspection it was noted that a section of tile has fallen from the RHS curved portion of the elevation. This has shown that the bond has failed locally and water ingress behind could affect the tiles immediately local to this in future. Refer to photographs below:



2012

July 2017

Entrance area/steps

The paint is peeling off the reinforced concrete columns and beams. There are metal soffit panels to the front down stand beam that are badly corroded and on one side dangerously hanging loose. The Concrete frame and roof slab, however, do not show any evidence of rust staining or spalling. There is visual evidence of further deterioration in comparison to the 2012 report photographs, see below:



Photograph of entrance steps 2012



July 2017



July 2017



July 2017

Foyer area

The foyer area is directly below the projection room, upper balcony/seating and forms part of the main auditorium structure that has been deemed to have little merit in keeping. Directly above this is a large void caused as a result of broken roof sheeting with clear evidence of water penetration working its way through the building down to ground level with pools of standing water.

The paintwork to the soffit of the concrete slab, down stand beams and columns are peeling away badly in all locations. There is clearly standing water on the slab above as there are hairline cracks in the soffit with rust staining and damp areas. This area is clearly in a poor state of repair and has deteriorated further since 2012 with the majority of the feature cornicing breaking away from the ceiling. Refer to photographs below:



Foyer area (2012)



Downstand RC beam (2012)



Foyer area doors, July 2017



Foyer area ceiling, July 2017



Foyer area ticket booth, July 2017



Cracked ceiling slab/damp, July 2017

The projection room and balcony were not inspected as it was deemed to be dangerous to enter these areas due to the extent of dilapidation and excessive build-up of pigeon droppings over the years. We managed to gain access through to the main auditorium at ground level and the vegetation that was noted as growing from the balcony seats in 2012 are now fully grown trees that extend up towards the broken roof sheeting and beyond. The trees also appear to be directly adjacent to the front wall to the auditorium structure. Whilst this wall has not been inspected the tree/vegetation roots may have caused damage to the wall. See photographs below:



2012 vegetation over seating



July 2017, trees growing up to roof level

Curved retail unit No.1 (RHS larger unit)

The 2012 report identified water ingress through the concrete roof slab revealing some corroded reinforcing bars. During the inspection it was clear that the paintwork to the concrete in general had deteriorated with almost all concrete surfaces peeling. Refer to photographs below:



2012



2012



Cladding panels below window 2012



Additional cracking July 2017

Curved retail unit No.2 (LHS smaller unit unit)

Likewise with unit 1 there are hairline cracks with water penetration to the soffit of the slab in two areas with algae staining and exposed corroded reinforcement. The paintwork is also looking in a much poorer state than the photographs on the 2012 report. Refer to photographs below:



July 2017 indicates clear evidence of water penetration through hairline cracks



2012



July 2017

The slab and down stand beams appear to be in a fair condition however the slab soffit displayed areas of additional hairline cracks and water staining with exposed/corroded reinforcement. There is clear evidence that the felt roof is letting in water and it is increasingly starting to affect the integrity of the slab. If this continues the slab will deteriorate to a point where spalling of concrete will occur and significant concrete repairs will be required.

There are concrete cladding plinth units under the front window. The 2012 report only identified one as being badly spalled with reinforcement showing. The current inspection showed cracking to a few additional cladding panels which indicates ongoing dilapidation. Refer to photographs below:

5.0 Recommendations

This main purpose of this inspection was to assess any further deterioration to the front portion of the building (area 1; as referred to in J&N report) as it is likely this will be retained and form part of a future redevelopment. It is, however, difficult to ignore the continual deterioration of the main auditorium (area 2) with specific attention to the broken/missing roof sheeting over the balcony area.

Area 1, foyer and main auditorium

Safe yet brief access was gained to the main auditorium ground floor via the foyer area where the extent of the damage could be assessed. Given the height of trees/vegetation growing from the upper level seats through the roof gives real cause for concern. Access was not afforded to the upper levels due to the inherent risks. It must be assumed that structural damage has been caused to the upper floors in this area especially given the extent of water ingress to the floors below and the crazed hairline cracks in the soffit of the slab over the foyer. There could also be damage to the steel roof trusses which were already showing signs of corrosion in the 2012 survey.

This area of the building should be classified as potentially dangerous as the slabs above the foyer area are showing early signs of damage which must have reduced their structural capacity. The structure will continue to deteriorate further as long as the broken roof sheeting allows water to enter the building.

Whilst it is unlikely that there will be a complete collapse of the structure in the near future the severity would be high. It is recommended this area is inspected annually by qualified personnel to assess whether there is clear evidence of structural failure to any key elements in this part of the building. The risk assessment carried out for this inspection should be reviewed and used for future inspections on an ad hoc basis (refer to appendix C). If it is deemed too dangerous, access should be prohibited to this part of the building.

Area 2, front façade, retail units, canopy and foyer steps

The front part of the building (Area 1) is in a generally better condition than Area 2 with no evidence of standing water on the ground floor slab, however in both retail units the concrete slab flat roof covering is not watertight due to small areas of cracking on the soffit and damp.. These areas will continue to deteriorate further as long as the felt roofing allows water penetration through to the concrete slab below. In order to stop this it is recommended the felt covering is inspected and repaired as necessary.

The lower external concrete cladding panels along the curved elevations are continuing to crack and spall away, however are of no real structural concern

The steel soffit panel on the underside of the concrete down-stand beam over the main front doors is starting to corrode. The steel panels on the soffit of the concrete canopy slab are also badly corroded and in danger of falling. These items are not primary structural elements and their condition does not necessarily mean the underlying structure has been compromised. It can't be ruled out the concrete canopy slab is in poor structural condition unless the soffit panels are removed and the slab inspected.

The hairline cracking that is visible on the canopy soffit does appear to have slightly increased from the 2012 report photographs. Given the condition of the soffit panels and hairline cracks it is recommended the felt roof protection is inspected and repaired to prevent water penetrating the slab.

The façade feature tiles have a small area where a tile has fallen off and a clearly visible hairline crack in the same location which indicated the tiles are susceptible to de-bonding with water getting behind which could exasperate the situation. The tiles however are superficial and the structure behind should not be affected to any large extent.

It is recommended that if the front portion of the building is to be retained and re-developed the defects identified will only deteriorate unless the roof covering is repaired. It is also recommended that prior to any re-development the contractor would need to strip the canopy soffit to inspect any concrete damage and tap test sample areas of the feature tiles

**7.10.2 Appraisal of the Existing Structure produced by
James & Nicholas Structural Engineers, May 2012**

SYNOPSIS / EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

James & Nicholas LLP were instructed by NPTCBC to carry out a structural inspection of the former Plaza Cinema in Port Talbot, and then to carry out a structural appraisal of the existing structure with particular reference to remodelling proposals illustrated on drawings prepared by Holder Mathias Architects.

The building is a Grade II listed structure built in 1939/40 which has been empty since 1999 and is currently-derelect.

It is known that asbestos is present at a number of locations in the building and, as a result, our survey work was limited – we were not able to carry out any intrusive works nor to inspect any areas that were inaccessible or covered up.

When carrying out our structural appraisal, we separated the building into two defined areas based on the proposed remodelling, as follows: -

Area 1 – those areas of the existing building where there appeared to be potential practical merit in re-using the existing structure if the building is remodelled as proposed (i.e. the front section of the building, including the main entrance, entrance canopy, retail units and the feature facade).

Area 2 - the remaining areas of the building, where the proposed remodelling is so significant that there appeared likely to be little or no practical merit in retaining the existing structure, subject to this being permissible under the terms of the Grade II listing.

We noted a number of defects and/or issues requiring further investigation in relation to Area 1 and, assuming that it is agreed that Area 1 will be re-used if possible, we recommend that further investigations are undertaken in relation to the concrete frame, façade and foundations, and also that compliance of the structure with current Building regulations and British Standards should be confirmed.

We concluded that there would be no practical merit in retaining the existing structure in Area 2 and recommend that the extent of the proposed demolition should be confirmed as acceptable in terms of the buildings CADW Grade II listing. A 'Refurbishment & Demolition' Asbestos Survey will be required prior to the carrying out of any construction works.

We noted that the chimney to the rear boiler house is in poor condition and recommend that it should be demolished to a safe height and sealed as necessary, as a matter of some urgency. A 'Refurbishment & Demolition' Asbestos Survey will be required prior to the carrying out of any construction works.

We noted that water is entering the building in significant quantities and recommend that a scheme for sealing the building envelope should be agreed upon, the nature and required extent of which will depend on the proposed timescale for commencement of the proposed remodelling works.

6.1.3 Site Inspection

Our site inspection took place on various days during March and early April 2012.

Record Photographs taken during our visits are enclosed (see Appendix E).

i) General Structural Form (See Photographs 1 to 5, Appendix E)

The structural form of the building was confirmed generally to be as indicated on the record drawings.

Area 1 (Front Façade) is concrete-framed and made up of slabs, beams and columns clad with masonry walls. The masonry walls are generally of cavity construction and clad with ceramic tiles on the front elevation. Internal walls are generally of masonry construction and appear to be non load-bearing. Ground floor slabs appear to be ground-bearing.

Area 2 (Main Auditorium) is generally single-storey (but with two- and three-storey areas to the front and rear) comprising a steel-framed roof structure supported on a reinforced concrete frame. The infill perimeter walls to the sides and rear of this area comprise rendered brickwork of cavity wall construction. Internal walls are generally of masonry construction and appear to be non load-bearing. Ground floor slabs appear to be ground-bearing.

ii) Area 1 (Front Façade)

Flat Roof (See Photographs 6 to 11, Appendix E)

The flat roof at second floor level is concealed by parapet walls which form part of the main façade. It is accessed from the store room below via a cat ladder.

The front and side walls comprise concrete-framed masonry panels of cavity construction clad with ceramic tiles to their external elevations.

The rear wall abuts the main auditorium and is of similar construction to the front and side walls with a precast concrete coping and valley gutters abutting the main auditorium roof.

The walls are lined / tanked internally with a bitumen-type finish. The roof slab is surfaced using an asphalt-type product and is largely covered in moss.

No structural defects were noted but the membranes to the walls and roof slab were noted to be aged and in need of repair or replacement.

Second Floor Storage Area (See Photographs 12 to 18, Appendix E)

The storage area is located at the front of the building, its perimeter walls on three sides comprising part of the main ceramic-clad façade. It includes 'feature' metal windows to its front and side elevations.

It is accessed via concrete stairs from the staff areas at first floor.

Its external walls comprise brickwork of cavity wall construction clad with ceramic tiles. The masonry is framed with reinforced concrete beams and columns.

The soffit of the concrete roof slab above and the supporting downstand beams and columns can be seen clearly.

The structure is generally in fair condition. No significant defects were noted other than spalling to the soffit of a concrete beam on the front elevation and a crack in the soffit of the roof slab. The crack is approximately 1mm wide and runs from the front to back of the room, approximately at its mid-point.

A limited amount of water is entering via the roof hatch and also via broken glass in the front window, albeit not in significant amounts. This water is working its way down through the building affecting the structure below.

This area is also inhabited by pigeons and the floor slab and access stairs are covered with a significant amount of bird excrement.

Staff & Administration Areas - First Floor (Mezzanine) (See Photographs 19 to 23, Appendix E)

These comprise office and staff areas, stores and circulation areas. Access to the void between the balcony slab and suspended ceiling (both of which are within Area 2) can be achieved via either of two small store rooms at this level.

The concrete floor slab at this level extends out to provide a felt-covered flat roof over the two retail units situated at ground level and a front entrance canopy.

The front elevation of the building at this level is part of the decorative façade above the main entrance and construction generally is similar to that at the upper levels, comprising a reinforced concrete frame with ceramic-tile-clad cavity walls on the perimeter.

This level includes a recessed area just above the main entrance which was originally an external balcony. This has been boarded up and is now enclosed. The walls are clad with ceramic tiles and / or stone. Some spalling of concrete and corroded reinforcement was noted in the soffit of the slab over the balcony area, and also hairline cracking (which was in isolated areas and not widespread).

There are numerous partition walls which made it impossible to inspect the structure adequately.

The external roof slabs could not be inspected due to the presence of the felt roof covering. The covering is generally in fairly poor condition and in need of repair or replacement.

Main Entrance

(See Photographs 24 to 33, Appendix E)

The main entrance is located on the south side of the building and provides access from Talbot Road.

A series of terrazzo-surfaced steps within the cinema entrance area lead to the foyer which is located approximately 850mm above pavement level.

An entrance canopy wraps around the front of the building cantilevering off the main structure by up to three metres.

The canopy comprises a reinforced concrete slab and downstand beams. The front face of the canopy is clad with a decorative precast concrete panel and the soffit is rendered and painted. An underslung metal structure was also noted above the main entrance doors - this conceals a number of downstand concrete beams cantilevering from the main building. The underlying metal structure is not thought to be part of the building structure. It is very corroded and in poor condition.

The top of the canopy slab could not be inspected due to the presence of a felt roof covering.

Corroded bars were noted at various locations in the soffit of the slab and the perimeter downstand beams. The bars were noted as 10-12mm in diameter with very little concrete cover, sometimes only the render.

Water ingress through the roof covering was also noted, evidenced by the presence of calcium carbonate stalactites in the slab soffit.

The main entrance to the cinema comprises glazed timber doors between 'feature' columns, which appear to be either brick- or precast-concrete-clad reinforced concrete columns.

A series of concrete downstand beams and columns was noted internally. These were generally in good condition.

Self-Contained Retail Units 1 and 2

(See Photographs 34 to 43, Appendix E)

The two retail units are located either side of the main entrance to the cinema, off Talbot Road. They are each provided with dedicated level access from the pavement.

The external elevations are almost fully glazed sitting above a 750mm high plinth.

Unit 1 is significantly larger than Unit 2 but they are of similar construction with a concrete frame comprising roof slab on downstand beams and columns. Metal columns are provided in the south-east and south-west corners in lieu of concrete.

The plinth beneath the glazing appears to have been constructed using pre-cast concrete units.

There is evidence of water ingress through the roof slab in both units.

Slab soffits have been rendered but this has come away in various locations revealing corroded bars. The bars are small in diameter (approximately 12mm) and have little, if any, concrete cover to them.

Externally, one of the precast concrete plinth units on Unit 1 has spalled quite badly revealing a corroded reinforcing bar.

(iii) Area 2 – Main AuditoriumPitched Roof

(See Photographs 44 to 61, Appendix E)

Access to inspect the roof was limited due to the poor condition of the access stairs and platforms and also the presence of a suspended ceiling.

The roof over the main auditorium comprises asbestos sheeting supported on timber purlins which in turn span onto a grid of steel trusses and / or beams.

Ventilation plant (ductwork, fans, etc) was noted within the depth of the trusses in some areas.

A suspended ceiling comprising a grid of timber with inlaid tiles hangs beneath the steel trusses over the entire plan area of the auditorium (excluding the stage and backstage areas – see below) albeit this has collapsed in some areas.

The asbestos roof cladding has collapsed or been blown off along part of the southern edge of the roof so that part of the balcony underneath is now exposed to the elements.

The main section of roof comprises steel trusses spanning the full width of the building (approximately 23 metres) onto the concrete perimeter frame or onto a steel lattice girder located just in front of the stage.

The trusses generally comprise rolled-steel angle sections with gusset plates and riveted connections.

Where it could be inspected, the steelwork was found to be in fair condition. It was difficult to ascertain if it had ever been painted, but corrosion was limited to light surface rusting.

No other significant defects were noted.

The back (northern) section of the roof (i.e. above the stage and backstage areas) comprises a series of steel beams, purlins and joists spanning between the steel lattice girder mentioned above, a concrete 'goal-post'-type reinforced concrete frame forming the proscenium arch over the stage and the concrete frame of the perimeter wall.

Above the stage and backstage areas the ceiling construction changes and in these areas it is of similar construction to the roof. It is supported by the bottom boom of the lattice girder, the roof-level steelwork and the proscenium arch.

The roof structure and above-stage ceiling structure were inspected from the store rooms situated at high level adjacent to the stage and were noted to be in good condition, with no obvious structural defects noted.

Balcony

(See Photographs 62 to 65, Appendix E)

The balcony, which is located at second floor level, is accessed from the main foyer at ground floor level via stairs on each side of the building.

It sits beneath the main auditorium roof and over the first floor mezzanine and ground floor auditorium areas below.

The balcony structure comprises a stepped concrete slab spanning approximately 4.5 metres onto raking reinforced concrete beams.

The central beams cantilever approximately six to seven metres over part of the ground floor auditorium below.

Beneath the balcony there is a suspended ceiling comprising a grid of timber joists spanning between steel beams which are in turn supported by the main concrete frame.

The entire structure is supported on a grid of reinforced concrete columns.

A significant portion of the roof cladding above the central portion of the southern edge of the balcony has failed and much of the debris, along with bird excrement and plant life, is currently sitting on the balcony slab, along with the original seating. The adjoining valley gutter was noted to be full of vegetation and in poor condition.

Water is entering the building in significant quantities through the open roof and this is evidenced at all levels vertically beneath, particularly in the projection room at first floor level and the foyer at ground floor level.

The balcony structure could not be inspected from above due to the presence of existing floor finishes and the reported potential presence of asbestos.

When viewed from below, the concrete slab and supporting beams appeared to be in fair condition except in those areas affected by water ingress. In these areas the slab was noted to be in poor condition. When it was raining outside, water was noted to be constantly dripping through the slab through rust-stained areas (probably in the location of steel reinforcing bars).

Projection Room & Switch Room - First Floor (Mezzanine)

(See Photographs 66 and 67, Appendix E)

The area immediately beneath the damaged roof section of the Main Auditorium (i.e. primarily the projection room) is badly affected by water ingress.

Ponding of water is present on the floor slab and the concrete balcony slab and supporting beams are deteriorating as a consequence.

Staining to the soffits of the concrete slabs and beams indicated that corrosion of the reinforcement is taking place and areas of spalling and corroded bars were noted in the soffit of the balcony slab and some beams. Concrete cover to the bars in these areas was as little as 10mm in places.

Ground Floor – Entrance Foyer

(See Photographs 73 to 78, Appendix E)

The entrance foyer is located above the main entrance and it is accessed by a series of terrazzo-surfaced steps. Male and female toilet areas are located to either together with access stairs to the upper floors.

Downstand beams and columns were noted throughout the area, all of which are rendered.

The stairs to the upper floors are constructed using concrete. The floor slab and stairs are surfaced in terrazzo throughout.

Ponding of water on the slab in the central section of the foyer was noted, as well as widespread damage to finishes as a result of water ingress. This area is located directly underneath the projection room (at first floor (mezzanine) level), balcony (at second floor level) and the damaged area of the main auditorium roof.

The condition of the slab and beams in this area could not be inspected further as the finishes could not be removed due to the reported potential presence of asbestos.

Except as reported above, the structure was considered to be in fair condition.

Main Auditorium

(See Photographs 79 to 81, Appendix E)

The main auditorium area at ground floor level is approximately 23 metres by 31 metres on plan (excluding the stage) but has been subdivided to include two small-screen cinemas at the rear.

The main perimeter walls comprise reinforced concrete columns and intermediate beams with infill masonry cavity wall panels. The concrete frames could not be viewed internally other than in the backstage areas due to the presence of decorative finishes.

The columns are spaced at approximately 3.9 metre centres horizontally and the beams at 2.8 metre centres vertically.

The concrete frame and walls appear to be in good condition generally. Some spalling of concrete due to corroded bars was noted externally but this was in very limited areas.

The external render was noted to be hollow in various locations but appeared to be generally in fair condition. However it should be noted that access was limited to inspect this due to the limited reach of the access platform.

The concrete frame comprising the proscenium arch was also noted to be in fair condition.

The walls forming the two small-screen cinemas are constructed in studwork to the underside of the concrete second floor balcony and are non-load-bearing.

The ground floor slab appears to be solid and ground-bearing. It is covered with carpet and/or timber flooring and therefore its condition could not be determined.

The auditorium floor slopes gradually downwards so that it is approximately 900mm below pavement level just in front of the stage. The car park to the rear was noted to be 750mm higher than pavement level.

The perimeter walls in the areas to the rear of the building therefore act as retaining walls.

Stage and Backstage

The stage and backstage areas are approximately 900mm above auditorium level and suspended of timber construction. Access was not available to inspect the sub-structure.

The fire escapes situated on each side of the building adjacent to the stage are served by flights of concrete stairs to pavement level externally.

There are a number of small rooms flanking the stage at first- and second-floor level. Two of these accommodate ventilation equipment. The rooms are concrete-framed, as elsewhere, and the structure is in fair condition.

Boiler Room and Chimney Stack

(See Photographs 82 to 84, Appendix E)

The boiler room is situated in the north-east corner of the building and accessed via a single-storey annexe from the car park at the rear. The record drawings show a flight of steps leading to a basement beneath part of the backstage area.

Access to the boiler room was prohibited due to the presence of asbestos.

The boiler room is provided with a chimney stack projecting approximately four metres above eaves level at the rear.

The chimney, which appears to be constructed in masonry, is significantly out of plumb and contains some large cracks up to approximately 20mm in width.

Facade

Carry out a more detailed inspection to confirm the construction and condition of the masonry walls, including determining the presence and condition of wall ties.

Carry out a more detailed inspection of the façade to ensure that the existing ceramic tiles are adequately bonded to the walls behind.

Foundations

Expose a number of existing foundations to confirm their construction and condition.

Carry out an assessment of the ground conditions in the area, either as part of a desk top study in the first instance, or alternatively a comprehensive geotechnical investigation.

Building Regulations & British Standards

Check compliance with current standards, where appropriate, and also confirm compliance with the requirements for robustness as specified in Part A3 of the Building Regulations.

CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Preliminary Structural Survey

8.1.1 Historic Data

The cinema was purpose-built in 1939 and opened for business in 1940. It was not fully completed until 1950 (mainly in relation to the works to the façade) due to restrictions on materials imposed as a result of the Second World War. No significant structural alterations appear to have been made since construction was completed.

The cinema closed in January 1999 and has remained empty ever since.

It was Grade II listed by CADW in August 1999.

It is known that asbestos is present at a number of locations within the building.

8.1.2 Structural Form

The structural form of the building was confirmed generally as being in accordance with the available record drawings insofar as they gave details of the construction.

The three-storey accommodation at the front of the building is reinforced-concrete-framed, made up of slabs, beams and columns clad with masonry walls. The masonry walls are generally of a cavity construction.

The main auditorium is generally single-storey (but includes two-storey and three-storey areas to the front and rear) and comprises a steel-framed roof structure supported on a reinforced concrete frame. The infill perimeter walls to the sides and rear comprise rendered brickwork of cavity wall construction. Internal walls are generally of masonry construction and non load-bearing.

Ground floor slabs in all areas appear to be ground-bearing and foundations to be spread or pad type.

8.1.3 Structural Condition

Taking into account the age of the building (and subject to the noted access limitations to those parts of the structure which were either inaccessible or covered, due to the reported presence of asbestos,) the structure of the building appears to be in fair or good condition except as follows: -

a) General

The ingress of water both via the damaged main auditorium roof (significant) and via broken glass in the window to the front façade (less significant) has caused damage to finishes and is gradually causing problems with the reinforced concrete elements, particularly floor slabs and beams in the following parts of the front three-storey section of the building: -

- the balcony
- the projection room
- the entrance foyer.

Staining / rusting of reinforcing bars and spalled concrete was noted in these areas as a consequence of the water ingress.

b) Entrance Canopy

The reinforced concrete canopy over the main entrance appears generally to be in fair to good condition when viewed from below. Although water staining was noted and some spalling of concrete and corrosion of reinforcing bars, this was not extensive.

However access to inspect the top of the canopy was not possible due to the presence of the roofing membrane.

c) Boiler House

The chimney to the boiler house is in poor condition and remedial works or demolition should be carried out as a matter of some urgency.

d) External Walls

The external rendered cavity brickwork walls are generally in good condition and no significant defects were noted.

However if the external walls are to be re-used, further investigations should be carried out to confirm the presence and condition of wall ties.

e) Façade

The ceramic-tiled façade was noted to be in reasonable condition where it could be inspected. No major defects were noted other than some hairline cracking in limited areas.

However, if the façade is to be re-used, further investigations should be carried out to ensure that the ceramic tiles are adequately bonded to the walls behind and to establish the presence and condition of wall ties

Preliminary Structural Assessment Prior to Proposed Remodelling

The proposed remodelling scheme (i.e. to convert the former Plaza Cinema into a multi-purpose arts centre) illustrated on the drawings prepared by Holder Mathias Architects requires such significant alteration to the structure to the rear of the main façade (i.e. Area 2) that there appears to be little, if any, practical merit in re-using the existing structure.

Area 1 (i.e. the three-storey structure at the front of the existing building which includes the main entrance, retail units and feature façade) may be suitable for re-use and, if this is to be considered, further investigation (as detailed below) should be carried out in relation to the concrete frame, entrance canopy, external walls and façade: -

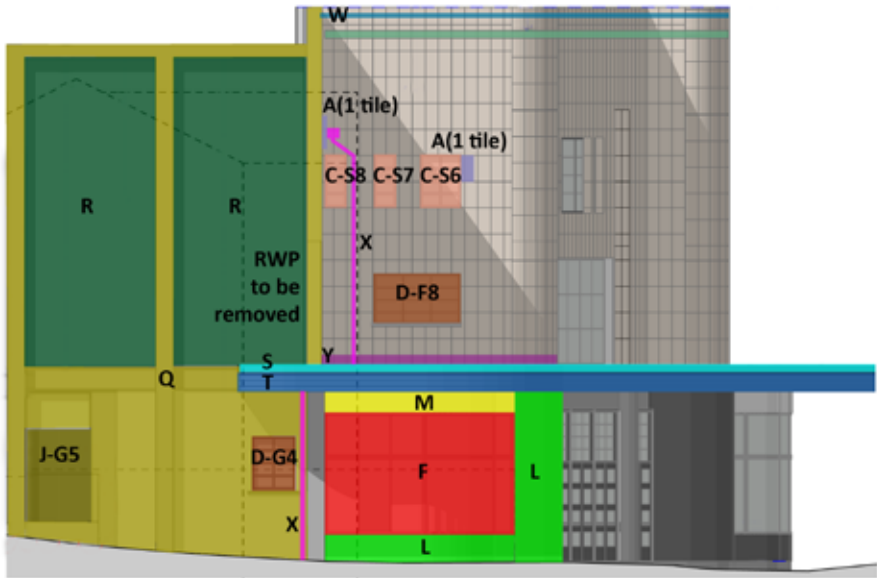
Concrete Frame

Carry out intrusive investigation to confirm its condition and to confirm member sizes and reinforcement details of any members that are to be retained.

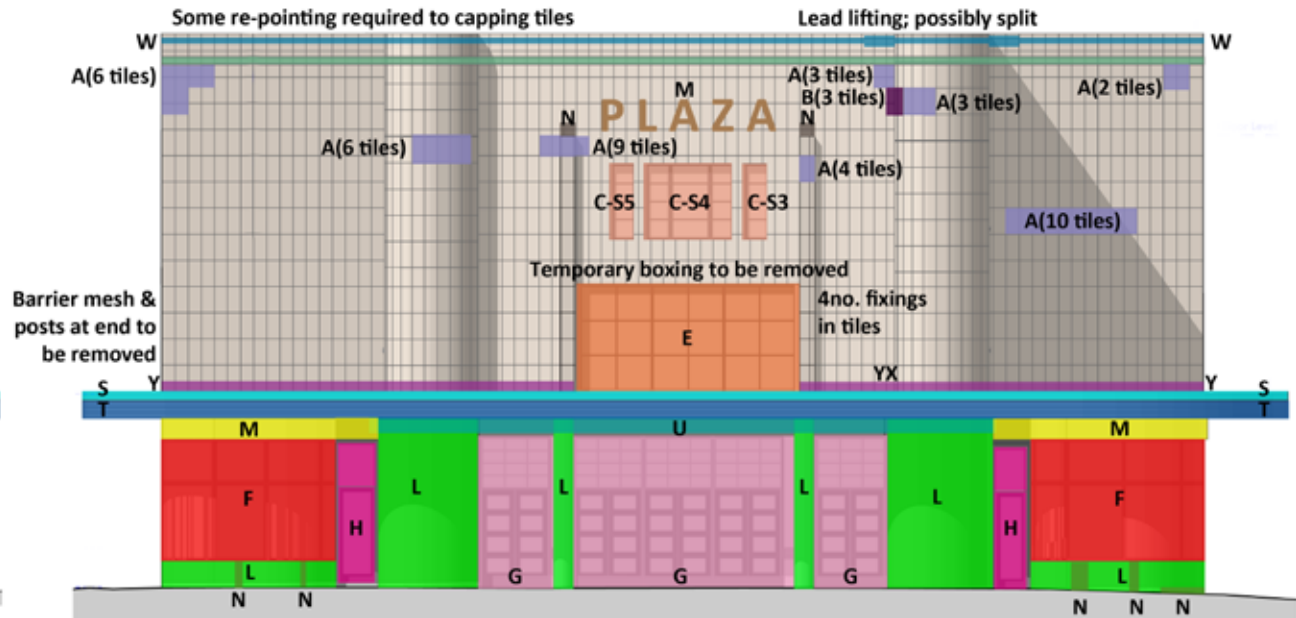
7.10.3 Existing Front Portion - Existing Elevations - General Condition & Repair Proposals

Key:

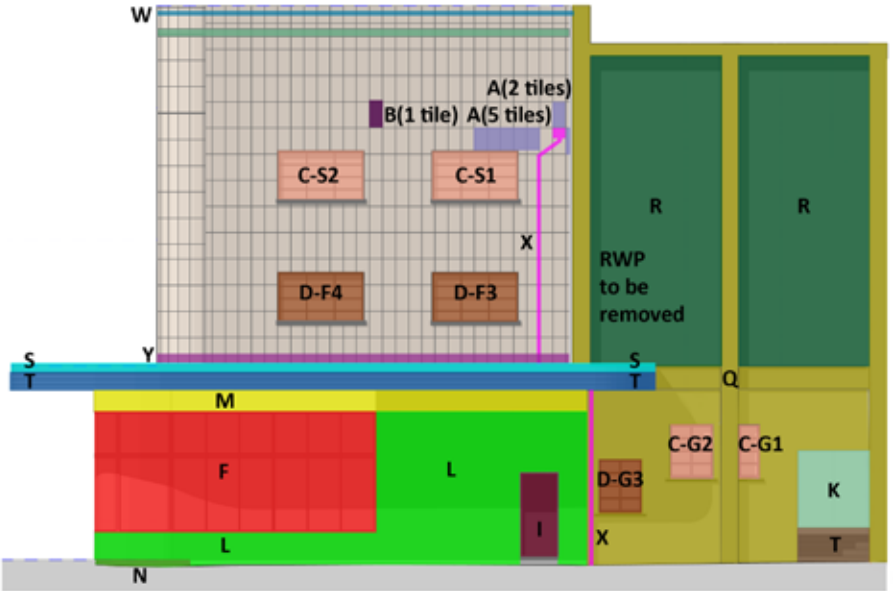
- A Cracks in Faience Tiling to be Repaired using grout injection (lime-based or epoxy or polyester resin) using a syringe & then glaze repair. Also some metal fixings to be removed & holes infilled. All faience tiling to be lightly clean using water & suitable detergent. Refer to Repair & Cleaning Specification.
- B Faience Tiles beyond repair to be Removed & Replaced, like-for-like. Minor spalling / delaminations may be gently & sensitively re-worked (by hand) using a non-hydraulic 'fat' lime putty: terracotta dust 1:3 mix & then glazed in situ. Refer to Repair & Cleaning Specification.
- C Crittall-style Windows in good condition. To be taken out, Repaired & Restored (rust abraded, filed or ground off down to bright metal), & Re-inserted, after removal of boarding. New single glazing. Colour of frame to be advised, possibly based on paint samples taken. Timber sub-cills to S3,4 & 5 to be replaced.
- D Crittall-style Windows in very poor condition. New Replica like-for-like Crittall-style Windows proposed. To match those retained in all respects. If possible, use god sections from window frames otherwise too corroded to retain & G5, F1, F5 & F10.
- E New double-glazed Window in opening. To be variant to existing Crittall-style windows, with larger pane sizes.
- F New thick single-glazed Shopfront Glazing (thickness of original), along with curved ends, within Repaired & Restored Timber frame & with Repaired & Restored rounded Bronze Cill.
- G Existing Timber-framed Glazed Entrance Doors & Overlights to be Rubbed down, Repaired & Restored. Plastic louvres & metal plates currently cover outside face of the overpanels. These are to be removed. Some glass panes are broken & require replacement. New brass art deco handles to match those lost.
- H Existing Timber Glazed Doors to Retail units, with timber-frame glazed overpanel. To be repaired & restored, like-for-like. Some new glass panes required.
- I New Steel Flood Protection Doorset within existing opening, replacing existing paneled timber door & frame. 3no. glazed over-panels within timber frame to be retained.
- J New Steel Door within existing window opening, with cill of window dropped to floor to enlargen opening. Colour to be advised.
- K New Steel Door behind steps. Colour to be advised.
- L Masonry Stall riser & Curved bays, rendered & painted black. Attempt to rub down all paintwork; repair damaged plaster, like-for-like, & re-paint, only if necessary; colour to be decided. If paintwork does not come off without damaging surface, undertake repairs & then re-paint black.
- M Reconstituted stone cladding panels to zone above openings, not painted, to be retained & repaired, as necessary. Some re-pointing (like-for-like) may be required.
- N Areas of damage to masonry requiring localised render & masonry repairs; i.e. re-bar exposed - like-for-like repairs.
- O New PLAZA sign to match original (which is damaged), using existing fixings & framework. Framework may require some local repairs.
- P New Lights on top of pilasters, uplighting sign. Existing light fittings to be removed.
- Q Existing Masonry Columns, Beams and Infill Panels to be Repaired. Existing Render to be Removed and New Render applied.
- R New Masonry Infill Panels to retained column & beam frame, Rendered to match render to existing panels.
- S Canopy Bitumen Felt Roof - in very poor condition - to be taken up & Re-applied. Dress new felt covering down front of fascia, as existing. At top / edge, form 50mm timber chamfer to drain water away from edge & back to roof.
- T Reconstitued Stone Profiled Fascia to Canopy Roof to be lightly cleaned & repaired in any areas necessary. Lead flashing below to be fully reviewed & patch repaired, if required. Joint between stone & lead to be sealed (black).
- U Metal Downstand to Canopy to be Removed & Replicated. Existing metal frame & panels severely corroded, so cannot be retained, even in part; & many panels have been replaced with board. Replication to match existing as closely as possible, in metal, painted a colour to be agreed.
- V Existing Steps to be Repaired & Restored, like-for-like.
- W Scalloped Lead Flashing. Lifting in areas. Possible splitting to be investigated. Dress back down & repair lead where damaged. To avoid damage to faience, bricks above lead course not proposed for removal, so lead cannot be checked or replaced. Capping of brickwork possible, if not exposed over faience.
- X Existing Rainwater Pipes & Hoppers to be rubbed down, any corrosion abraded off, primed & re-painted. Any damaged areas to be repaired or replaced. Lead dressing into hopper to be re-formed once roof behind is laid.
- Y Lead flashing at base of faience tiling, dressed over flat bitumen roof, damaged in areas. Removal of lead could damage faience tiling, so proposal is to dress new roof finish under lead, chased into bottom joint, & patch repair all damaged areas to lead flashing in situ. [YX = damaged to lead flsahing]



Part West Elevation



South Elevation



Part East Elevation

7.10.3.1 Examples of aspects of the Envelope requiring attention



A Cracks in Faience Tiling



A Cracks in Faience Tiling



B Faience Tiling probably needing replacement



C Crittall Window to be Retained & Restored - Window S2



D Crittall Window to be Replaced like-for-like - Window F8



E Opening to receive New Glazed Screen



F Thick Shopfront Glazing to be Replicated



G Timber-framed Entrance Doors to be Retained & Restored



H Timber-framed Shop Doors to be Retained & Restored

7.10.3.2 Examples of aspects of the Envelope requiring attention



I Existing Door to be Replaced with Steel Flood Protection Door



L Black painted Masonry Stall riser & Curved bay



N Example of Damage to Masonry



J Existing Window to be Replaced with Steel Escape Door



O PLAZA Sign



K Location of New Steel Door (highlighted in red)



M Stone Cladding above openings



P Existing Lights to be Replaced with New Lights

7.10.3.3 Examples of aspects of the Envelope requiring attention



Q Existing Masonry Columns, Beams & Infills to be Repaired



T Reconstituted Stone Profiled Fascia to Canopy with felt dressed



W Scalloped Lead Flashing at head of faience tiling



R Existing Masonry Infills to be Replaced



U Metal Downstand to Canopy to be Replicated



X Existing Rainwater Goods to be Retained & Restored



S Canopy Bitumen Roof to be Replaced



V Existing Steps to be Repaired

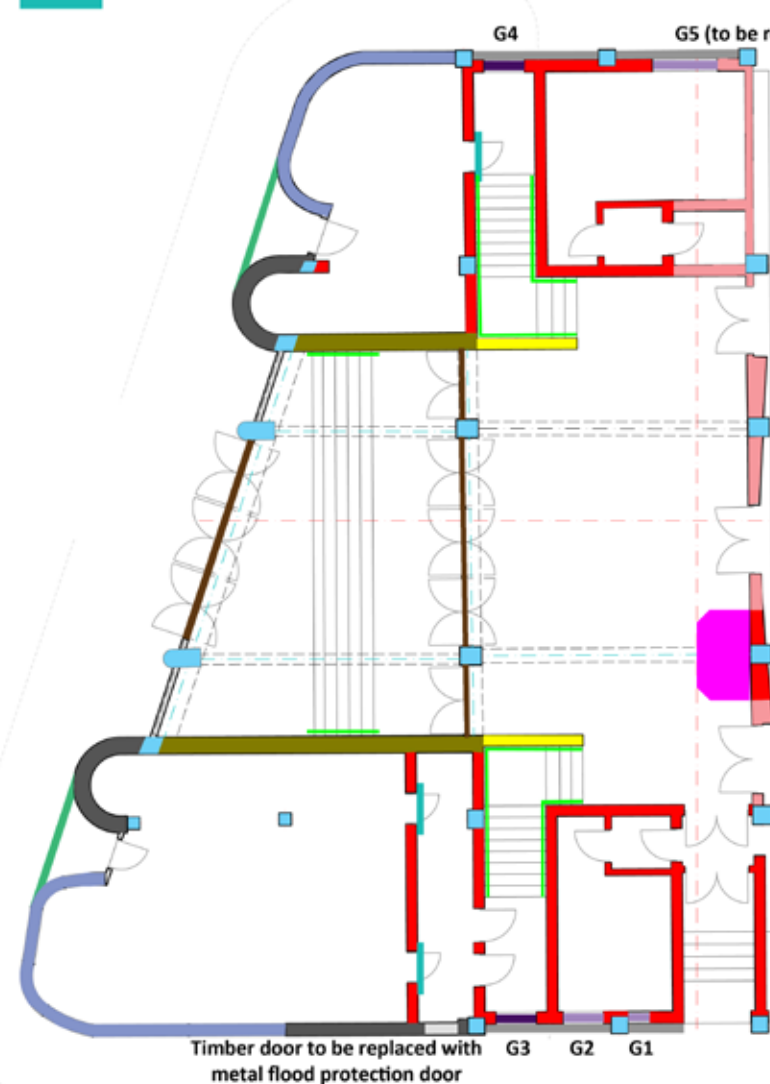


Y Lead Flashing at base of faience tiling

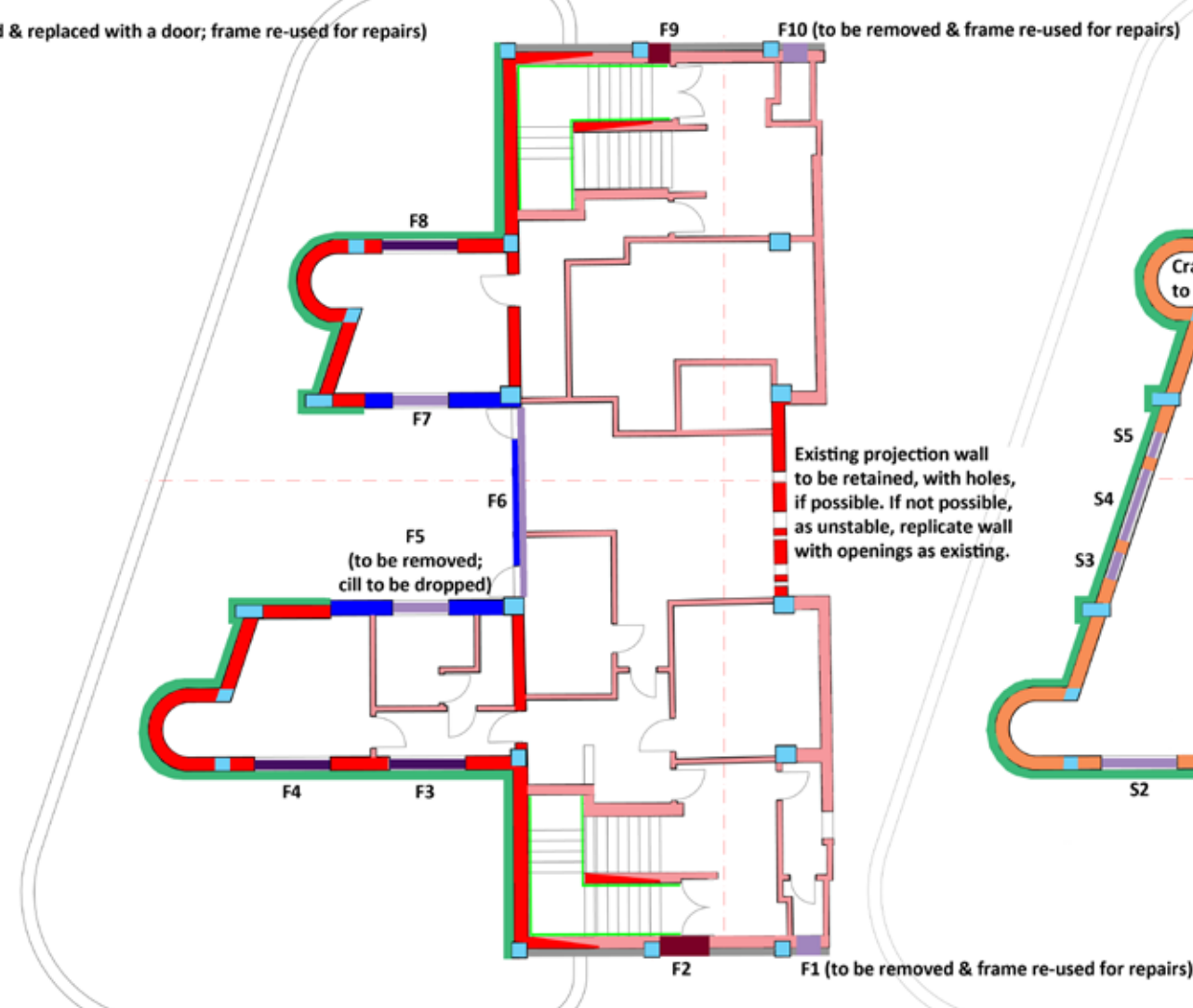
7.10.4 Existing Front Portion - Existing Wall Finishes & General Condition

Key:

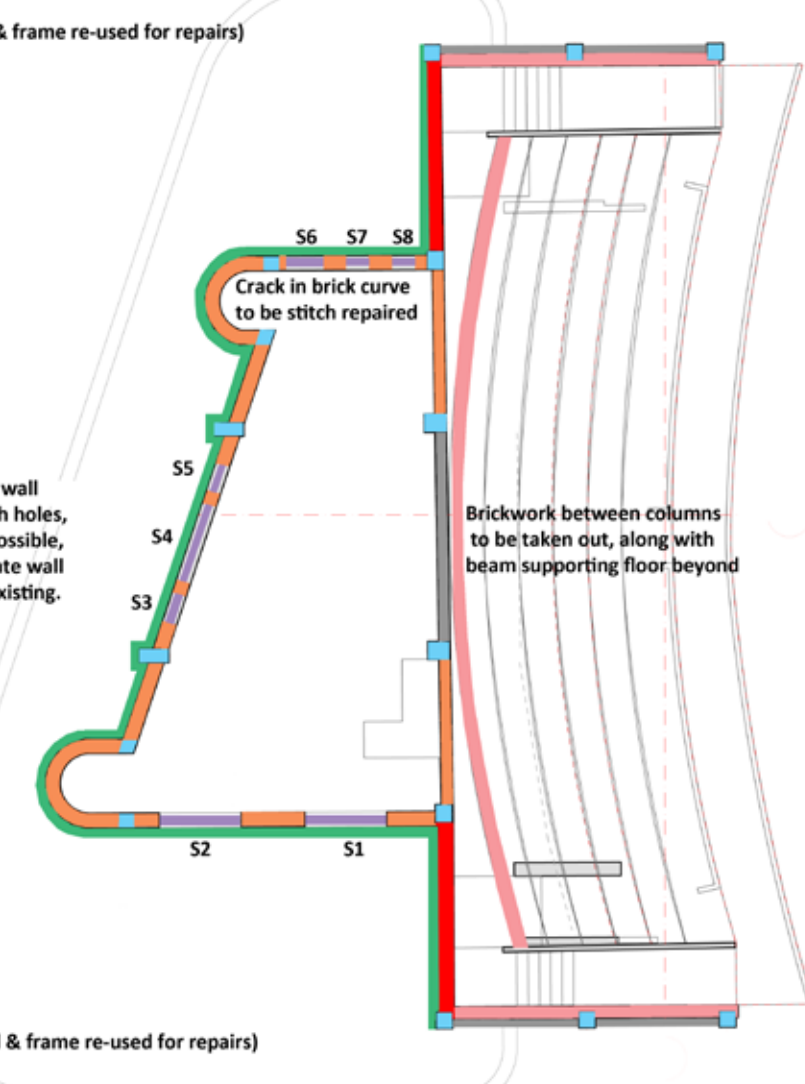
- Cream Faience Tile Cladding with eau-de-nil course near top. A number of damaged tiles (see Elevations mark-up), however all tiles remain & most are not damaged. Proposal: Localised repairs to damaged tiles, along with light clean. See Specification & Elevation mark-up.
- Grey-painted External Render. In poor condition. Proposal: To ground floor: Removal & then re-rendering. To upper floors: Removal, along with masonry, and new render on new masonry.
- Painted Plastered Red-orange Brickwork infill. Paint peeling in most areas. Some damage to plaster, however, generally in reasonable condition. Proposal: Retain. Rub down all paintwork; repair damaged plaster, like-for-like, & re-paint.
- Painted Plastered Red-orange Brickwork infill. Paint peeling in most areas. Some damage to plaster, however, generally in reasonable condition. Proposal: Remove & make good at junctions with retaining fabric.
- Painted Red-orange Brickwork infill (not plastered). Generally in reasonable condition. Proposal: Rub down all paintwork; repair any damaged brickwork & re-point, where necessary, & re-paint. Colour to be advised, but probably off-white, as existing.
- Reinforced Concrete Frame. Proposal: Refer to Structural Engineers' specification.
- Black-painted Render, with cut-in ashlar joints, on Brickwork forming curved walls and/or Black-painted large curved blocks. Proposal: Rub down all paintwork; repair damaged plaster, like-for-like, & re-paint, only if necessary; colour to be decided.
- Off-white painted Render, with cut-in ashlar joints, on Brickwork and/or painted large Blocks. Render to bottom section. No skirting. Proposal: Rub down all paintwork; repair damaged plaster, like-for-like, and re-paint; colour off-white.
- Large Reconstituted Stone Facing Blockwork with plastered brickwork backing. Stone facing to be repaired locally & lightly cleaned. Plaster to be stripped, to be repaired, as required, & re-painted.
- Curved & straight thick single-layer Glazing with horizontal joint at 3/4 height. Black-painted curved masonry stall riser at base. Slim metal grille at top; Bronze cil at bottom.. All frame black. Proposal: Rub down all paintwork; repair any damage & re-glaze.
- Low plastered masonry walls with sloping timber capping. Timber capping continues up stair wall as profiled timber dado rail just above steel circular handrail. Proposal: Rub down paintwork; repair damaged plaster, like-for-like, & re-paint. New fire-rated glazing to be built over.
- Hardwood-framed sets of double Doors with 5no. horizontal glass panes per door, & glazed overpanels to inner line of doors, louvre to outer line of doors. In good condition. Proposal: Local repairs; re-finishing with new/repared glass. New brass art deco handles to match those lost.
- Existing Box Office construction to be retained & repaired.
- Crittall Windows in good condition. To be taken out, Repaired & Restored, & Re-inserted (apart from G5, F1, F5 & F10), after removal of boarding. New single glazing. Colour of frame to be advised, possibly based on paint samples taken. Timber sub-cills to S3,4 & 5 to be replaced.
- Crittall Windows in very poor condition. New Replica like-for-like Crittall-style Windows proposed. To match those retained in all respects. Single glazing. If possible, use good sections from window frames otherwise too corroded to retain & G5, F1, F5 & F10.
- Glass block windows to be removed, along with wall.
- Round Metal Stair Handrails - partly corroded - to be retained, rubbed down / abraded, made good as required & re-painted.
- Internal Doorways to incorporate flood protection barriers. Barrier infills will be stored & not permanently in place, however, channels to receive infills will be fixed to the walls inside the storeroom and sealed to the walls.



Existing Ground Floor Plan



Existing First Floor Plan

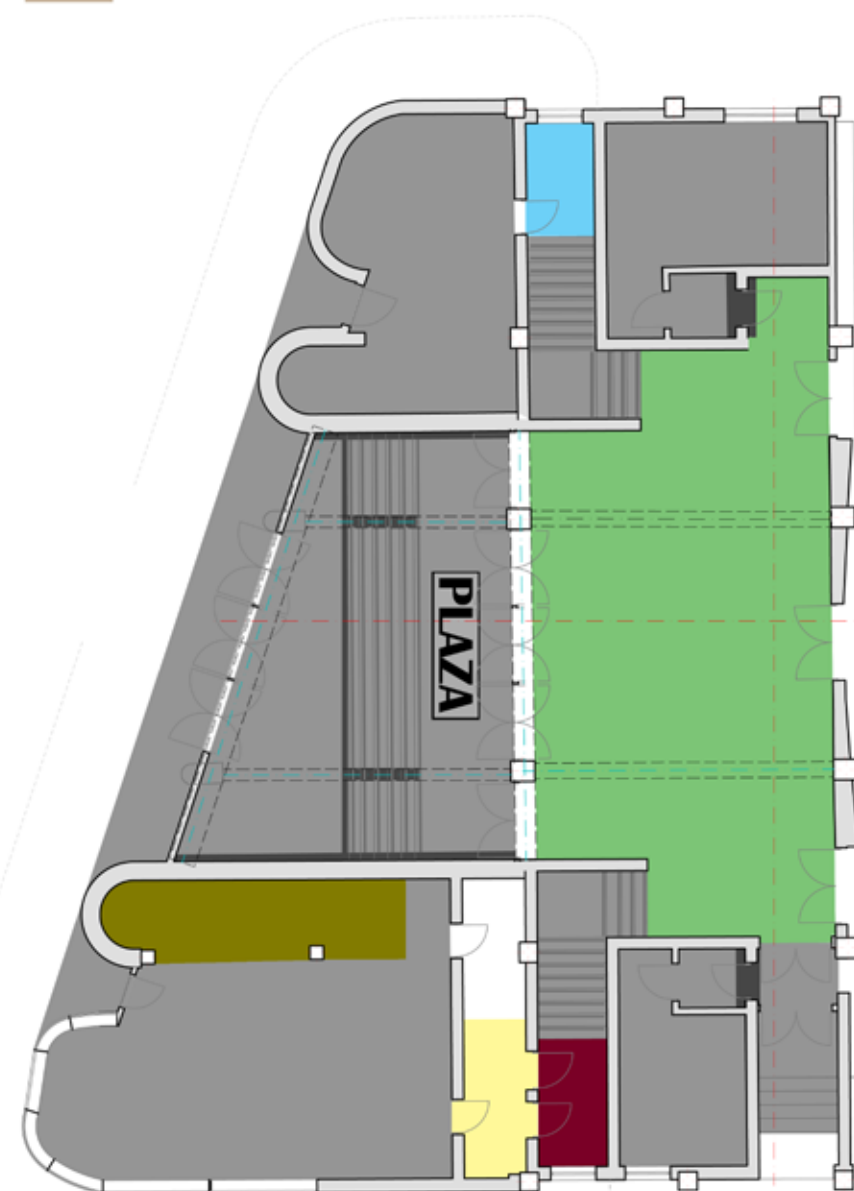


Existing Second Floor Plan

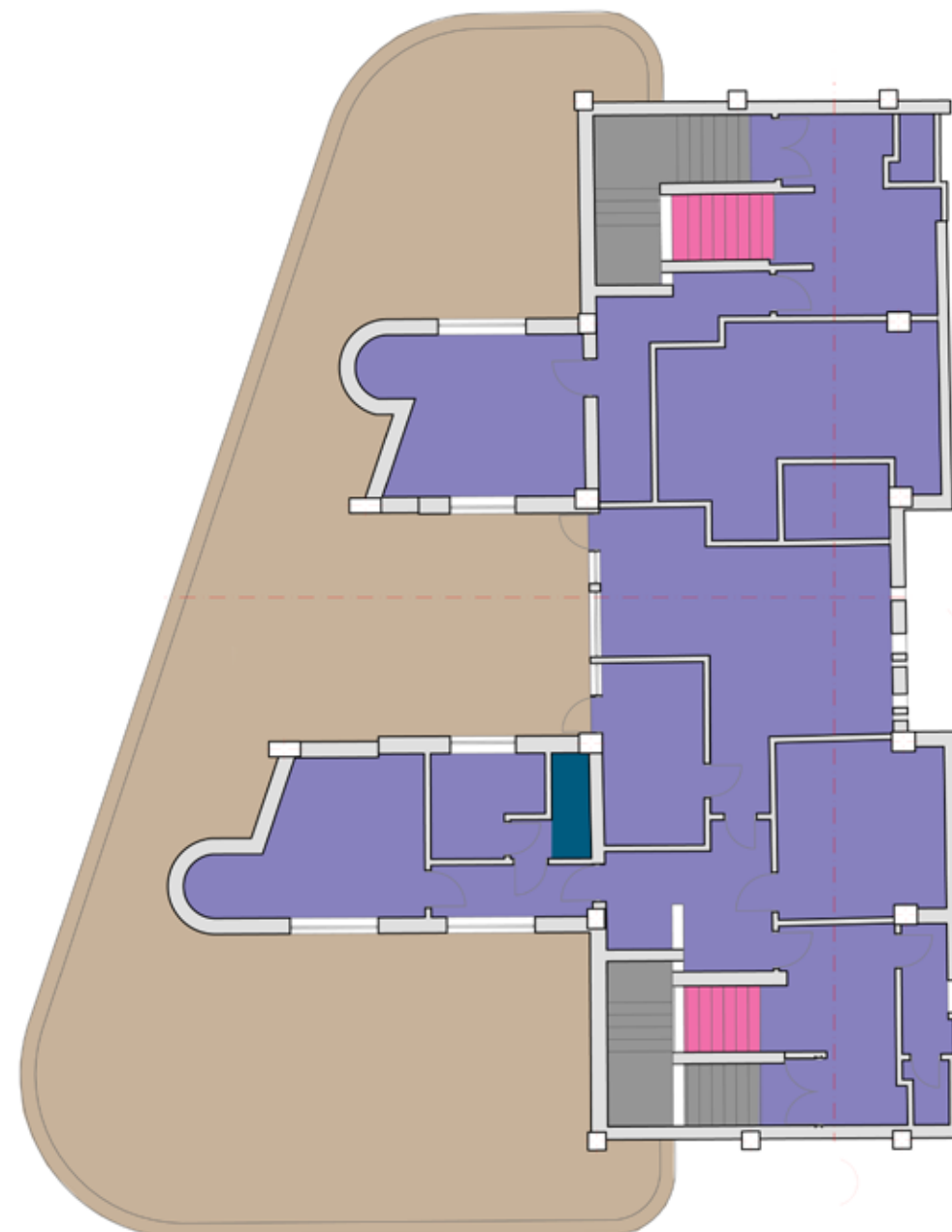
7.10.5 Existing Front Portion - Existing Floor Finishes & General Condition

Key:

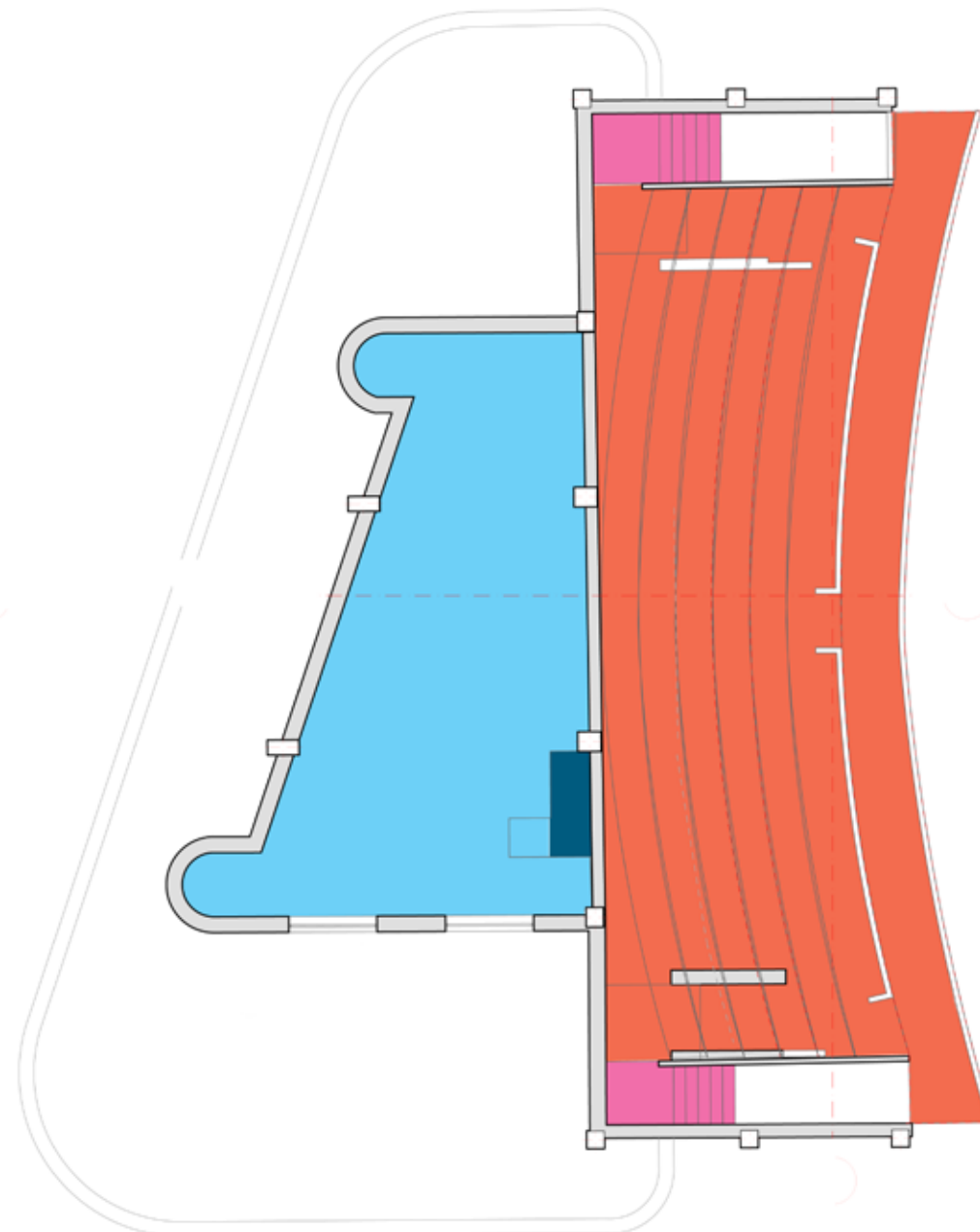
-  Green & Yellow Terrazzo Tiles. Generally in good condition, however requires cleaning before full assessment can be made. Proposal: Joints to be re-grouted and small number of local in-situ repairs may be required, then cleaning.
-  Mid-Grey Terrazzo in large bays with dark grey band on perimeter. Generally in good condition, however requires cleaning to establish detail. Also terrazzo steps with black & white checkerplate nosings. Proposal: Local repairs & cleaning. Use off-cuts from auditorium steps for repairs.
-  'PLAZA' lettering painted onto terrazzo, within thin black edged box with lighter grey terrazzo insert. Generally in good condition. Proposal: Requires touching up, mainly to the final 'A'.
-  Cream & Burgundy small Terracotta Tiles in checkerboard pattern. Condition appears to be reasonable. Proposal: Joints to be re-grouted and small number of local in-situ repairs may be required, then cleaning.
-  Burgundy small Terracotta Tiles. Condition appears to be reasonable. Proposal: Joints to be re-grouted and small number of local in-situ repairs may be required, then cleaning.
-  Linoleum on Raised Concrete Floor. Condition poor. Proposal: Slab to be levelled (for full accessibility). Levelling compound to be applied. New linoleum finish to be applied.
-  Timber staircases with carpeted treads & risers & pvc nosings. Generally in very poor condition. Proposal: Staircase from first to second floor to be removed & replaced with new timber staircase.
-  Carpet on Concrete Steps to auditorium. In Poor Condition. Proposal: To be fully removed.
-  Painted Concrete Floor. Small areas of spalled concrete & corroded reinforcement. Proposal: Concrete & reinforcement repairs as Structural Engineers' specification. New carpet tile flooring.
-  Uncovered Concrete Floor. Reasonable Condition. Proposal: Carpet tiles to be laid over floor, following any localised repairs.
-  Uncovered Concrete Steps. Reasonable Condition, however too steep for use. Proposal: Concrete Steps to be removed. Hole to be infilled, but railings to be retained, rubbed down & re-painted.
-  Canopy Bitumen Felt Roof. In very poor condition. Proposal: to be taken up & Re-applied. Dress new felt covering down front of fascia, as existing. At top / edge, form 50mm timber chamfer to drain water away from edge & back to roof. Area in centre to be made internal & carpetted.



Existing Ground Floor Plan



Existing First Floor Plan

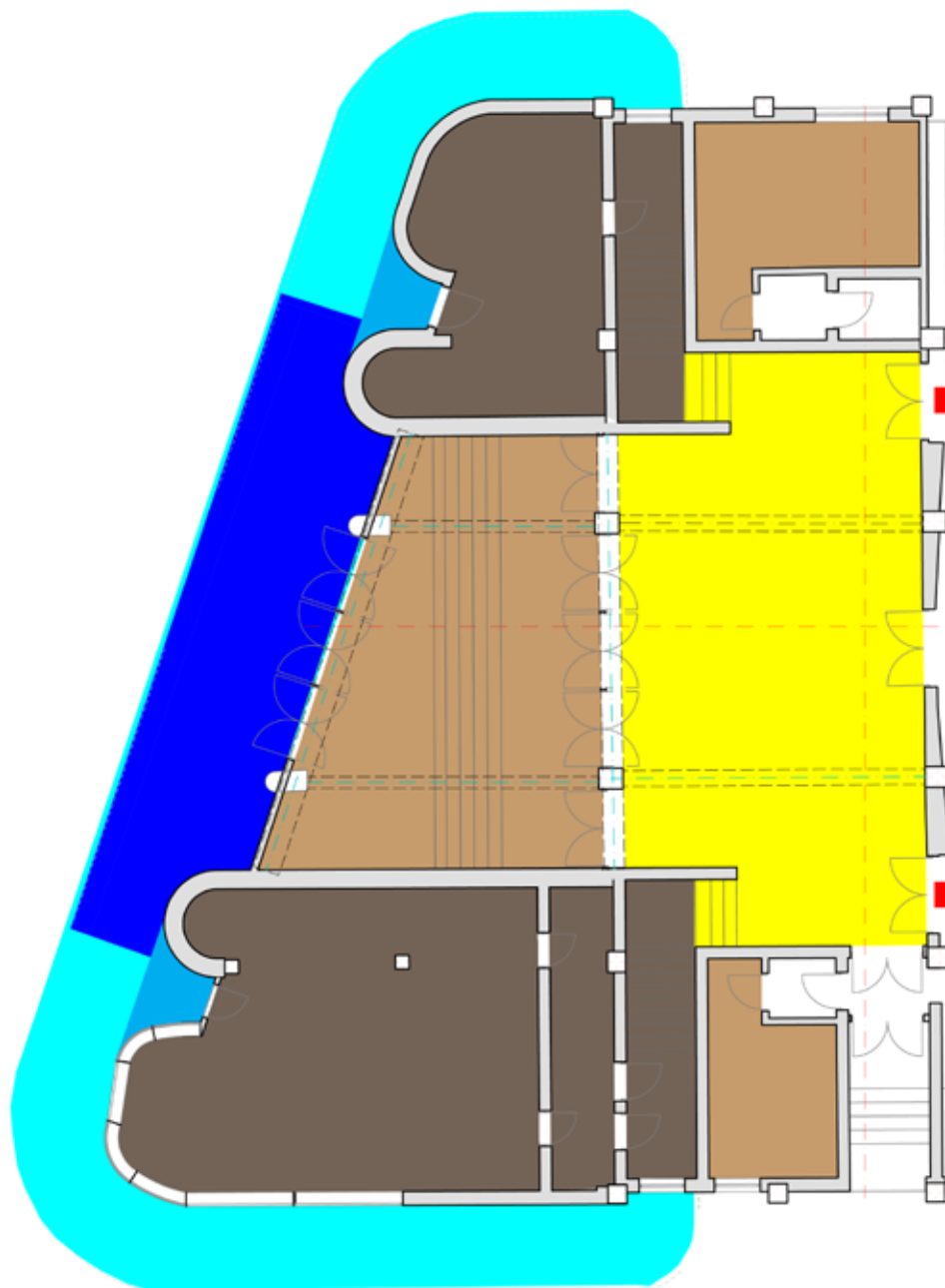


Existing Second Floor Plan

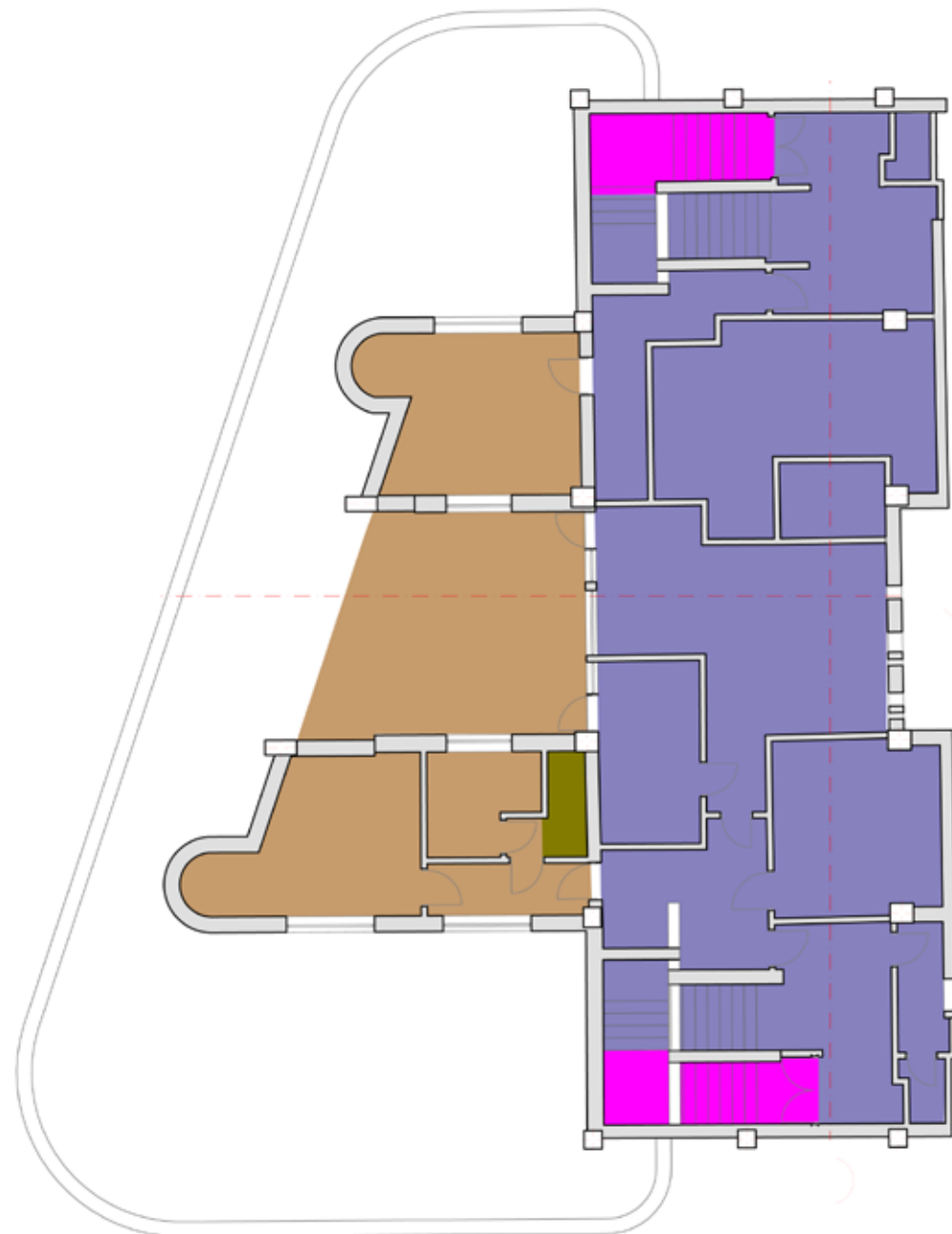
7.10.6 Existing Front Portion - Existing Ceiling Finishes & General Condition

Key:

- Painted Plastered Concrete Soffit with Decorative Yellow Chevron Cornice. In Poor Condition. Cornice damaged in many areas. Proposal: Rub down paintwork and re-paint. Remove cornice and replicate like-for-like. Colour tba, possibly golden yellow.
- Painted Plastered Concrete Soffit with no cornice. Paintwork in Poor Condition, however underside of Concrete appears in Reasonable Condition. Proposal: Rub down paintwork & re-paint.
- Painted Plastered Concrete Soffit with no cornice. In Very Poor Condition; many areas of spalled concrete and exposed reinforcement exposed. Proposal: Concrete & reinforcement repairs as Structural Engineers' specification. Re-plaster throughout & paint.
- Exposed Shuttered Concrete Soffit & Beams. Generally in reasonable condition, however, one large crack & a number of areas of spalling, exposing re-bar. Proposal: Undertaken minor repairs to surface, as Structural Engineer's specification. Paint white.
- Exposed Grid Suspended Ceiling. In Poor Condition. Proposal: Remove completely.
- Metal Downstand to Canopy - in Very Poor Condition. Existing metal frame & panels severely corroded, so cannot be retained; & many panels have been replaced with board. Proposal: To be Removed & Replicated, using like-for-like detailing.
- Concrete Canopy. In Reasonable Condition, however, with areas of cracking apparent & spalling concrete, exposing re-bar.. Proposal: Undertaken necessary concrete repairs as Structural Engineers' specification..
- Underside of Concrete Pitched Seating. In Very Poor Condition, with water ingress, spalling concrete & corroded reinforcement. Proposal: To be removed. New 'ceiling' to be underside of soffit of new composite deck floor above - painted.
- Original Art Deco style 'Emergency Exit' signs to be retained, repaired & re-used, possibly in different locations. May require modern, compliant signs to be used alongside these.
- Opening in floor to be infilled with new concrete slab, once stairs have been removed.



Existing Ground Floor Plan



Existing First Floor Plan



Existing Second Floor Plan

8.0 SECTION THREE - UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HISTORIC ASSET – ‘STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE’

8.1 An Assessment of Significance

One of the real strengths of any historic building assessment is that it focuses attentions on what is of high importance about a cultural or national asset, whilst similarly defining aspects which are of little or no importance. Thus, in planning what or how to conserve, or develop, areas around it, it is possible to make decisions based on the best possible analytical process rather than on individual preference, or some other arbitrary method.

This section of the report seeks to set out, albeit briefly, what makes the heritage asset, the Plaza, of value and should therefore be protected.

The assessment of significance has been provided to give an initial guidance on the proposals for the development.

Significance can be defined as the sum of the cultural, social and/or natural heritage values that make a building or place important to this and future generations. The aim of conservation is to sensitively manage change to a place to ensure that its significance is not only protected, but also revealed, reinforced and enhanced at every possible opportunity. It should also ensure that decisions regarding both day-to-day and long term use and management of the site take into account all of the values that contribute to a place's significance.

The purpose of a Statement of Significance is to identify the areas and aspects of the Plaza which have cultural significance. Cultural significance is a concept which helps us in estimating the value of a place and which:

- Helps us understand the past;
- Enrich our present lives;
- Will be of value to future generations.

Most historic sites or buildings are significant for a range of reasons, and it is important to understand all of its values in order that informed, balanced decisions can be made.

Many heritage values are recognised by the statutory designation and regulation of significant places. In statutory terms, the significance of the Plaza is formally recognised by its Listing. As a Grade II Listed Building, it is a building 'of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve' it, as appraised by Cadw.

However, while these designations provide baseline guidance to the significance of the Plaza, it is useful to go beyond this view to arrive at a deeper understanding of its values and significance.

Cadw's '*Conservation Principles for the sustainable management of the historic environment in Wales*' (March 2011), expands on how one can analyse the public's interest in heritage assets by sub-dividing it into evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal values. These values can be used to inform the structured and consistent assessment of buildings.

Evidential Value is deemed to derive from those elements of a historic asset that can provide evidence about past human activity, and especially its historic fabric, supported in some cases by documentation. These may be visible and relatively easy to assess, or they may be buried below ground, under water or be hidden by later fabric. These remains provide the primary evidence for when and how an historic asset was made or built, what it was used for and how it has changed over time. The unrecorded loss of historic fabric represents the destruction of the primary evidence. Additional evidential values can be gained from documentary sources, pictorial records and archaeological archives or museum collections.

All buildings — domestic, commercial, religious, industrial etc — have the capacity to provide evidence of specific past human activity from one or perhaps several periods. The extent to which they do so depends on coherence and integrity, or an intelligible development sequence. The extent of survival of original or clearly phased fabric and layout, or of detail relating to use (including internal detail) are particularly important.

Context may also be relevant: the evidential value of a single industrial or agricultural building for example will be diminished if other associated buildings have already been lost or damaged.

Historical Value is deemed to be the associative or illustrative ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present.

An historic asset might illustrate a particular aspect of past life or it might be associated with a notable family, person, event or movement. These illustrative or associative values of an historic asset may be less tangible than its evidential value but will often connect past people, events and aspects of life with the present. Of course the functions of an historic asset are likely to change over time and so the full range of changing historical values might not become clear until all the evidential values have been gathered together. Historical values are not so easily diminished by change as evidential values and are harmed only to the extent that adaptation has obliterated them or concealed them.

In practice, much of the historical value of an asset is inseparable from its evidential value — a well-preserved building can illustrate an aspect of past life much better than can a damaged or heavily altered building. But historical value may also reside in the less tangible — in associations with notable people events or movements of proven regional or national significance. As in the criteria for listing, however, these associations will be more powerful if the building as it survives directly confirms the association (i.e. is recognisably the building with which connection is claimed).

The difference between evidential value and illustrative historical value may seem difficult to define, but in general, evidential value relates to the material evidence about how a particular building or site functioned, and historical value to the capacity of that site to illustrate broader historical themes — its contribution to our understanding of aspects of past life, be they for example the organisation of society, developments in agriculture or industry, or in religious observance.

Understanding historical value therefore requires a broader understanding of the asset in context, whereas a good understanding of evidential value can be reached by close physical analysis on site.

Aesthetic Value relates to the external appearance and form of an asset and its relationship to its context and setting, be it a designed landscape, a working agricultural or industrial landscape, or a townscape. Aesthetic Value derives from the way in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from an historic asset. It may relate to conscious design or style or it may be a seemingly fortuitous outcome of the way in which an historic asset has evolved and been used over time, or a combination of both. It may relate to adherence to tradition, to quality of craftsmanship or technology of construction, or it may reflect the results of development over time.

High-quality conscious design — so-called ‘polite architecture’ often associated with named architects — and vernacular building according to clear regional traditions (and perhaps unconscious design), have their own aesthetic codes. But for both, composition, plan, method of construction, materials, finish and detail — including interior detail — are the essential elements of design.

The form of an asset normally changes over time. Sometimes earlier pictorial records and written descriptions will be more powerful in many people’s minds than what survives today. Some important viewpoints may be lost or screened, or access to them may be temporarily denied. To assess this aspect of an asset, again the evidence of the present and past form must be gathered systematically. This needs to be complemented by a thorough appreciation on site of the external appearance of an asset in its setting. Inevitably understanding the aesthetic value of an historic asset will be more subjective than the study of its evidential and historical values. Much of it will involve trying to express the aesthetic qualities or the relative value of different parts of its form or design.

Communal Value derives from the meanings that an asset has for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory. It includes social and economic value, as well as commemorative, spiritual or symbolic value.

It is closely linked to historical and aesthetic values but tends to have additional or specific aspects. Communal value might be commemorative or symbolic. For example, people might draw part of their identity or collective memory from an historic asset, or have emotional links to it. Such values often change over time and they may be important for remembering both positive and uncomfortable events, attitudes or periods in Wales’ history. Historic assets can also have social value, acting as a source of social interaction, distinctiveness or coherence; economic value, providing a valuable source of income or employment; or they may have spiritual value, emanating from religious beliefs or modern perceptions of the spirit of a place.

Each of these elements will be dealt with below.

The significance of a place is the sum of these values, brought together and expressed in a statement of significance. This statement forms the foundation upon which any proposals for change and enhancement of a place can be considered and carried forward.

In order to identify the relative contributions that these values make to the significance of a place and therefore the capacity for these values to be revealed and/or enhanced, a range of classifications are used.

For the purpose of this study we have adopted a fairly standard classification using five levels of significance, which are sufficient to measure each aspect of significance and to compare it to others consistently.

High: An aspect of value that strongly contributes to the significance of a place, forming a key piece of its history and cultural value which may be of national or international importance. In material terms, these aspects will best contribute towards the heritage values. Conservation will be a priority, and alteration is likely to be resisted unless it is demonstrated that significance will be greatly enhanced, reinforced or revealed as a result.

Medium: An aspect of value that will have some cultural importance (perhaps on a regional scale) and will make a moderate contribution to the significance of a place. In material terms they will play an important role in conveying the heritage values. Efforts should be made to protect and enhance these aspects, though a greater degree of flexibility is possible than with aspects of high value.

Low: An aspect of value that will make a slight (yet still noteworthy) contribution to the significance of a place, but perhaps only on a local scale. In material terms it will still add something to the heritage values (such as helping to maintain plan form and historic character), although this contribution may have been compromised by loss or uninformed intervention. A greater capacity for enhancement exists than for items of medium or high value, although a low designation does not necessarily mean that the feature is expendable.

Neutral: An aspect that has no discernible value that neither adds to nor detracts from the significance of the place. Informed change will be acceptable.

Detrimental: An aspect of the place that detracts from its values and therefore its significance. In material terms, removal or reversal of these aspects should be strongly encouraged.

8.2 Historical Value

Historical Value is deemed to be the associative or illustrative ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It relates to the capacity of the site to illustrate broad historical themes — i.e. its contribution to our understanding of aspects of past life. The Plaza is an excellent example of both illustrative and associative historical value.

Port Talbot is a town best known for industry – primarily for its Steelworks and its Docks. Despite the demise of this once life-blood of the town, it will, for a very long time, be associated thus. This is an essential part of the historical significance of the town.

The Plaza Cinema sits within a part of the town which was the railway crossroads at a time when coal, copper, tin, iron, steel and people will have been transported backwards and forwards in huge volumes. Coal, and other materials, from further inland, will have been off-loaded by the tonne on the site of the Plaza and taken to the steelworks and the docks.

However, Port Talbot also has a long and distinguished history of culture and invention. As local comedian, Rob Brydon, jokingly said in 2010 in his BBC television series ‘The Trip’ “You’ve got Hopkins, me, Richard Burton and Sheen. The Port Talbot four. That’s what we’re known as.” He may have been joking, but Port Talbot is not only synonymous with the steel industry, but as the ‘actors’ capital of Wales’. Richard Burton, Anthony Hopkins and Michael Sheen, along with Rob Brydon, and the operatic soprano Rebecca Evans, head a list of world-renowned performers who came from the area, and who have retained a personal connection with the town.

And, whilst such associations for a town might not always be direct associations to a building, for the Plaza, these associations do extend to the building. Each of these performers has actively reminisced about how the Plaza was a pertinent part of their respective upbringings.

The opening of the Plaza is documented in Richard Burton’s diary for Monday, 25th March 1940 as follows “Went down to Uncle Ben’s this morning to fetch stones for the cement bed. Dilwyn came with me. Went to Majestic to see ‘King of the River’. Plaza opened today and it was all crowded out”. Although the Plaza was so busy on opening night that Richard Burton went elsewhere, his diary shows he made it to the Plaza later that year to see George Formby in ‘Come on George’.

Anthony Hopkins’ childhood memories of the Plaza inspired his classical musical composition ‘1947 – The Plaza’ which was his homage to the Port Talbot cinema that used to transport him to another world, stating that “On Friday nights we’d go to the pictures. I loved the pictures. Sometimes the Majestic in Bethany Square or the Regent in Taibach but the Plaza was the place to go.”

Martin Sheen made a BBC Radio 4 documentary entitled ‘Port Talbot Paradiso’, in which Rob Brydon also featured heavily, talking about his memories of the Plaza and how his parents supposedly met at the Italian café on the corner of the Plaza which he described as “a veritable hotbed for the courting couples of Port Talbot in the post war era”.

Martin Sheen’s production of ‘The Passion’ in 2011 through Port Talbot, in which he also starred, was ‘announced’ on the front of the derelict Plaza. In ‘Port Talbot Paradiso’, Sheen said there was only one place to announce the start of The Passion in 2011 and that was on the side of the Plaza. Forty days before the performance, the words “It has begun” were painted onto the wooden boarding in big white and red letters on a black background. At the same time, artwork was painted onto the wooden boards surrounding the derelict Plaza with images of Richard Burton, Anthony Hopkins and Michael Sheen painted there together with daffodils, the national symbol of Wales.

Operatic soprano Rebecca Evans says in ‘Port Talbot Paradiso’ that her aunt had spoken of a formidable lady called Madame Miriam Joseph James who would put on evenings of song and dance during the film intervals and that she had a brother, Jacky Jones, with a band that would play there too. She also recalls seeing ‘Jaws’ and ‘Grease’ at the Plaza, admitting to knowing all the words to Grease and dancing and singing along to the film in the Plaza, whilst Michael Sheen recalls people queuing round the block and all the way down Station Road to see ‘Star Wars’ there.

Cinema-going, and the gleaning of news, was an enormous part of the lives of people of all ages through the 1930s, 40s and 50s. With the growing popularity of television, cinema still had its part to play in the 1950s and 60s showing live entertainment as well as cinema, with the opportunity to see the best known names of the age; and, whilst less frequented in the 1970s and 1980s, blockbuster movies continued to draw people to the cinema, as it would be some time before these films would appear on the television, or even video. Everyone has their memories of visits to the cinema and only a few are referred to above.

The Art Deco architectural style - characterised by clean lines, bold shapes, colour, geometric designs and decoration - became a favourite for building types associated with the modern age of the 1930s, particularly with cinemas, a new building type celebrating a new phenomenon. There were overlaps with the Modernist style, with the use of clean lines and minimal decoration; a style which also leant itself well to buildings associated with entertainment, providing glamorous interiors for theatres, cinemas, hotels, restaurants and luxury apartments. Described in the listing as “Modernist style with Art Deco influences”, the Plaza Cinema in Port Talbot is a very clear illustration of the Art Deco and Modernist architectural styles which were used across the UK and the world, with its clean and sweeping lines and streamlined and bold, curving shapes; its curved canopy; its faience tiling and Crittall-style windows; its colour scheme of cream and eau de nil green; its terrazzo flooring, black and white checkerplate tiles and linoleum flooring; its chevron / zigzag geometric decoration to the foyer cornice; its bold signage; and its Britannic Bold font lettering.

Indeed, whilst the Plaza was built for the independent Cardiff syndicate, its design is synonymous with that of the ‘house style’ of the vast network of Odeon cinemas in the 1930s, a chain founded by Oscar Deutsch (1893-1941) in Birmingham in 1930, which usually included soaring towers and fins; dynamic, curved canopies; facades clad in black and buff-coloured faience pierced with horizontal bands of coloured faience; curved and semi-circular wings; Crittall steel windows; and extensive use of neon lighting.

Of note is the fact that the Plaza is one of only six remaining cinemas for the Art Deco period on the 1920s and 1930s which have survived throughout Wales; the other surviving cinemas are the former Odeons at Llanelli, Newport and Rhyl, the Plaza in Flint and the Palace in Conwy.

A well-preserved building can illustrate an aspect of past life much better than can a damaged or heavily altered building. The Plaza’s relatively unaltered form, layout and decoration, aside from the insertion of two cinemas in the rear stalls area, is largely unaltered.

The part that the Plaza played in the lives the people of Port Talbot between 1939 and 1999 is considerable. It is both illustrative of, and associative with, the way people spent their leisure time for 60 years. It illustrates a pastime which is still very relevant to today, and is indeed the precursor to so much of our modern leisure activity – watching television and online entertainment, keeping up with the news, and meeting up with friends - however, it illustrates a very different way of doing so to now.

The fact that the Plaza retains so much of the provision and character which it had 80 years ago, and through its 60 year working life, simple adds to its historical value.

It is this level of preservation, when so many of these early cinemas no longer exist; its illustration of, and contribution to our understanding of, such a prominent part of past life; its prominence within the town; and its association with such prominent names as Burton, Hopkins, Sheen, Brydon and Evans; which affords the Plaza Medium Historical Value. This is because it forms a key piece of the history and cultural value of the area, however, one which is more of local and regional importance than of national importance.

This means that, whilst efforts should be made to protect and enhance those aspects which afford this level of historical value - and any project should encourage the interpretation of its history and heritage – a greater degree of flexibility is possible with changes to the fabric than with aspects of high value. In materials terms, this might suggest that the building’s art deco frontage and its foyer would be the more resistant to loss or change, whilst the rear auditorium could possibly accommodate change or loss.

8.3 Evidential Value

Insofar as Evidential Value is deemed to derive from those elements of an historic asset that can provide evidence about past human activity, and especially its historic fabric, the Plaza provides considerable evidence from 60 years of human activity.

As stated under ‘historical value’, the Plaza retains much of the provision and character which it had 80 years ago, when it was built, and through its 60 year working life. It is extremely well-preserved, with few major alterations evident from its inception. The next series of paragraphs backs up this claim.

Photographs of the frontage of the Plaza onto Talbot Road from 1948 and 1950, suggest that the form of the building from its construction date of 1939, and the treatment of the frontage, from its completion date of 1950, are very much as we see today. Whilst it is of for this main body is much as it is today, suggesting that the slightly strange lean-to section of the roof to the north end is likely to have been original and not an alteration.

The article in the Port Talbot Guardian on Friday, 22nd March 1940, after its opening night, stated that “the building . . . has the main façade carried out in reconstructed stone”, albeit a finish which was covered up on the upper two floors in 1950. It went on to state that “the main entrance is approached by a loggia flanked by two lock-up shops. After passing through the main entrance doors there is a spacious foyer complete with kiosk”. This is still very much as it is now.

The article then stated that “the foyer, tastefully decorated in various shades, with fibrous plaster enrichments in gold and green”. This reference to the “with fibrous plaster enrichments in gold and green” is interesting, as these enrichments are currently golden yellow, however, were, at some point burgundy red. The terrazzo tiles to the foyer, and of course the faience tiling, were both cream and green, so this ‘gold and green’ will be continued the general colour theme.

The article then stated that “the foyer . . . has two staircases leading to the balcony, and three double entrance doors to auditorium. Cloak rooms and lavatories are arranged under the balcony staircases and entered from the foyer”. Again this layout is as it is today, with the two staircases, three double doors and lavatories under the stairs. However, one point of interest relates to my comment under ‘Character, Architectural Design and Materials of the Albert Hall and Changes it underwent’ where I stated that “from the first floor, the staircases rise again, this time to the back of the upper tier balcony to the large cinema space. Here the seating remains, in its curved form, with a curved back wall of brick. It is of interest that these stairs are not of terrazzo, but finished in carpet, and the staircases both sides appear to pass through the middle of what appears to have once been a window opening, but is now blocked up. This leads on to assume that the first to second floor staircases are not original and were added in at a later time. How the balcony would have been accessed prior to this is not yet known”.

During the soft strip of the staircase, this will require a further review – are the stairs original? If so, was there actually a window at the location of the physical staircase? Or, were there different stairs which have been replaced and re-aligned?

The article went on to state that “The floors of auditorium and balcony are finished in oregon pine flooring laid in mastic, and with boards secret nailed, and five frame Wilton carpet is laid to all gangways. The proscenium and window curtains are in velour of a petunia shade with satin screen curtain in old gold, and the seats are covered in moquette of a green shade. The interior decorations are treated to harmonise with the furnishings. A car park has been provided for the convenience of patrons. The frame work, staircases, floors, balcony and flat roofs are constructed in reinforced concrete, with wall panels in 1 in. cavity brickwork between piers and beams; while the roof is carried by steel trusses and covered with asbestos sheets, with concrete flat roof to main entrance and shops. The operator’s box and staff rooms are over the foyer and under the balcony: the placing of the box in this position gives a horizontal throw of the picture on to the screen and obviates distortion.” Again, much of this is as we still have it.

Even the lettering on the foyer floor spelling out ‘PLAZA’ in Britannic Bold font lettering, synonymous with the art deco period, appears to be original; and, whilst slightly damaged, it remains almost intact.

The Plaza has, as one would expect, undergone some change. In 1988, the single-screen cinema was converted into a multi-screen operation, with the stalls converted into three separate screens with a fourth screen in the circle. This meant the insertion of acoustic partitioning to form the individual cinemas. Since its closure in 1999, and possible before 1999, many window and door openings have been blocked up. However, this is both relatively minor and reversible change.

Where additional evidential values can be gained from documentary sources and pictorial records, there have been a few documentaries produced, not least a long two-parter entitled ‘Road to Plaza Cinema Port Talbot’, produced for the BBC, which charted the period between 1985 and 1999, when Alex Jones (in 1985 a 20-year-old ex-projectionist) bought the Plaza and regenerated it. Along with the video footage, there are also a number of photographs of the exterior and interior from this period. However, very few photographs, and no drawings, have been discovered from prior to the mid-1980s.

Also, in 2011 Michael Sheen made ‘Port Talbot Paradiso’, a nostalgic documentary for Radio 4, which, whilst radio, draws upon a number of people’s memories of the cinema in its hey-day, rather more than its fabric.

Insofar as evidential value and/or archaeology may be buried below ground, it is possible that there are remnants of the railway structures which used to occupy the site, not least as much of the ground floor is raised above the ground outside. This is unlikely to be of considerable value, as there has never been any sign of a building on the site, but simply the end of railway lines.

Insofar as evidential value may be hidden by later fabric, this is unlikely as almost all of the fabric appears to be original and, therefore, not hidden by newer fabric, apart from the partitions to the cinema screen within the rear section of the stalls.

Context may also be relevant - the evidential value of a single industrial or agricultural building for example will be diminished if other associated buildings have already been lost or damaged. The streetscape / urban context is fairly consistent with the 1939 streetscape, which means that the way the focal frontage and the less architecturally interesting side and rear elevations relate to their surroundings now is similar to how they did in 1939, however, the nature of the buildings has changed considerably. However, whilst there remains the core of Victorian and Edwardian hotels and residential terraces and the one other listed building in the area (the grade II listed Grove Place Chapel, built in 1904, albeit listed principally for its interior), the architecture of the area is a rather varied, with many more recent inclusions to the streetscene, and with the Plaza as the one Art Deco style building in the area. This and the fact that the Plaza appears to have always been the only building of its style in the area, means that context will not have a huge bearing on the evidential value of the Plaza.

Given the intactness of the original building, the Plaza’s evidential value might be deemed to be high, however, as evidential value is deemed to derive from those elements of an historic asset that can provide evidence about past human activity, it is arguable that the 1940s-1990s is recent enough for a considerable amount of other evidence – be it photography, film or memories – to still be available. As a result, the Plaza is deemed to have Medium Evidential Value.

As with its historical value, this means that, whilst efforts should be made to protect and enhance those aspects which afford this level of evidential value, a greater degree of flexibility is possible with changes to the fabric than with aspects of high value.

8.3.1 Photographs of the Interior from the 1980s and 1990s

On this page are a series of photographs from the mid to late 1980s and the 1990s of the interior of the Plaza in use, when it had been re-opened and run as a family business, led by Alex Jones. The photographs are reproduced courtesy of the Port Talbot Historical Society.



8.4 Aesthetic Value

Aesthetic Value relates to the external appearance and form of a heritage asset. In this respect, the Plaza has considerable aesthetic value.

It epitomises the Modernist Art Deco design aesthetic which was so celebrated in the emerging Cinema tradition; an aesthetic which was hugely popular in the 1930s and appears to have retained that level of popularity in the 90 years since.

Indeed, whilst the Plaza was built for the independent Cardiff syndicate, its design is synonymous with that of the 'house style' of the vast network of Odeon cinemas in the 1930s, a chain founded by Oscar Deutsch (1893-1941) in Birmingham in 1930, which usually included soaring towers and fins; dynamic, curved canopies; facades clad in black and buff-coloured faience pierced with horizontal bands of coloured faience; curved and semi-circular wings; Crittall steel windows; and extensive use of neon lighting.

As the listing states, the Plaza is listed "as a very rare example in Wales of a building type which expresses the distinctive architectural vocabulary of 1930s cinema architecture".

The Plaza displays all of the Art Deco characteristics of clean and sweeping lines; streamlined and bold shapes; colour; geometric designs and decoration.

It incorporates so many of the well-known Art Deco features and materiality, such as faience tiling; Crittall-style steel windows; curved-fronted turrets and retail units and curved canopy; a cream and eau de nil green colour scheme; black and white checkerplate floor tiles; chevron / zigzag geometric decoration to the foyer cornice; linoleum flooring; and the Britannic Bold font lettering, synonymous with the art deco period, on the foyer floor spelling out 'PLAZA'.

Aesthetic Value derives from either conscious design or style or the seemingly fortuitous outcome of the way in which an historic asset has evolved and been used over time, or a combination of both. The Plaza is a very interesting representation of conscious design.

Aesthetic Value also relates to the building's relationship to its context and setting. The value of the Plaza's setting is also considerable, as it can be seen down the streets from all directions and, to an extent, further afield. It can be seen from the train, as it passes between east and west Wales. This setting has not changed much, in terms of urban grain and streetscape, although its neighbours have changed over the years. However, its lack of use and activity and its derelict and deteriorating condition are beginning to make it look more of a 'blot' on the streetscape than the lively presence it once had.

However, Aesthetic Value also derives from the way in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from it, and the response by the local community to its deterioration over the last 20 years suggests that there it still stirs some considerable emotion. In the form of sensory stimulation, the Plaza was clearly once a celebrated and very popular icon of the town and many people have many experiences of visiting it and passing it. In the form of intellectual stimulation, its Art Deco style and motifs are of considerable interest and the knowledge of those famous sons and daughters of the area who once held it, and still do, to their hearts, it rather warming.

Of course, a well-preserved building, still intact, in its original form, and largely unaltered will hold more aesthetic value than one which is not. The Plaza is principally intact, in its original form, and largely unaltered, which does add to its aesthetic value. However, it is in a very poor state of repair, particularly in the main body of the auditorium where a large hole in the roof has resulted in major deterioration beneath it, which has an extremely negative impact on its aesthetic value.

The Plaza's iconic frontage affords it considerable aesthetic value; its conscious Art Deco style and its use of such well-known Art Deco characteristics and features; its prominence within its setting; the love and sensory stimulation it draws from the people of the area; and the fact that it remains almost as it was when it was originally built all imbue considerable aesthetic value.



The Plaza frontage in 1981 in its colourful glory - green window frames and red sign and canopy underside (source: walesonline)

However, its 20 years' dereliction and the resultant condition it finds itself in reduces that value somewhat. Also, whilst the front third is so iconic and of high design quality, the rear two thirds, with its roughcast rendered monolithic elevations with blocked up openings and deteriorating roof, is much less appealing, even unattractive.

As a result, the Plaza is considered to have Medium Aesthetic Value, principally because of its frontage. This means that, whilst efforts should be made to protect and enhance it, some degree of flexibility is possible with changes to the fabric, not least in order to ensure that the building is brought back into viable and sustainable re-use, even if this necessitated adaptation. The assessment might suggest that the building's art deco frontage and its foyer - which are in a reasonable condition - would be the more resistant to loss or change, whilst the rear auditorium - which is in a poor condition - could possibly accommodate change or loss.

Indeed, reference is made to the 2012 Condition Assessment of the Plaza from James & Nicholas Structural Engineers (particularly the summary on page 50 of this Heritage Impact Statement (HIS)) and the 2017 Condition Assessment from Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (particularly the summary on page 44 of the HIS), which states, of the rear section, that "the whole area is in a very poor state of repair and looks to have deteriorated further since the 2012 inspection. It is recommended this portion of the building is deemed potentially dangerous...". This being said, the rear portion of the building - which houses the auditorium - contains some surviving features from the period of its construction, such as the art deco emergency exit signs, which should be found a home in the adapted building, whilst other aspects, such as sections of the terrazzo steps either side of the stage, could be re-used to undertake like-for-like repairs to the front portion of the building.



A recent photo of the Plaza frontage shows that, despite its dereliction, it retains the iconic Art Deco forms, lines & features

8.5 Communal Value

Communal Value derives from the meanings that an asset has for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory. It includes social and economic value, as well as commemorative, spiritual or symbolic value.

The Plaza figures in the memories of almost everyone who lived in and around Port Talbot between 1939 and 1999. Cinema-going, and the gleaning of news, was an enormous part of the lives of people of all ages through the 1930s, 40s and 50s. With the growing popularity of television, cinema still had its part to play in the 1950s and 60s showing live entertainment as well as cinema, with the opportunity to see the best known names of the age; and, whilst less frequented in the 1970s and 1980s, blockbuster movies continued to draw people to the cinema, as it would be some time before these films would appear on the television, or even video. Everyone has their memories of visits to the cinema, particularly insofar as they were the primary means of entertainment for many, and were frequently in large numbers with great regularity. The Plaza was one such cinema, with the 1,500 seat capacity met regularly.

Some considerable press attention and community website activity has focussed on the Plaza, all seeking to encourage its restoration and/or re-use, including the Port Talbot Historical Society and the 'Cinema Treasures' website.

It has also been the subject of written, recorded and filmed reminiscences for many years from many people, some of which are particularly well-known and influential.

The opening of the Plaza is documented in Richard Burton's diary for Monday, 25th March 1940 as follows "Went down to Uncle Ben's this morning to fetch stones for the cement bed. Dilwyn came with me. Went to Majestic to see 'King of the River'. Plaza opened today and it was all crowded out". Although the Plaza was so busy on opening night that Richard Burton went elsewhere, his diary shows he made it to the Plaza later that year to see George Formby in 'Come on George'.

Anthony Hopkins' childhood memories of the Plaza inspired his classical musical composition '1947 – The Plaza' which was his homage to the Port Talbot cinema that used to transport him to another world, stating that "On Friday nights we'd go to the pictures. I loved the pictures. Sometimes the Majestic in Bethany Square or the Regent in Taibach but the Plaza was the place to go."

Martin Sheen made a BBC Radio 4 documentary entitled 'Port Talbot Paradiso', in which Rob Brydon also featured heavily, talking about his memories of the Plaza and how his parents supposedly met at the Italian café on the corner of the Plaza which he described as "a veritable hotbed for the courting couples of Port Talbot in the post war era".

Martin Sheen's production of 'The Passion' in 2011 through Port Talbot, in which he also starred, was 'announced' on the front of the derelict Plaza. In 'Port Talbot Paradiso', Sheen said there was only one place to announce the start of The Passion in 2011 and that was on the side of the Plaza. Forty days before the performance, the words "It has begun" were painted onto the wooden boarding in big white and red letters on a black background. At the same time, artwork was painted onto the wooden boards surrounding the derelict Plaza with images of Richard Burton, Anthony Hopkins and Michael Sheen painted there together with daffodils, the national symbol of Wales.

Operatic soprano Rebecca Evans says in 'Port Talbot Paradiso' that her aunt had spoken of a formidable lady called Madame Miriam Joseph James who would put on evenings of song and dance during the film intervals and that she had a brother, Jacky Jones, with a band that would play there too. She also recalls seeing 'Jaws' and 'Grease' at the Plaza, admitting to knowing all the words to Grease and dancing and singing along to the film in the Plaza, whilst Michael Sheen recalls people queuing round the block and all the way down Station Road to see 'Star Wars' there.

A long two-part documentary was produced for the BBC, entitled 'Road to Plaza Cinema Port Talbot', charting the period between 1985 and 1999, when Alex Jones (in 1985 a 20-year-old ex-projectionist) bought the Plaza and regenerated it. Along with the video footage, there are also a number of photographs of the exterior and interior from this period.

Insofar as communal value includes social and economic value, as well as commemorative, spiritual or symbolic value, the Plaza held enormous social value, as the social hub of the area for a number of decades; considerable economic value, as an employer and place of economic activity; and was a source of commemorative, spiritual and symbolic value during the second world war, when the Plaza was where people would go to glean news about the progress of the war.

Communal value is closely linked to historical value, in the way that it acts as a source of social interaction. In the section on historical value, it was stated that the Plaza's level of preservation, when so many of these early cinemas no longer exist; its illustration of, and contribution to our understanding of, such a prominent part of past life; its prominence within the town; and its association with such prominent names as Burton, Hopkins, Sheen, Brydon and Evans; affords it medium historical value.

Communal value is also closely linked to aesthetic value and the way in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from it. In the section on aesthetic value, it was stated that the Plaza's iconic frontage affords it considerable aesthetic value; its conscious Art Deco style and its use of such well-known Art Deco characteristics and features; its prominence within its setting; the love and sensory stimulation it draws from the people of the area; and the fact that it remains almost as it was when it was originally built all imbue considerable aesthetic value. However, its 20 years' dereliction and the resultant condition it finds itself in reduces that value somewhat.

It is the host of memories which it holds, some of which are recorded, some from extremely well-known figures from the area; the communal love for the building; and its source of social interaction which afford the Plaza Medium Communal Value, however, this value is slowly ebbing away as the building further deteriorates.



*Anthony Hopkins visits the Plaza around 1991
(source: Port Talbot Historical Society)*

8.6 Overall Heritage Value

In summary, the Plaza is considered to be of regional importance, however not of national importance. It is, therefore, deemed to have Medium Heritage Value, representing an aspect of value that will have some cultural importance which makes a moderate contribution to the significance of its place.

Its values are equally shared between historical, evidential, aesthetic and communal derivations.

In material terms it plays an important role in conveying the heritage values of the area (such as helping to maintain historical representation and historical character), however this contribution has been compromised by its 20-year dereliction.

This means that, whilst efforts should be made to protect and enhance the asset, some degree of flexibility is possible with changes to the fabric, not least in order to ensure that the building is brought back into viable and sustainable re-use, even if this necessitated adaptation. The assessment might suggest that the building's art deco frontage and its foyer would be the more resistant to loss or change, whilst the rear auditorium could possibly accommodate change or loss.

The part that the Plaza played in the lives the people of Port Talbot between 1939 and 1999 is considerable. It is both illustrative of, and associative with, the way people spent their leisure time for 60 years. It illustrates a pastime which is still very relevant to today, and is indeed the precursor to so much of our modern leisure activity – watching television and online entertainment, keeping up with the news, and meeting up with friends - however, it illustrates a very different way of doing so to now.

The fact that the Plaza retains so much of the provision and character which it had 80 years ago, and through its 60 year working life, simple adds to its heritage value.

Of course, a well-preserved building, still intact, in its original form, and largely unaltered will hold more heritage value than one which is not. The Plaza is principally intact, in its original form, and largely unaltered, which does add to its heritage value. However, it is in a very poor state of repair, particularly in the main body of the auditorium where a large hole in the roof has resulted in major deterioration beneath it, which has an extremely negative impact on its heritage value.

It is this level of preservation, when so many of these early cinemas no longer exist; its illustration of, and contribution to our understanding of, such a prominent part of past life; its prominence within the town; and its association with such prominent names as Richard Burton, Anthony Hopkins, Michael Sheen, Rob Brydon and Rebecca Evans; which affords the Plaza medium historical value.

Given the intactness of the original building, the Plaza's evidential value might be deemed to be high, however, as evidential value is deemed to derive from those elements of an historic asset that can provide evidence about past human activity, it is arguable that the 1940s-1990s is recent enough for a considerable amount of other evidence – be it photography, film or memories – to still be available. As a result, the Plaza is deemed to have medium evidential value.

The Plaza's listing states that it is listed “as a very rare example in Wales of a building type which expresses the distinctive architectural vocabulary of 1930s cinema architecture”. Its iconic frontage affords it considerable aesthetic value; its conscious Art Deco style and its use of such well-known Art Deco characteristics and features; its prominence within its setting; the love and sensory stimulation it draws from the people of the area; and the fact that it remains almost as it was when it was originally built all imbue considerable aesthetic value. However, its 20 years' dereliction and the resultant condition it finds itself in reduces that value somewhat. Also, whilst the front third is so iconic and of high design quality, the rear two thirds, with its roughcast rendered monolithic elevations with blocked up openings and deteriorating roof, is much less appealing, even unattractive. As a result, the Plaza is considered to have medium aesthetic value, principally because of its frontage.

The Plaza figures in the memories of almost everyone who lived in and around Port Talbot between 1939 and 1999. Cinema-going, and the gleaning of news, was an enormous part of the lives of people of all ages through the 1930s, 40s and 50s. With the growing popularity of television, cinema still had its part to play in the 1950s and 60s showing live entertainment as well as cinema, with the opportunity to see the best known names of the age; and, whilst less frequented in the 1970s and 1980s, blockbuster movies continued to draw people to the cinema, as it would be some time before these films would appear on the television, or even video. Everyone has their memories of visits to the cinema, particularly insofar as they were the primary means of entertainment for many, and were frequently in large numbers with great regularity. The Plaza was one such cinema, with the 1,500 seat capacity met regularly.

It is the host of memories which it holds, some of which are recorded, some from extremely well-known figures from the area; the communal love for the building; and its source of social interaction which afford the Plaza medium communal value, however, this value is slowly ebbing away as the building further deteriorates.



Plaza exterior approx 1950 - building receiving sign, tiles and windows 10 years after opening (source: Port Talbot Historical Society)

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