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Historic Building Recording Survey

Pontardawe Arts Centre

Level 2 Historic Building Recording Survey, prepared in response to planning permission (ref: P2022/0956) pre-commencement condition 03.

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Revision /

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1.0 Introduction

Location + Background

Childs Sulzmann Architects have been commissioned on behalf of Pontardawe Arts Centre, to prepare a Level 2 Historic Building Recording Survey.

Pontardawe Art Centre is located along the main high street in Pontardawe, Swansea, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) SN7230303976. (Figure 1)

Pontardawe Arts Centre Address:
60 Herbert Street,
Pontardawe,
SA8 4ED

The building is not statutorily listed or situated within a conservation area.

Planning permission (ref: P2022/0956) has been conditionally granted by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council for works to build a new cinema extension to Pontardawe Arts Centre, as well as works to reconfigure the ground floor bar and cafe spaces to improve the operation of the centre.

Due to the buildings reputation as an important cultural centre in South Wales, pre-commencement Condition 03 of the Planning Submission states:

No works to which this consent relates shall commence until an appropriate

programme of historic building recording and analysis (a minimum Level 2 survey) has been secured and implemented in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason:

As the building is of architectural and cultural significance the specified records are required to mitigate impact.

This Historic Building Recording Survey has been prepared in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation, as well as the guidance set out in *Understanding Historic Buildings A Guide to Good Recording Practice HEAG099* (Historic England 2016).

This document will be submitted for approval to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.

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BritishNationalGrid.uk



Figure 1 - Site National Grid Reference

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Brief Description

Pontardawe Arts Centre was constructed in 1908 as a Public Hall and Institute (which first opened its doors in 1909 by the opera singer Adelina Patti). Pontardawe Hall and Institute occupied the building until 1994, with the building first opening as Pontardawe Arts Centre in 1996.

The building was designed by W. Beddoe of Cardiff and constructed by Raford and Greaves of Derby as three separate architectural volumes, which are still externally distinguishable today. The building is constructed of brick, with some areas of render, with stone window cills and door surrounds.

The building measures approximately 37m in length along its east-west cross section and 30m in width at its widest extent on the north-south cross section. Pontardawe Arts Centre.

Scope of Document

The aims or purpose of the historic building record, in line with Historic England's *Understanding Historic Buildings A Guide to Good Recording Practice* HEAG099 (Historic England 2016), are to:

- Establish the character, history, dating, form and development of a specific building or structure
- Provide a better understanding of the building structure (where possible within the confines of the works), compile a lasting record, analyse the findings/ record and then disseminate the results.

Data and information comprising the survey/ drawn record and written record has already been undertaken by external consultants, such as Midland Survey Ltd, and will be included within the document appendix.

Additional information required to form the Historic Building Recording Survey is a photographic survey of the building, which has been carried out by Childs Sulzmann Architects.

Photographic Survey

The scope of the photographic record includes:

- A general view or views of the building in its wider setting or landscape;
- The building's external appearance. Typically captured in a series of oblique views to show all external elevations of the building and give an overall impression of its size and shape. Where individual elevations include complex historical information, it may also be appropriate to take views at right angles to the plane of elevation;
- The overall appearance of the principle rooms and circulation areas on all floors. The approach will be similar to that outlined for the building exterior;
- Structural or decorative details relevant to the building's design, development and use – for example memorials, stained glass windows and religious furnishings such as the altar, font, lectern and pulpit;
- Evidence of removed machinery, fixtures or fittings;
- Details of dates, signage and marks that contribute to an understanding of the building, such as date stones, maker's marks or graffiti (where

noted). A photographic scale of an appropriate size will be included in all detailed views, where possible. The location of photographic views will be recorded on a key plan. Accompanying photographic registers will record, as a minimum, a brief description of the subject and location.

The full photographic record, together with photographic registers will form part of the project archive. Selected images from the photographic record will be used to illustrate the report. The report figures will include plans showing the location of photographic plates used in the report.

Limitations of this photographic survey include:

- Some photographs used within the survey were taken prior to recording works due to scaffolding being erected on site on the day that the main survey was carried out.

Primarily the photographs that comprise this record were taken on Thursday 14th of September by Childs Sulzmann Architects. Supplementary photographs used were taken on 11th September 2020.

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2.0 Written Record

Historical Background

Pontardawe Arts Centre was designed by W. Beddow of Cardiff and constructed by Raford and Greaves of Derby in 1908.

The original building, Pontardawe Public Hall and Institute opened in 1909, containing a Reading Room, Billiards Room, and Club Rooms. The Public Hall originally had a capacity of 1,500 people. The building was maintained by a management committee comprised of representatives from local chapels and trade unions.

It was the intention of the establishment to "provide an opening for the introduction of best literary and musical talent which will have an inspiring and elevating influence on the life of the place".

The building was designed as three separate architectural volumes, which are still externally distinguishable today. (Figure 2) The first volume, the original institute, housed the administrative spaces and a library. The middle one storey section was the Billiards Hall. The largest volume, was the original Public Hall, which is used today as the main auditorium.



The Public Hall

The Billiards Hall

The Institute

Figure 2 - Annotated Photograph of Pontardawe Arts Centre

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Pontardawe Public Hall and Institute remained open until 1994 when the committee transferred ownership to the then Lliw Valley Borough Council, superseded nowadays by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council. Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council secured the building seeking to improve the cultural offerings of the town.

The new art centre opened in 1996 and contained a new box office, the Oriel Lliw Art Gallery, a dance studio, meetings rooms, the restored snooker hall, a theatre bar, and grand auditorium.



Figure 3 - Historic Photograph of Pontardawe Public Hall and Institute

Arts Centre Background

Today, Pontardawe Arts Centre has gained a reputation as an important cultural venue in South Wales. The theatre hosts professional work of the highest calibre, from classical music to drama and dance, literature and children's theatre to blues and world music; something for everyone to enjoy. The 450 seat theatre currently also shows films in between other events and shows within the programme. On site, there is additionally a Dance studio, also used for Community events, Meeting rooms, Bar, Cafe and an Art Gallery.

Having hosted regular cinema showings, Pontardawe Arts Centre has identified that there is a significant opportunity to now expand its film offer to include 'first release' blockbusters as well as art house movies within a new dedicated Cinema space.

Works to Pontardawe Art Centre are to build a new cinema extension, as well as works to reconfigure the ground floor bar and cafe spaces to improve the operation of the centre.

The ambition to now provide a state of the art but small scale, intimate Cinema in the town is entirely consistent with the history of the place and the building.

Statement of Significance

Whilst the building is not listed it is of local importance and is prominent in its location. The impact it has on the surrounding area is significant and its design is of some architectural significance.

Externally the building is largely unchanged with much of its original design the same as when completed. Internally however the vast majority of the historic features, excluding the main theatre space, have been lost with the exception of the ceiling cornices and timber sash windows.

The theatre on the other hand appears to be largely unchanged from its original design and is a good example of theatre design in the early 20th century.

The majority of the building's significance lies within the exterior facades and theatre with the remaining internal spaces less so.