

KENYON LANE (APP REF 127669/FO/2020)

This note responds to queries regarding the potential to retain the building currently on the site, as part of redevelopment plans. It is submitted alongside the following:

- Façade Retention Appraisal, prepared by FCH ; and
- Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment Addendum, prepared by ARS Ltd.

Loss of building

The 'Façade Retention Appraisal' document prepared by scheme architect FCH explains why the building is not structurally viable for conversion. Issues include the building's back-of-pavement location and the difficulties of providing a suitable ground-floor use; the lack of windows on the side and rear elevations, meaning that significant interventions would be required in a much closer relationship to existing habitable room windows; and the depth of the building's footprint meaning that internal spaces could not be lit sufficiently to provide living space.

The document also touches on the difficulties that will be inherent in bringing a building of its age up to standard in terms of structural integrity, thermal, acoustic and fire performance. Together, these issues would be prohibitively costly to address, and would not result in a liveable scheme. No other suitable uses for the building appear to be viable or suitable. It is therefore not a realistic option to retain and convert the building.

In heritage terms, the loss of the building is addressed in the original submission through the Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment carried out by ARS Ltd, and reiterated in their Heritage Addendum which accompanies this note. The original report covers the heritage and archaeological aspects of the proposal. In the terms of the NPPF, the building is a non-designated heritage asset. As such, the proposal's effects should be taken into account, with a balanced judgement required having regard to the scale of harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

The report identifies the significance of the building. A former cinema on the site was demolished by 1937, and the present building was constructed. It was converted to a bingo club in 1962 and later a social club, and experienced a fire in the 1960s. The report finds that the building has some, limited significance due to its illustrative historical value and aesthetic interest arising from its identity as a cinema built during the period in which this form of entertainment expanded. There is some evidential value resulting from the few discernible cinema-related features. The building has some communal value to those who remember its use as a cinema and then a bingo hall. There is some associative historical value in the relation to the HD Moorhouse cinema chain, although 17 such buildings remain in existence. The assessment finds that the building has experienced alterations, degradations and fire damage. It only has low significance.

As such, the level of significance is very minimal, and loss of the building is acceptable in heritage terms.

To this should be added the benefits of the scheme, comprising 33 high quality dwellings in a pleasant development with amenity space; providing an appropriate quantum of accessible and affordable dwellings; constituting brownfield development of an appropriate

use in a sustainable location, knitting together the urban fabric and constituting positive regeneration for the site and wider area, in line with the vision of the Manchester Core Strategy for diverse, high quality neighbourhoods of choice in North Manchester; generating construction jobs and contributing to urban vitality and activity; providing significant financial investment in the site and area; and providing a contemporary design appropriate to the site.

As such, the proposal complies with the NPPF requirements concerning loss of non-designated heritage assets, and is not a reason for refusal.

Retention of façade

A façade retention scheme is considered in the submitted 'Façade Retention Appraisal' document. It considers retention of the primary façade, in which a new structure is added behind. It finds that it is challenging to reconcile the needs of residential development with the frontage that was designed for the long, deep footprint of the cinema. As such, the site is used inefficiently, and the number of residential units which can be achieved is reduced, thereby compromising the development. The building needs to be relatively narrow to ensure enough light, meaning that it is longer and therefore access and parking are relocated to the east, resulting in less amenity space. This also means that existing and proposed habitable room windows have a closer relationship. Also, the existing façade's location to the rear of the pavement means that the ground floor is not attractive for residential use as it has no defensible space, and commercial uses do not appear to be attractive or suitable in this location. There are therefore practical problems with retaining the frontage of the building.

In addition, façade retention can be very complex and costly, particularly when there is limited space between the frontage and the roadway. Policy H3 seeks to achieve high value, high quality development in North Manchester but recognises that this can be difficult to sustain. This has been achieved on the site with the current, high quality scheme. However, requiring façade retention would add a costly, complex element.

In heritage terms, the frontage does not have any particular significance to militate for its retention in this way. As we have seen from the assessment of significance, the building has only limited significance arising from its illustrative historical value and aesthetic interest, arising from its identity as a cinema built during the period in which this form of entertainment expanded.

It is also relevant to note that whilst façade-retention has its place, it is not considered best practice in conservation terms. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) considers facadism to be inappropriate. The approach places old and new together and it is very difficult in many cases to mediate between the two and produce a coherent whole. This is the case on the proposed site, where the façade simply cannot accommodate a viable residential development.

Alternative options have been considered, such as a building structure at right-angles to the main façade. However, this would result in an inelegant building form which would make the original façade difficult to read, and impossible to interpret in relation to its past form and function.

We therefore conclude that retention of the building or its façade are not possible in this case. This has been justified in heritage terms.