

**The former Ritz Cinema
High Street West,
Wallsend, North Tyneside
Level II Historic Building
Record Survey**

Client: HARRISON INCE ARCHITECTS

AB Heritage Project No:10440

Date:14/01/2015

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1.0	1 st Draft Covering External Works and Research	G Talbot	A Buckley	24/10/2014
2.0	Interior Building Recording Survey	K Kerr-Peterson	A Buckley	14/01/2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Tyne and Wear Specialist Conservation Team requested a Level II Historic Building Recording of the former Ritz Cinema, High Street West, Wallsend prior to its redevelopment as a public house (North Tyneside Council Planning Application: 14/00232/FUL).

AB Heritage was commissioned by Harrison Ince Architects to undertake the works. This report constitutes the results of documentary research undertaken at the North Tyneside Local Studies Library, Tyne & Wear Archives, appropriate online resources and the Level II Historic Building Recording.

Of the thirteen cinemas designed by Percy L Brown in the North East, The Ritz at Wallsend is one of only five that remain, making it a significant survival for the region.

The exterior of the building has changed little since its construction in 1939. Therefore, the facade facing onto High Street West is considered to be a significant element of the building, and the retention and restoration of the Art Deco frontage has been recommended.

Despite at least two phases of refurbishment, a large number of original Art Deco architectural details and some cinematographic features survive within the building.

The retention of the Art Deco features has been recommended where possible, due to their contribution towards the history and significance of the building.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 AB Heritage Ltd carried out a programme of historic building recording in October 2014 and January 2015 at the former Ritz Cinema, later Mecca Bingo, at High Street West, Wallsend, North Tyneside. The work was undertaken to satisfy a condition placed on planning consent relating to the development of the building as a public house with external drinking area. The building has most recently been in use as a Mecca Bingo, and closed for use in 2011.
- 1.1.2 The building is on the Local List (North Tyneside Council, November 2008, Register of Buildings and Parks of Special Local Architectural and Historic Interest SDP (Local Development Document 9)). In accordance with paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework and standard practice, it was recommended by the Tyne & Wear Planning Archaeologist that a programme of recording was undertaken in order to advise the conservation, alteration, repair or management of the building, to provide a better understanding and to compile a permanent archive record of the building.
- 1.1.3 The exterior of the building was recorded on 22nd October 2014. At this time, AB Heritage was advised by the site security team that there was no power in the building, and that the building also contained a significant amount of asbestos and collapsed structural elements. As per the AB Heritage Risk Assessment for this project, the interior of the building was therefore not accessed at this time. The recording of the interior of the building was undertaken on 6th January 2015, once the removal of asbestos and stabilisation of the building had been undertaken and temporary lighting has been installed.

1.2 Site Location & Description

- 1.2.1 The Ritz (Tyne & Wear HER 9313) is located on High Street West, at NGR NZ 2972 6634 (See Figure 1). It forms part of a streetscape that comprises buildings dating from the late 19th and 20th centuries. To the rear of the building is an open car parking area. The building is of the Art Deco style and dates to the late 1930s. Despite its recent use as a bingo hall, closing in 2011, it retains Art Deco details on the exterior and interior.



Photo 1: Location of the Ritz along High Street West, viewed from the east

- 1.2.2 The front elevation of The Ritz on High Street West appears to be relatively unchanged since it was opened in 1939 (See Photo 1 above & Plate 1 below). Original features such as the decorative metalwork and the ABC sign (now painted over) survive and, with the exception of some modern additions, such as security shutters over the entrance, the building appears to have changed little. To the rear, there are a number of blocked off entrances, and some added air conditioning units and new window frames; however, as with the front, there appears to have been little done to alter the overall fabric of the building.



Plate 1: View of the exterior of the Ritz in 1963 (Online source)

- 1.2.3 The interior of the building also retains many of the original Art Deco architectural details including decorative ventilation grills (See Photo 2 below), moulded plaster ceilings, covings and corbels as well as banister rails, projector apertures and lighting switch panels.



Photo 2: Art Deco moulded plaster proscenium edge and decorative ventilation grill in the auditorium (Scale 2m)

1.3 Proposed Development

- 1.3.1 The proposed development is to convert the building into a large public house with external drinking area.

2. AIMS & METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims of Works

- 2.1.1 The aim of the work is to advise the conservation, alteration, repair and management of the building, in order to provide a better understanding and to compile a permanent archive record of the building.
- 2.1.2 The research aims are to contribute towards the appreciation of the history of cinema in the north-east of England in line with the North-East Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment¹ – in line with research priority *MOVii: Sports & Leisure* (Petts & Gerrard, 2006).

2.2 Methodology of Works

- 2.2.1 The report will comply with English Heritage, 2006, *Understanding Historic Buildings – A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (revised and expanded version of the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England's 1996 document *Recording Historic Buildings – A Descriptive Specification (Third Edition)*).
- 2.2.2 The report will:
- chart the historical development of the building and adequately explain and illustrate what is significant;
 - explain the level of recording and limitations of the record.
- 2.2.3 The survey will be broadly in accordance with an English Heritage Level 2 recording. This will be a descriptive record. Both exterior and interior will be viewed, described and photographed.
- 2.2.4 The site was visited by Gareth Talbot on the 22nd October 2014 and Kerry Kerr-Peterson & James Dunn on 6th January 2015 in order to compile descriptions of the building and to undertake the photographic work. The photographic record was made using 14-42mm DSLR colour photography. Within the report, selected digital images have been reproduced along with plates where relevant. A full catalogue of all photographs is included in the archive.
- 2.2.5 A drawn record has not been produced as part of this survey.

Documentary Research

- 2.2.6 Initial research was undertaken using the following online resources:
- Heritage Gateway: www.heritagegateway.org.uk to access the English Heritage National Monuments Record and to undertake an initial assessment of the Tyne and Wear Historic Environment Record;

¹ NERRF, p.195: <http://www.durham.gov.uk/media/1551/Shared-Visions-North-East-Regional-Research-Framework-for-the-Historic-Environment/pdf/SharedVisionsNERegionalResearchFrameworkHistoricEnvironment.pdf>

- Cinema Theatre Association: <http://cinema-theatre.org.uk> to develop a general understanding of the development of the cinema in Britain;
- Tyne and Wear Archives Online Catalogue: <http://www.tyneandweararchives.org.uk/> to identify pertinent resources to access when visiting the archives;
- North Tyneside Local Studies Library: http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk/browse-display.shtml?p_ID=29141&p_subjectCategory=435 to identify pertinent resources to access when visiting the archives.

2.2.7 Visits were made by AB Heritage to the Tyne and Wear Archives, and to North Tyneside Local Studies Library.

Photographic survey

2.2.8 The photographic record was made using 14-42mm DSLR colour photography. Photographs were taken with the assistance of a flash and tripod where required.

2.3 Limitations

2.3.1 There was limited access to some areas of the interior of the building, due to the stock piling of demolition materials. These included many of the offices and store rooms. There were areas within the building where some of the smaller rooms had already been demolished during the removal of the asbestos (See Figures 2 & 3). The third floor area was not accessed due to the absence of lighting, as per the AB Heritage risk assessment.

3. HISTORIC BACKGROUND

3.1 Statutory / Non Statutory Designated Features

- 3.1.1 The former Ritz is on the Local List as a building of Special Local Architectural and Historic Interest (North Tyneside Council, November 2008, Register of Buildings and Parks of Special Local Architectural and Historic Interest SDP (Local Development Document 9)).

3.2 Historical Background

Cinemas in Tyneside²

- 3.2.1 Between 1908 and 1914, thirty cinemas opened in Newcastle. Although given grandiose names, such as *Grand* and *Palace*, they were often very basic and functional in nature, usually being converted church halls or shop premises. Many were family-owned and run, and costs were small – a projector, some seating and a screen.
- 3.2.2 There was a lull in the building of new picture halls in the Tyneside area after the Great War as moving pictures struggled to command any sort of significant audience. However, film-going was about to change with the coming of sound.
- 3.2.3 The cost of adapting old equipment and theatres to offer the new *Talkies* drove many small operators out of business; however, as the quantity and quality of films increased, so there began to another boom in the opening of picture halls in late 1920s and 1930s. These were not the draughty old church hall or converted theatres: the new ‘super-cinemas’ brought unheralded levels of luxury and comfort. New types of comfortable seating, waiting rooms, front-of-house staff, pageboys, bars and restaurants were all part of the picture-going experience.

The Opening of The Ritz

- 3.2.4 The Ritz Cinema in Wallsend opened on 15th May 1939 towards the end of the super-cinema building boom. It opened with Jackie Cooper in “Gangster’s Boy”. Built for the Associated British Cinemas (ABC) chain, it was designed by the noted firm of Percy L. Browne, Son and Harding who were fairly prolific in cinema design in the north east of England (Armstrong, L 2005).
- 3.2.5 There were other picture-halls in Wallsend prior to the opening of the Ritz: The Borough (now the site of an amusement arcade next to the Coronation Club); The Royal (now the site of the Anson Public House); The Tyne (now a fireplace shop on Station Road); and The Queens (on Sycamore St close to the Town Hall) Of these cinemas, the Ritz was considered to be the latest in luxury for the Wallsend area. With entrance prices slightly higher than its competitors, it was seen by some to be a sign of high social standing to visit the Ritz rather than the Borough or other Wallsend halls (Armstrong, L 2005).
- 3.2.6 Plans for the Ritz were drawn up on the 16 March 1937 (See Plate 2 below) and were approved by the local council almost a year later in May 1938. Part of this delay was caused by a dispute over rights of way across the cinema site. This site had a narrow street frontage

² Taken from *Manders, F, 2005, ‘Cinemas of Newcastle’*,

with a small tower-type vertical feature. The auditorium was built on land which was partly the Black Bull Yard and partly the site of a house (Manders, 2005).



Plate 2: The Ritz under construction in 1938 (Manders, 2009)

- 3.2.7 It had total seating capacity for 1,636, with 1,092 in the stalls and 544 in the circle (See Plate 3 below). It was in the Art Deco style with sinuous lines of curving plaster and decorative grilles around extraction vents. The proscenium is 40 feet wide and there is a 20 feet deep stage. In addition to showing films, the Ritz held 'Golden Gloves' boxing competitions to help raise funds for the Wallsend Boys' Club. The event would be held over a period of six days with one bout held each day immediately before the film show.³

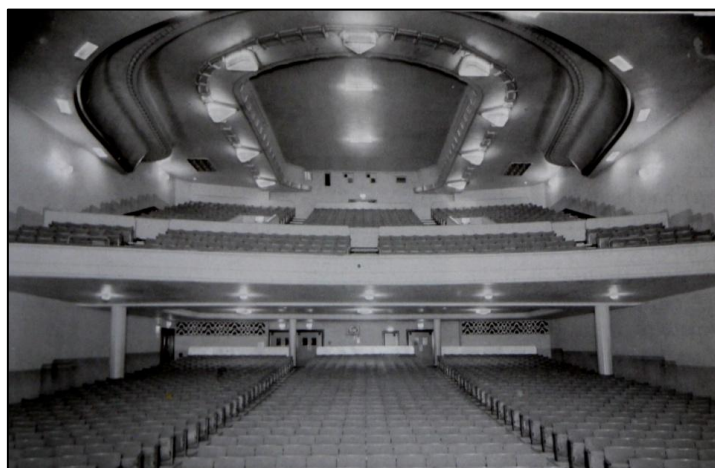


Plate 3: The auditorium from the screen, taken in 1939 (Manders, 2009)

- 3.2.8 In time, the Ritz came to operate continuous daily performances from about 1pm. Sunday shows started at 5pm. Films and programmes normally ran Sunday for seven days or Sunday only, then Monday for six days. A Saturday morning children's matinee was popular and was

³ Wallsend Boys' Club: <http://wallsendboysclub.org.uk/history/the-early-days-boxing-took-centre-stage/>

referred to as *the tanner rush*. Within months of opening, the Second World War broke out in September 1939 and the Government ordered the closure of all cinemas. Most were open again with a matter of weeks, however, and from one extreme to another, most cinemas enjoyed their most profitable years as the country entered six years of war (Armstrong, L 2005).

- 3.2.9 After the war, from 1947 onwards, there began a slow but steady decline that continued until a new boom of cinema-going in the 1980s. Despite attempts to revive cinema-going in the 1950s and 1960s, with gimmicks such as 3D and Cinemascope, the decline had set in. Improvements in social welfare and increased standards of living did not help picture halls; however, it was the growth of television in the 50s and 60s that sealed the fate of many local cinemas. In 1958, two Tyneside cinemas closed, then three in 1959, seven in 1960, and seven in 1961. The ABC Ritz closed on 8 September 1962 after a double bill comprising *A Kind of Loving* and *The Third Alibi* (Armstrong, L 2005).

The Bingo Years

- 3.2.10 After the closure of the cinema at the Ritz, ABC then spent £50,000 to convert the cinema into a bingo club, taking advantage of bingo's increasing popularity. The club opened in 1963.
- 3.2.11 In September 1972, Mecca applied successfully for a cinema licence ten years after closing. *Get Carter* had been shown there with great success following the town's Arts Festival in May 1972, starting at 1030hrs, and the managed planned to introduce films on Saturday nights between 11pm and 2am after the bingo had finished. Although a cinematograph licence was granted, no evidence has been found that these late shows ever took place. In 1992, the stalls rake was removed and cashline bingo tables introduced by the new owners (See Plate 4 below), the Rank Organisation, at a cost of £750,000 (Armstrong, L 2005).

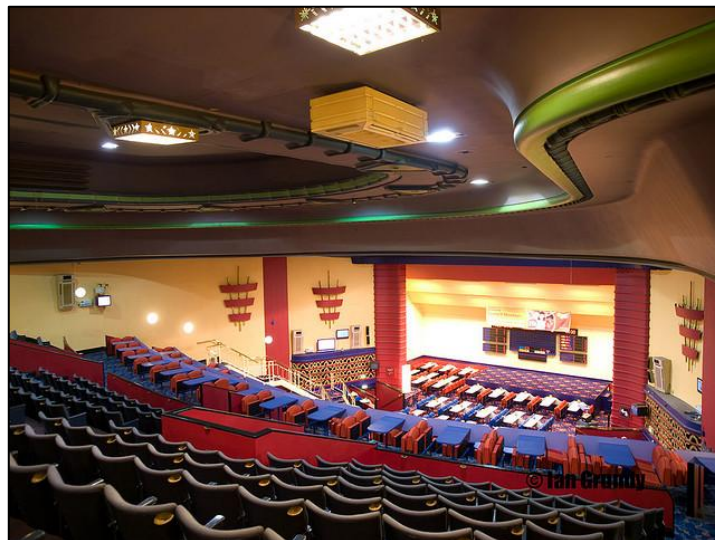


Plate 4: The auditorium from the circle, after the refurbishment in 1992. Online Source

The Building Design and its Architect

- 3.2.12 The design of the Ritz was unusual; the ABC was unable to extend the auditorium in a direct line due to the presence of other buildings. The solution to this was to have a narrow cinema entrance into what was, in effect, a corridor of 35 yards. The building then swings on a 90

degree right angle into the spacious auditorium that runs parallel to High Street West. The cinema had a perpendicular name sign outside (See Plate 1 above) and had an upstairs flat for the cinema manager to live in. Access was through the foyer into what is now a storeroom.

- 3.2.13 The auditorium was parallel to the street and was approached from the main terrazzo-floored vestibule by a short flight of stairs on the right to the circle foyer and a parallel passage leading to the stalls foyer (See Plate 5 below). This auditorium was 97 feet long by 75 ½ feet wide; seating in the stalls was 1,092 to which was added the circle seating to make a total of 1,636. The ceiling was deeply coved in typical Browne style. The Ritz was built with a large stage, 58ft by 20ft, and a scenery door; the proscenium width was 40ft.



Plate 5: View of the Main Entrance Lobby on opening night in 1939 (Manders, 2009)

- 3.2.14 The present foyer retains many art deco features especially on the walls and plasterwork (See Plate 5 above & Photo 7 below). The lounge areas that lead to the auditorium retain their cinema design (See Photo 13). The banister and balustrade in the foyer are in near original form (See Photo 5 below). In the rear circle, cinema seats have been retained (Armstrong, L 2005).

Percy Lindsay Browne⁴

- 3.2.15 Percy Lindsay Browne was born in 1871 and practised in Newcastle upon Tyne. He entered into partnership with Edwin Fewster Waugh Liddle in 1895 followed after 1908 by a period on his own. He joined Kenneth Glover in 1913 and remained there until 1925 when this was dissolved and Charles Alfred Harding who had joined his practice as an assistant after serving in the First World War was taken into partnership. In 1928 Browne's sons, T Lindsay Browne and J L Browne joined the practice, the name changing to PL Browne & Son with the practice title subsequently becoming PL Browne Son & Harding. In the 1960s, the practice

⁴ Dictionary of Scottish Architects: http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=205088

was PL Browne & Partners. He was a cinema specialist and had visited the United States of America to study cinema design – his firm designed more than 120 cinemas in 20 years.

3.2.16 Table 1 below lists the cinemas designed by Browne in the North East region.

In use as cinema	In use, not as cinema	Demolished
The New Westgate Cinema (now O2 Academy, Newcastle)	The Wallaw Cinema, Blyth ⁵ (Grade II Listed) ⁶	Fairworld Film Centre, Hartlepool
Odeon Darlington	Gaumont, Sunderland	Gaumont, Whitley Bay
Globe Theatre, Stockton-on-Tees (Grade II Listed) ⁷		Gaumont, Wallsend
		Rialto Cinema, Newcastle upon Tyne
		Ritz, Erith
		Ritz, Gateshead
		Savoy, South Shields
		Scala, Newcastle Upon Tyne

3.3 Historic Building Recording

Exterior of the Building

- 3.3.1 The exterior of the building has changed relatively little since the building was constructed in 1939. The northeast front entrance faces onto High Street West, and is constructed of painted concrete faced brick. A metal canopy projects out over the entrance. The lower part of the front facade has been decoratively tiled. This was carried out sometime after 1963 when part of this wall was a shop window (See Plate 1 above). The windows have projecting concrete sills and decorative metal grills which have waving line and scroll designs. A triangular ABC sign, now painted over, is located on the front of the building (See Photo 3 below).
- 3.3.2 The remainder of the exterior is constructed from brick with flat roofs. The windows are mostly wooden framed with concrete sills. A fire exit doorway, located on the southeast corner of the auditorium has rounded concrete corner on the exterior of the building (See Photo 4 below).
- 3.3.3 The auditorium had several blocked doorways visible on the exterior. These include one on the north elevation, formerly entering the Wash Up Room, another is situated adjacent to the fire exit in the northern corner. A former access to the back of the stage is present at the

⁵ NMR: <http://www.heritage-explorer.co.uk/web/he/searchdetail.aspx?id=7448>

⁶ <http://cinema-theatre.org.uk/uk-cinemas/listed-cinemas/england/>

⁷ <http://cinema-theatre.org.uk/uk-cinemas/listed-cinemas/england/>

northeast corner. A further former doorway is situated on both sides of the fire exit with the rounded exterior corners (See Photo 4). Blocked windows are present along the west wall of the lobby, along the east elevation, in one of the offices and along the south elevation of the auditorium, in the male toilets.



Photo 3: The front entrance including details of the decorative tiles, canopy, windows and ABC sign, taken from the north



Photo 4: The auditorium fire door exit with rounded concrete corner detail, and blocked up doorways, taken from the north

*Interior of the Building**Ground Floor - The Main Entrance Lobby*

- 3.3.4** The brickwork has been exposed throughout the building. The main entrance lobby was located immediately behind the main entrance to the building from High Street West. The brickwork has been exposed on all the walls throughout the building. There are carpet covered steps leading up from the entrance, which have two original metal hand rails with a decorative scroll design (See Photo 5 below & Plate 5 above).



Photo 5: One of the two original hand rails located within the main entrance lobby

- 3.3.5** The original terrazzo floor is present beneath the carpet. The pattern, in the areas that were visible, consisted of horizontal and vertical lines along the edges of the room, and a semi-circular design against the eastern wall where one of the ticket kiosks would have been located (See Photo 6 below & Plate 5 above). This has been removed on the other side of the lobby.



Photo 6: Original terrazzo floor within the main entrance lobby. Scale 1m

- 3.3.6 The original moulded plaster ceiling was visible above the modern suspended ceiling tiles. This has a central rectangular recess with rounded corners and ridged egg and dart edging. The original moulded cornicing is present with an arched egg and dart design, and a descending three ridged corbel remains on the west side of the entrance lobby (See Photo 7 below & Plate 5 above).



Photo 7: Details of the cornicing and remaining corbel in the main entrance lobby

- 3.3.7 Three rectangular blocked up windows are present above the main entrance, with a large central window flanked by two smaller windows on either side (See Photo 8 below). By 1963 these had been covered by an advertisement sign (See Plate 1 above). There is a high pitched wooden ceiling within the entrance way. This appears to be a modern replacement.



Photo 8: Windows above the main entrance

- 3.3.8 Several offices and store rooms are present on the east side of the main entrance lobby. There was limited access to these rooms at the time of the site visit, due to the stock piling of

demolition material and the presence of a high voltage electricity generator. These rooms appear to have been modernised prior to the closure of the building. Blocked up recesses are present on the on the east, west and north walls of the main entrance lobby, although their function and date is unclear.

Ground Floor - The Lobby Corridor

- 3.3.9 The lobby extended along the west side of the ground floor level, from the main entrance lobby to the auditorium, on the south side of the building. The terrazzo floor appears to have continued through the lobby, although this was not visible due to the presence of a carpet. A hatch was present along the east wall of the lobby; this may be a service access hatch. A blocked up window is present on the west wall of the lobby.
- 3.3.10 At the south end of the corridor, on the west side, an arrangement of three windows is present. These consist of a large, square central window flanked on both sides by smaller, thin rectangular ones. Most of the original Art Deco ceiling survives at the south end of the lobby. The central, oval recess panel is missing but the moulded smooth raised edging and main ceiling panel remain intact. The cornicing around the main panel has an inverted arched design (See Photo 9 below).



Photo 9: Details of the Art Deco ceiling at the south end of the lobby

Ground Floor - The Auditorium

- 3.3.11 The auditorium is located adjacent to the south end of the lobby corridor. It consists of a large hall with an upper level at the west end called the circle. The original stage has been removed, probably during the refurbishment in 1992, and seating had been installed in this area. The floor level has been raised at the north end of the auditorium, as the original floor had sloped towards the screen (See Plate 3 above & Plate 6 below). Earlier floor boards are present beneath the raised floor supports and at the eastern end of the auditorium. The wooden floor joists have been exposed in some areas and are in filled with concrete. The fire exits in the northwest and southeast corners of the auditorium are each accessed via a set of stairs. A later cast iron staircase has been constructed to create access to the circle, from the northwest corner of the auditorium.



Plate 6: The auditorium from the circle, the original floor level can be seen sloping towards the proscenium and stage in 1939 (Manders, 2009)

3.3.12 The moulded plaster edges of the proscenium are rounded with decorative ridges which join decorative ventilation grills on both sides of the proscenium (See Photo 2 & Plate 6 above). Two ventilation grills of the same style are located at the western end of the auditorium. The ceiling of the auditorium, beneath the circle has a moulded rectangular recess with rounded corners and a shallow Greek key design (See Photo 11 below). The circle is supported at the western end of the auditorium by three ridged pillars. A fourth pillar on the northwest side of the auditorium no longer survives.



Photo 10: Details of one of the decorative ventilation grills and ceiling at the western end of the auditorium

The Stair Corridor

- 3.3.13 A stairway is present on the east side of the lobby. The stairs are of a concrete construction with an original central metal hand rail, consisting of the same scroll design as those in the main entrance lobby. A curved, rectangular window with 20 panes, arranged in two rows is located at ceiling height, midway down the stair corridor. This is only visible from the top of the stairs (See Photo 10 below). Another probable service access hatch is present at the top of the stairs.

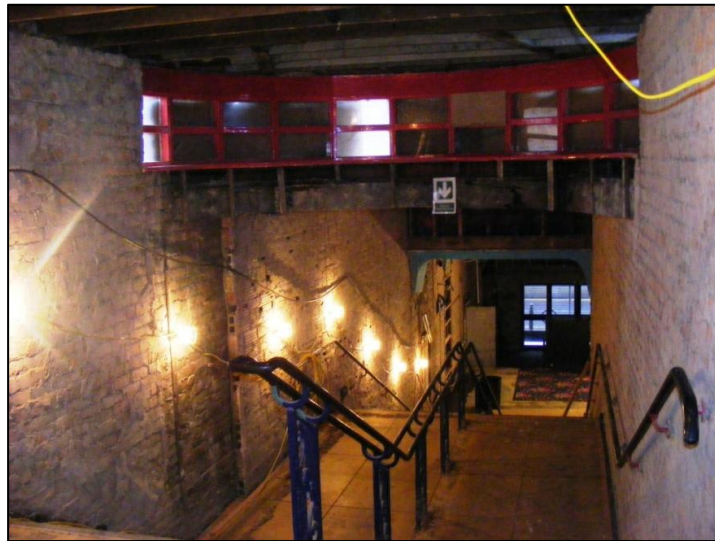


Photo 11: Details of the stair corridor with the window at ceiling level

First Floor - The Circle

- 3.3.14 The circle is accessed via a later set of stairs from the auditorium and originally via two staircases that lead onto a corridor behind the auditorium. Cinema style seating is present in most of the circle with Bingo seating and tables along the front edge. The Art Deco ceiling above the circle survives practically in its original state (See Photo 12 below). It has a concentric sub-oval design; the outer circle has smooth moulded plaster edging with further ridged detail on the inside. The interior design consists of a rectangle with rounded ends, moulded ridged edges and nine inward pointing triangles around the sides. The triangles were originally designed as light fittings (See Plate 6 above) which have been removed and smoothed over with plaster. Two original decorative ventilation grills are located on either side of the moulded central ceiling.

First Floor – Corridor

- 3.3.15 A corridor is located at the top of the main staircase which would have provided access to the circle. Armstrong describes this area as a lounge, although no evidence for this function survives. Several offices, storerooms and a locker room on the northwest side of the corridor had already been demolished at the time of the site visit. The remaining small rooms off the corridor were inaccessible due to the stock piling of the demolition material. The original moulded plaster ceiling survives. The design consists of a rectangular recess with rounded

ends which has smooth moulded edges. The exposed brickwork indicates that some of the walls on the east side of the corridor have rounded edges (See Photo 13 below).



Photo 12: Details of the auditorium ceiling



Photo 13: The ceiling in the first floor corridor. The rounded edge of the wall can be seen in the background adjacent to the scale. Scale 2m

- 3.3.16 The office on the east side of the corridor has been mostly modernised and the adjacent toilets had been demolished at the time of the site visit.
- 3.3.17 The stair way located in the northwest corner of the first floor has walls with rounded edges, an original rounded hand rail and rectangular wooden framed window.

Second Floor – Projection Room

- 3.3.18 There was limited access to the second floor during the site visit, due to lighting limitations in this area. A stair way at the top of the main staircase leads to the projection room, associated office and WC. There are four projection apertures on the east wall of the projection room. At

least two of which survive with their fire shutters, glass plates and most of the bar mechanism above the apertures associated with operating them, intact (See Photo 14 below).



Photo 14: Projection apertures with associated shutter mechanisms. A switch board is visible on the wall between the apertures

3.3.19 The projection room also contains the original lighting controls. A switch panel is present with individual flick switches for each different set of lighting. The switches have individual metal labels fastened with metal rivets above them. These have been painted over which has obscured most of the wording. A lighting dimmer consol survives on the south wall, with a metal manufacturer's plate which has Major Equipment Ltd stamped in relief. This has switches for different colour lighting and for different areas of the auditorium and two crank wheel on the side (See Photo 15 below).



Photo 15: Lighting dimmer consol

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Context of the Ritz in the North East

- 4.1.1 As outlined above, Percy L Browne was responsible for the design of around 13 cinemas within the North East, and a large number of these have since been demolished. Along with the Ritz, there are a further four surviving examples of Browne cinemas in the region, making it a significant survival.
- 4.1.2 The Wallaw in Blyth has recently re-opened as a JD Wetherspoon public house⁸, and this has demonstrated how a cinema building can be given a new use while respecting its historic fabric.
- 4.1.3 The continued survival and use of the building, albeit different from its original purpose, is important to the history of cinema buildings in this part of the country, indeed in Great Britain as a whole.

4.2 Survival at the Ritz

- 4.2.1 As mentioned above, the exterior of the building has changed relatively little since the building was constructed in 1939. Several features of architectural interest survive on the southwest facing facade of the cinema, including decorative metal grills over the windows, a triangular ABC sign and later decorative tiling. The fire exit located on the eastern corner of the auditorium has Art Deco style, rounded exterior walls.
- 4.2.2 Despite at least two phases of refurbishment, firstly in 1962 for the conversion to a Bingo hall and another in 1992 by Mecca Bingo, a large amount of original Art Deco architectural details and some cinematographic features survive on the interior of the building. The ground and first floors include moulded plaster ceilings and cornicing, decorative ventilation grills and banister rails. The second floor projection room retains the projection apertures with their shutters and glass plates, as well as lighting control panel and dimming consol. However, in line with Section 3.8 of the submitted planning document (reference, Item 5.4 - 14-00232-FUL Mecca Bingo and Social Club High Street West, Wallsend, NE28 8JD (Wallsend ward)), dated 12th February 2014, no changes are proposed for this floor.

4.3 Recommendations

- 4.3.1 The Tyne & Wear Historic Buildings Officer advised that 'The facade, doors and windows are essentially Art Deco and are therefore significant' (reference, Section 1.5.2; Item 5.4 - 14-00232-FUL Mecca Bingo and Social Club High Street West, Wallsend, NE28 8JD (Wallsend ward)). In addition, the Tyne & Wear Planning Archaeologist advised in Section 1.6.1 of the same document that ... 'the Art Deco details inside (the cinema) be kept' where possible.
- 4.3.2 To respond to these requests the proposed development will retain and restore the art-deco frontage onto High Street West. The main building would include some minor alterations to the fenestration and ground floor level, and the removal of the existing foyer to provide an outdoor seating area. It should be noted that these alterations were considered by the

⁸ <http://www.jdwetherspoon.co.uk/home/pubs/the-wallaw>

Planning Officer in Section 10.7 of the Planning document Item 5.4 ...'to improve the appearance of the building'. It was also considered in Section 10.12 of the same Item 5.4 document that ...'bringing the vacant building back into use, the creation of jobs as a result of the development and the restoration of the frontage, outweigh the loss of the ticket foyer behind the art-deco frontage.

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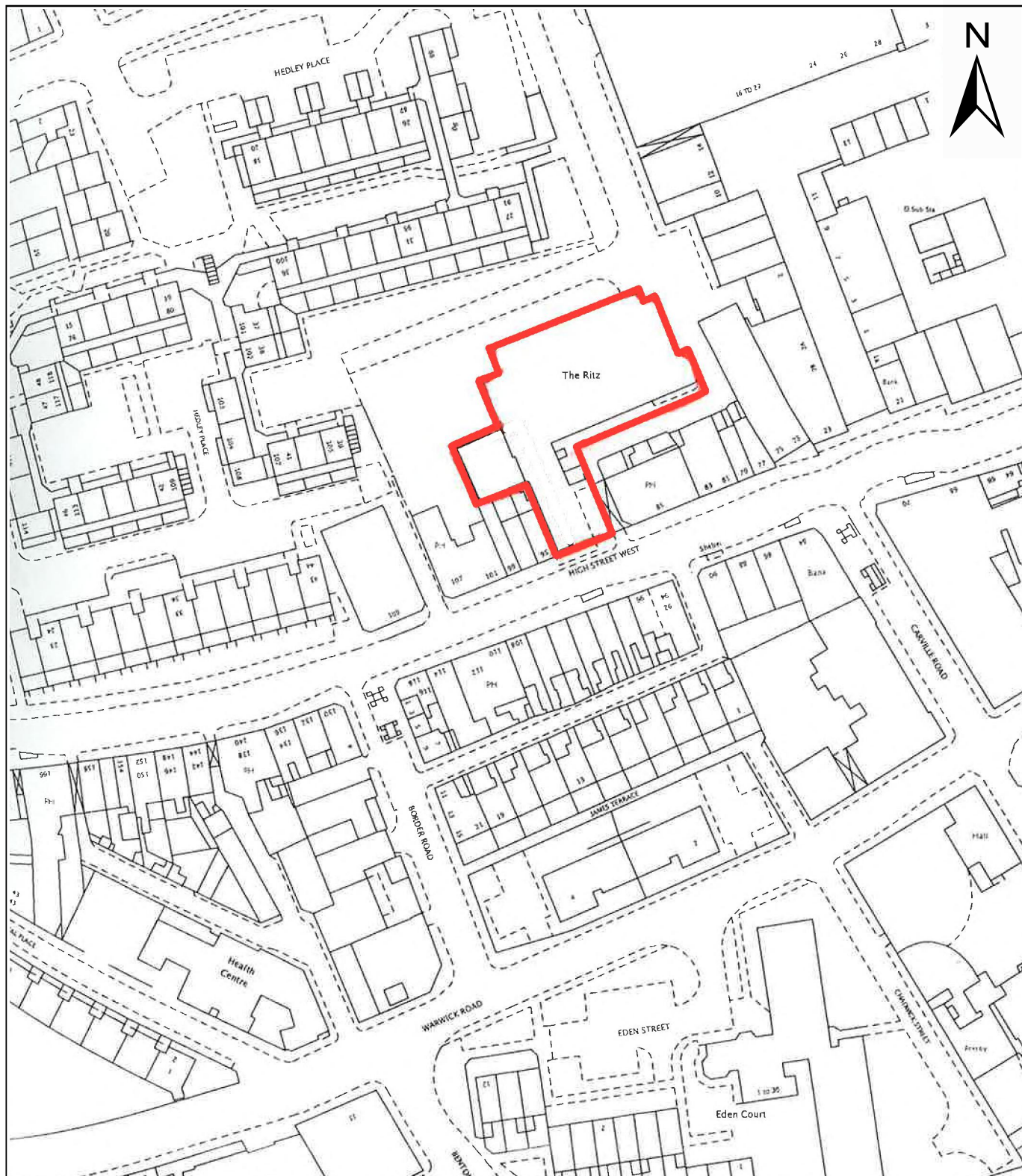
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Legend

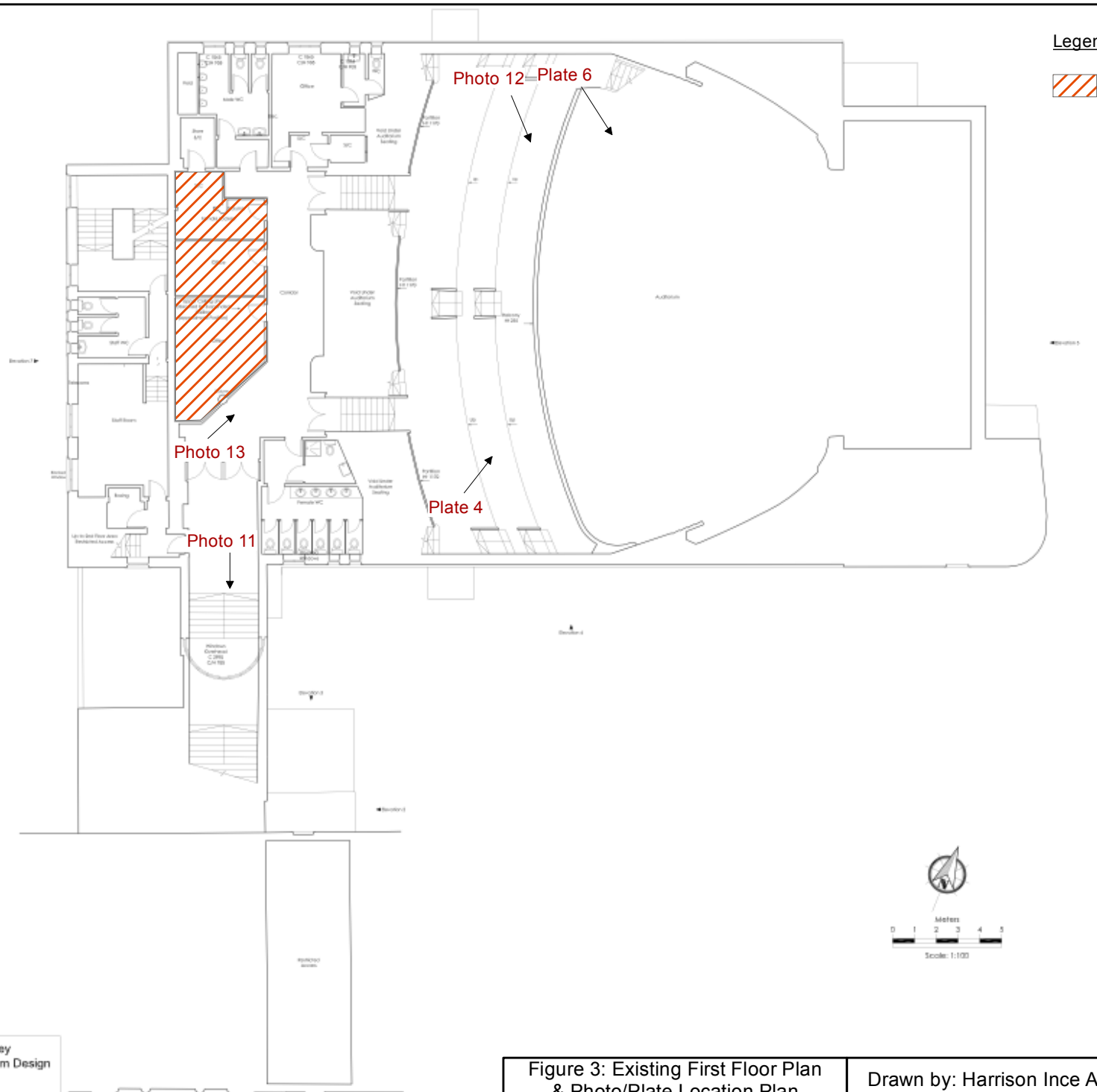
Site Boundary

Figure 1: Site Location
Reproduced from client's figure


Project: The Ritz - Level II
Historic Building Recording

Job Number: 10440

Scale: 1:1250



Legend

 Demolished in advance of Site Visit

Note: Drawings are base on survey information provided by Perceptum Design
 Project No. PD/257 Drawing No. PD/257/02-F dated January 2014

EXISTING FIRST FLOOR PLAN

Figure 3: Existing First Floor Plan & Photo/Plate Location Plan

Drawn by: Harrison Ince Architects

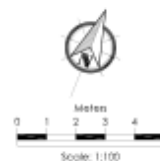
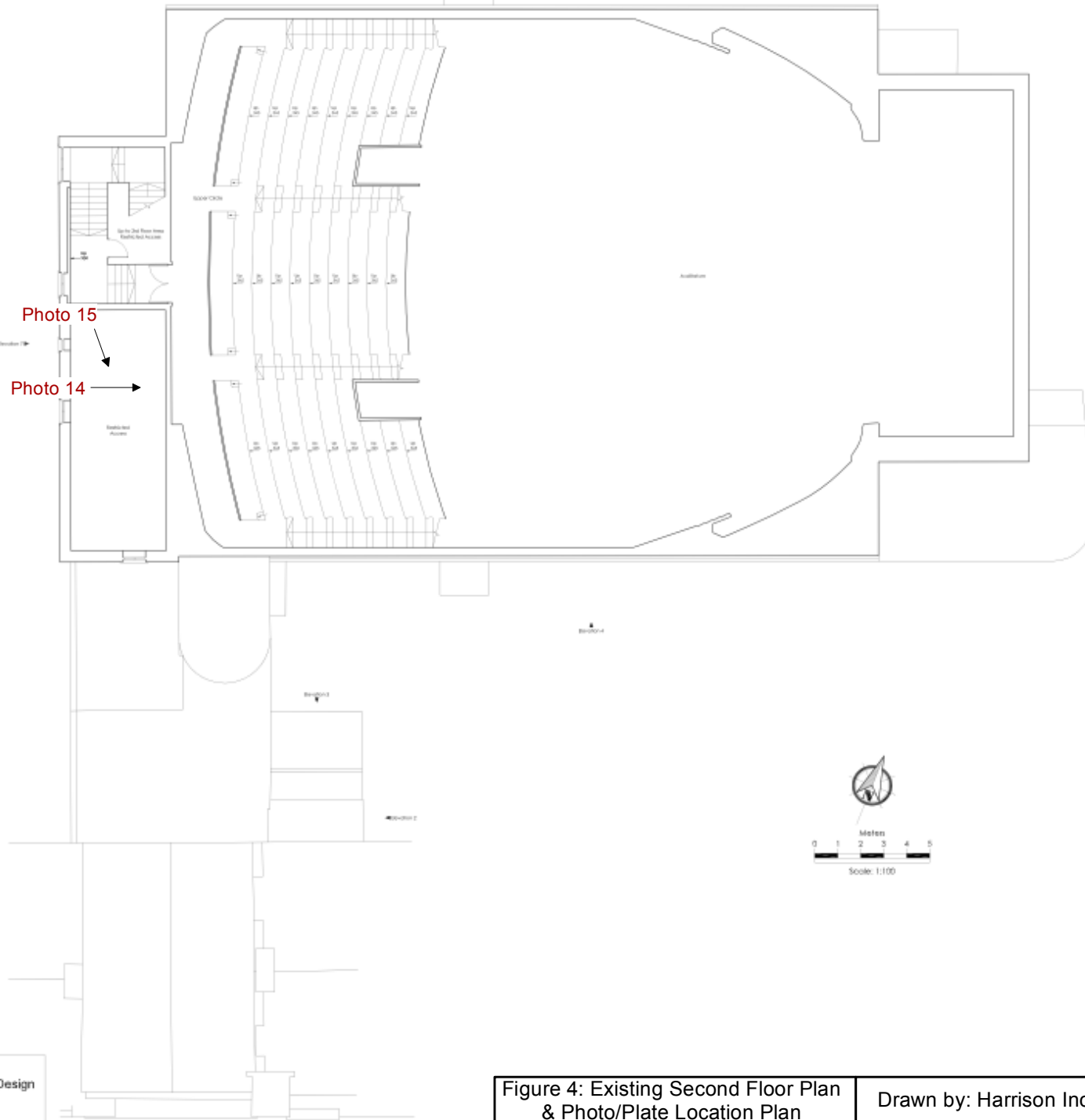
Project: The Ritz, Wallsend

Date: 01/2014

Job Number: 10440



Photo 15
Photo 14



Note: Drawings are base on survey information provided by Perceptum Design
Project No. PD/257 Drawing No.
PD/257/03-F dated January 2014

EXISTING SECOND FLOOR PLAN

Figure 4: Existing Second Floor Plan & Photo/Plate Location Plan

Drawn by: Harrison Ince Architects

Project: The Ritz, Wallsend

Date: 01/2014

Job Number: 10440



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