

# **Archaeological Services**

A Historic Building Photographic Survey at the former Ritz Cinema, Northampton Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire.

NGR: SP 7348 8706

Andrew Hyam



# An Historic Building Photographic Survey at the former Ritz Cinema, Northampton Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire

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For: CgMs Consulting

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# An Historic Building Photographic Survey at the former Ritz Cinema, Northampton Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire.

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#### **Andrew Hyam**

#### **Summary**

An historic building photographic survey was undertaken by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at the former Ritz Cinema, Northampton Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire on the 1st of October 2012. The survey studied the former cinema building which was subsequently converted for use as a supermarket until its closure in 2005. The brick-built building has been stripped of most of its original fixtures and fittings leaving only a remnant on the top floor. Planning permission has been granted to demolish the existing building and build 51 sheltered apartments for the elderly in its place.

The report and archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council under Accession Number X.A87.2012

#### Introduction

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12 *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* this document forms the report of an historic building photographic survey on the former Ritz Cinema, Northampton Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire. Planning permission has been granted to demolish the cinema building and construct a block of 51 retirement apartments in its place. The historic building photographic survey was undertaken to record the current state of the cinema building which forms a notable piece of social history within the town of Market Harborough. This level of survey was deemed suitable for a building such as this. It is intended that a plaque will be erected on the new building to commemorate the fact that the Ritz Cinema used to occupy this site.

A detailed Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment prepared by CgMs (March 2012) and a Heritage Statement prepared by Gilmore Hankey Kirke Limited (May 2012) both address the wider historical background of the site and the building.

#### **Background**

The site is located on the southern side of Market Harborough and is on the western side of Northampton Road (Figs 1 and 2). It lies immediately to the south of the east to west oriented River Welland and a Methodist Church to the south. To the east of the site, across the road, is the refurbished market hall.

As noted in the DBA and Heritage Statement the cinema was constructed in May 1939 by Associated British Cinemas (ABC) to a Union Cinemas design (Fig. 3). It

closed as a cinema in 1978 and became a bingo hall until 1982. From this date until 2005 it operated as a Kwik Save supermarket. It seems likely that the conversion to a supermarket marked the time when many of the remaining internal fittings were removed to create a large open space on the ground floor. Historic map evidence indicates that the footprint of the building has remained unchanged since 1939.

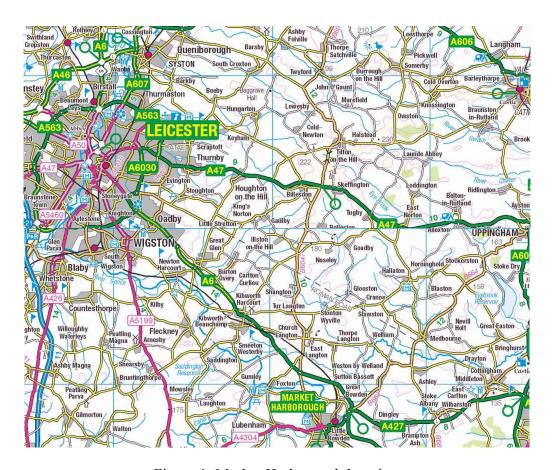


Figure 1. Market Harborough location

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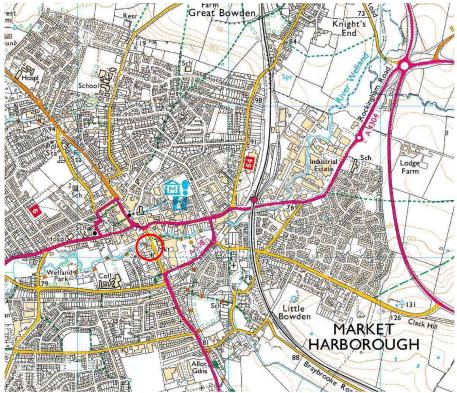


Figure 2. Site location

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Figure 3. The cinema as originally built in 1939 Source: GHK Architects Heritage Statement.

#### **Objectives**

The objectives of the historic building photographic survey were:

- To record by photography the building with specific attention given to those elements proposed for demolition, conversion and/or alteration. This work to be undertaken to a standard that will allow the future interpretation of the building within the context for which it was originally designed and which subsequently evolved.
- To produce an archive and report of the results.

#### Methodology

Black and white 35mm photographs and digital colour photographs were taken throughout the survey. Notes and sketches were also made to assist the photographic survey. The specific levels of detail used in the survey followed the guidelines laid down in the RCHME (1996) and English Heritage (2006) specification for photography, which were:

- Item 1: General view or views of the exterior of the building.
- Item 2: The overall appearance of principal rooms and circulation areas.
- Item 3: Coverage of the building's exterior appearance.
- Item 4: Any external detail, structural or decorative, which is relevant to the building's design, development and use and which does not show adequately on general photographs.
- Item 5: The building's relationship to its setting, to other buildings, or to a significant viewpoint.
- Item 6: Internal detail, structural and decorative, which is relevant to the building's design, development and use, and which does not show adequately on general photographs.

All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Code of Conduct (2010) and adhered to their Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing buildings or Structures (2010). In addition, Leicestershire County Council's Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire was followed.

#### **Results**

Key digital photographs are shown in the body of this report with a gazetteer, location plan and contact sheet of all photographs taken included in the appendices of this report.

The building consists of a large brick-built auditorium with the main entrance foyer, service rooms and projection suite being incorporated into a brick-built block fronting onto Northampton Road (Fig. 4). The main elevation of the building is set slightly back from the road and has an open car park running around the sides and rear (Figs. 5 and 6). A brick and concrete loading bay has been built near to the north-western corner of the building and is presumably associated with the supermarket. The roofing material appears to be of asbestos sheet supported by L-section angle iron. It is hipped on the eastern side but has a small gablet on the west which may be connected with the location of the projection screen inside. Modern wooden hoardings have been erected around the site and a number of large bushes and trees have grown up along the front of the site preventing close-up photography of the ground floor.

#### Outside

East facing elevation and main façade

The east facing elevation is the main face of the building and is brick-built using a better quality brick from that employed on the other faces of the auditorium building (Fig. 8). A fairly basic version of Art Deco decoration has been used to create a flat fronted façade with a ground floor entrance to the main foyer flanked by double doors which, when first constructed, led to two sets of internal stairs. One set of stairs has since been removed (see below). The entrance steps seen in Figure 3 have been modified to provide wheelchair access (Fig 9). The second floor has a central row of five wooden-framed windows lighting an upstairs landing. Around these windows is a raised rectangle of brickwork which relieves the otherwise plain frontage (Fig. 9). Either side of the landing windows are a matching pair of larger windows of identical style which light internal staircases. A narrow coping runs along the parapet screening the flat roofed block built against the hipped roof.

The higher quality brickwork wraps around the east facing elevation to form two wings extending beyond the sides of the main auditorium. All of the windows on the two wings facing to the north and south have been blocked using modern bricks (Figs 11 and 12).

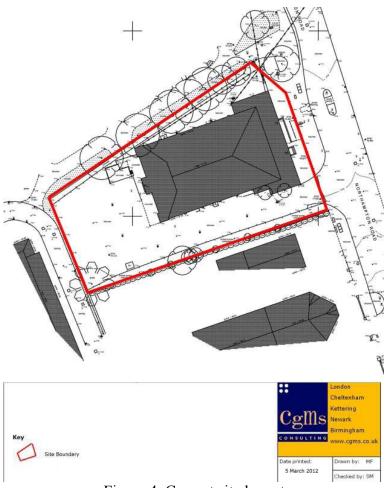


Figure 4. Current site layout Source: CgMs Desk-Based assessment, March 2012



Figure 5. General view of site from Northampton Road Looking north



Figure 6. General view of site from Northampton Road Looking south-west



Figure 7. Rear yard to west of building Looking north-west



Figure 8. East facing elevation Looking west



Figure 9. Entrance to ground floor foyer Looking south-west shortly after closure of supermarket in 2005. Source: CgMs



Figure 10. Window detail on east facing elevation



Figure 11. North wing blocked windows Facing south-east. 1.5m scale

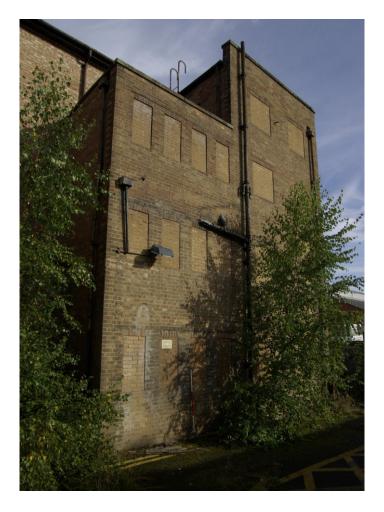


Figure 12. South wing blocked windows Facing north-east. 1.5m scale

#### North and south facing elevations of the main auditorium

As noted, the main auditorium is built from a lower quality and much less attractive brick giving the impression of a large monolithic box-like structure (Figs. 13 and 14). A series of brick pilasters support this large wall. Only two small doors, which may have acted as fire-escape doors, pierce these faces.

#### West facing elevation

The rear face of the main auditorium is constructed from the same functional bricks that are used on the north and south elevations (Fig. 15). At ground floor level on each corner are small projections as well as a central extension the purpose of which is not clear. A chimney also rises above eaves height near to the southern corner.



Figure 13. North facing elevation
Facing south-west. 1.5m scale. Note different types of brick used in main façade (on left of picture) and those used on the main auditorium



Figure 14. South and west elevations Facing north-east



Figure 15. West facing elevation Facing east. 1.5m scale

#### Inside

#### Main auditorium

The large open space of the auditorium has had all of its fixtures and fittings relating to its time as a cinema, bingo hall and supermarket completely removed. Current access is via a doorway to the south of the main entrance foyer. Inside this doorway are a set of narrow staff stairs leading up to the landing and beyond to the top floor projection suite. It would appear that at ground floor level the public stairs which led from the entrance up to the first-floor landing and into the main auditorium have been removed leaving only a series of small awkward spaces in its place (Fig. 16). Another set of wide public stairs led up to the landing from a set of double doors set to the north of the main entrance.

The entrance foyer has had the dividing wall between the foyer and the auditorium removed to create a large open space with a low false ceiling (Figs. 17 and 18). There is also no trace of any ticket office or booth. Where the false ceiling has collapsed the front of the first floor curving balcony can be seen extending out approximately 15m into the auditorium (Fig. 19).



Figure 16. Removed public staircase to south of entrance foyer Looking south. 1.5m scale



Figure 17. Ground floor entrance Looking east.1.5m scale



Figure 18. Main auditorium, ground floor Looking west. 1.5m scale



Figure 19. Front and underside of balcony seen through modern false ceiling Looking south-east

Approximately 30m west from the entrance a 2m high breeze block wall has been built from north to south across the auditorium to create a warehousing space for the

supermarket (Fig. 20). Glimpses of ironwork, ladders and gantries which could be part of the original screen support can be seen through the false ceiling in this space.



Figure 20. Rear portion of main auditorium Looking north-west.

#### First floor

Internal access from the ground floor to the first floor landing is now via the narrow staff staircase to the south of the entrance foyer. The landing forms a central space with steps leading from each end to the balcony (Fig. 21). The ceiling has a series of embossed rectangles added in an Art Deco style which appears to be a common theme used by the Union Cinemas who designed the building. It is lit by a series of five wooden framed windows which have a beaded decoration that is repeated on all of the surviving wooden doors on this floor and the top floor (Fig. 22).



Figure 21. First floor landing Looking north-east. 1.5m scale. Note art deco style ceiling decoration



Figure 22. Window detail on first floor landing



Figure 23. Door details on north side of first floor landing Looking south. 1.5m scale

The balcony in the auditorium has had all of its seats removed leaving only the wooden boarded curved, stepped base (Fig. 24). The windows on the rear (east) projection wall have been blocked but the original ventilation/extraction ducting is still present. What looks like a fire screen has been built half way across the auditorium and this may be contemporary with the insertion of the false ceiling. Above the balcony the L-section roof supports can be seen (Fig. 25). These supports also appear to have held the original ceiling which is now missing.

#### Top floor Projection Suite

To the south of the first floor landing the staff stairs lead up to the Projection Suite corridor (Fig. 26). The Projection Suite consists of a central projection room flanked by three smaller rooms each side. All of the doors are unpainted teak with the name of each room stencilled on the outside (Fig. 27).



Figure 24. First floor balcony Looking north-east. 1.5m scale

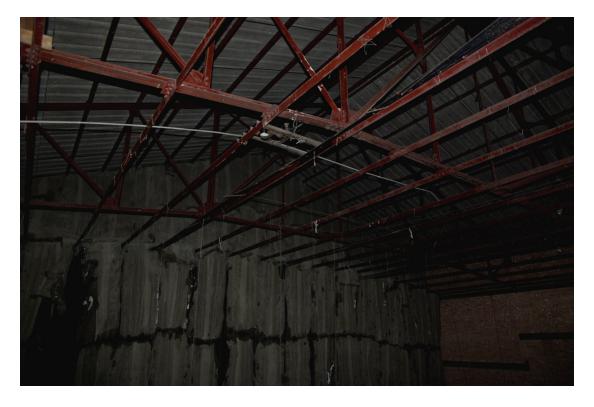


Figure 25. Roof structure as seen from balcony Looking north-west. Note inserted fire screen.

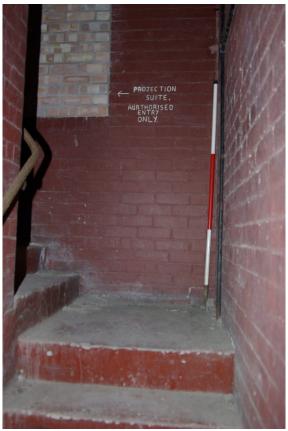


Figure 26. Stairs to Projection Suite Looking south. 1.5m scale



Figure 27. Projection Suite corridor Looking north from southern stairs

The most southerly room of the projection suite is the Battery Room (Fig. 28). Only a few broken remnants of battery plates remain in this room along with some metal racking which may or may not be related to the batteries.



Figure 28. Battery Room Looking west. 1.5m scale

The next room to the north of the Battery Room is the Rest Room (Fig. 29). Traces of the original painted green and cream wall colour scheme remain as does a viewing hatch used by staff to check the progress of the film (Fig. 30).



Figure 29. Rest Room door detail Looking south. 1.5m scale



Figure 30. Rest Room

Looking south-west. Note hatch into auditorium and original green and cream paint scheme. 1.5m scale

Beyond the Rest Room is the Rectifier Room (Figs. 30 and 31). A considerable amount of electrical switchgear and related equipment survives in this room. A door sized hatch on the north wall is filled with electrical equipment leading into the adjacent projection room. Small circular holes in the flat concrete roof allow some natural light into this room.

In the centre of the Projection Suite, to the north of the Rectifier Room, is the Projection Room which fills the whole width of this floor (Fig. 33). Nothing remains of the projection equipment except for the fixings set into the concrete floor (Figs. 34 and 35).



Figure 31. Rectifier Room Looking north-west. 1.5m scale



Figure 32. Rectifier Room Looking west. Note roof lights. 1.5m scale



Figure 33. South doorway of Projection Room Looking north. 1.5m scale



Figure 34. Projection Room Looking north-west. 1.5m scale

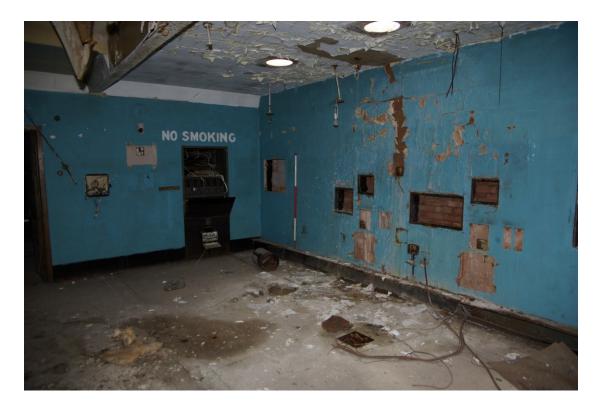


Figure 35. Projection Room Looking south-west

To the north of the Projection Room none of the three rooms have any names stencilled on them. The southernmost of these rooms has a door and window leading into the Projection Room as well as a door to the corridor (Fig. 36). A large amount of wooden debris has been deposited in this room although it is not clear where this came from

Beyond this room is a smaller room housing the original ventilation/extraction equipment which is connected to the ducting seen above the balcony (Fig. 37). The motor appears to be a later replacement but an unmounted one in the corner could be the original.

The final and northernmost room along the corridor is filled with wooden benches and other equipment, there is also a toilet in the north-west corner (Fig. 38). The purpose of this room is not clear but there are a number of lengths of film scattered around the floor suggesting film storage or repair.

To the north of the rooms a further set of narrow stairs leads down to the first floor landing.

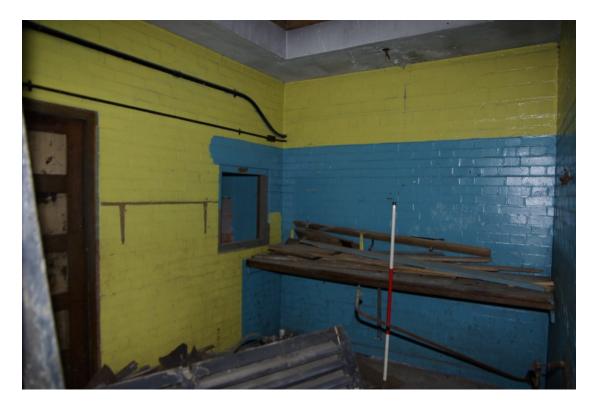


Figure 36. Room to the north of the Projection Room Looking south-west. 1.5m scale



Figure 37. Ventilation/extraction room Looking south-west. 1.5m scale

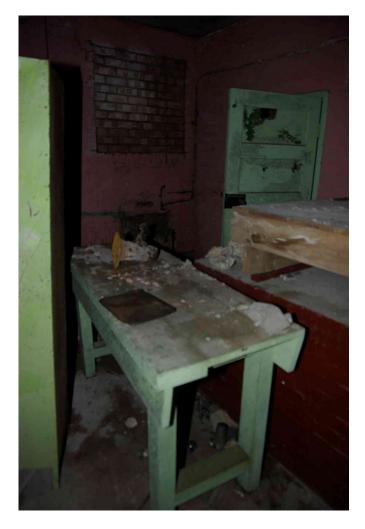


Figure 38. Northern room of Projection Suite Looking north-west. 1.5m scale

#### **Discussion**

Since its construction in 1939 the building has seen little alteration to its main external fabric. The most noticeable modifications to the fabric of the building are the removal of the main stairs to the south of the entrance foyer, removal of all foyer walls and the blocking of all side windows. Internally, with the exception of the top floor Projection Suite, there is little to show for its life as a cinema or even as a supermarket.

#### **Archive**

The archive consists of:

This report,

2 contact sheets of 75 digital photographs,

1 CD of digital photographs in jpeg format plus this report,

2 CD's of digital photographs in .tif format

Contact sheets of 54 black and white 35mm photographs,

35mm negatives,

handwritten notes taken during the survey.

3 photographic record sheets (combined for digital and black and white).

#### **Publication**

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course. A record of the project will also be submitted to the OASIS project. OASIS is an online index to archaeological grey literature.

#### Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Myk Flitcroft of CgMs for arranging site access and providing useful additional information. The project was managed by P Clay, the fieldwork was carried out by A Hyam.

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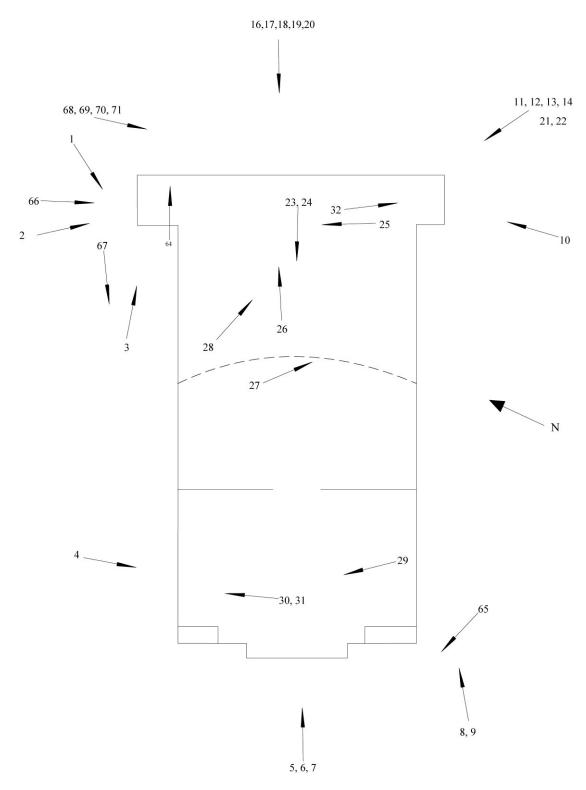
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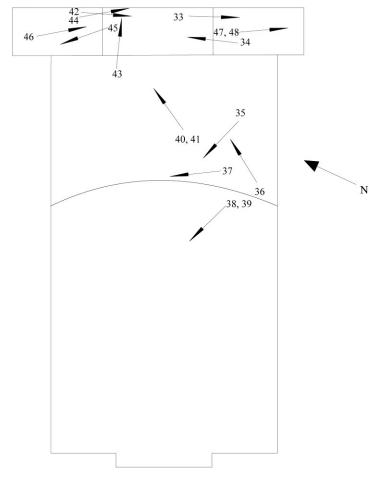
12.10.2012

# Appendix 1. Location of digital photographs

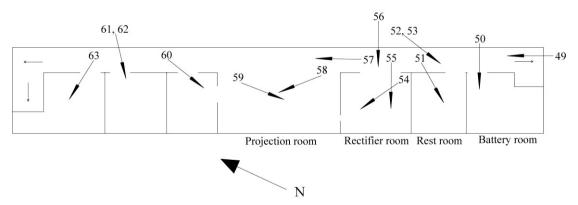
See gazetteer in Appendix 2 for details



Ground floor. Not to scale.



First floor landing and balcony. Not to scale.



Top floor Projection Suite. Not to scale

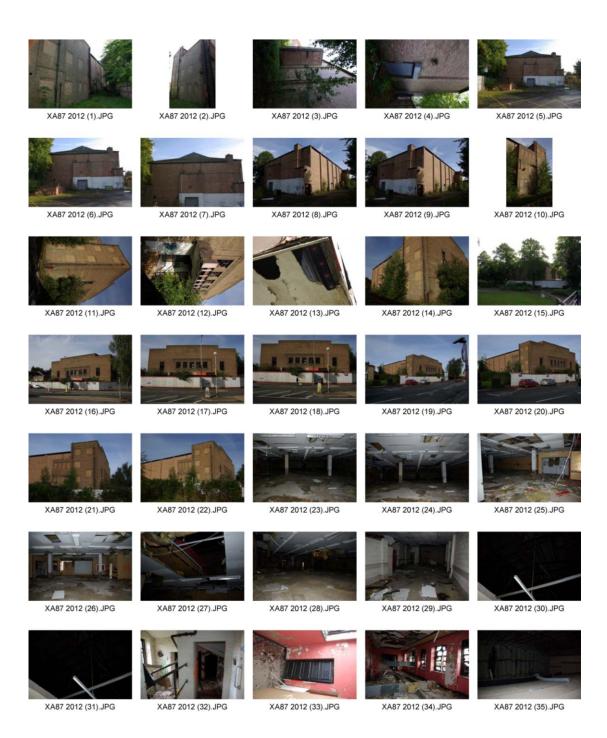
# Appendix 2. Gazetteer of photographs

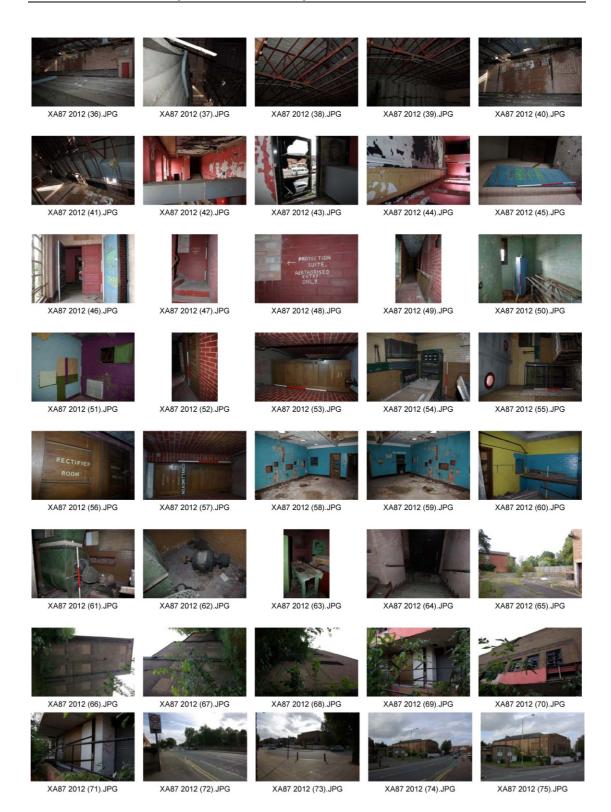
35mm Photo	Digital photo			
number	number	Description	Facing	Scale
1	1	N facing elevation	W	1.5m
2	2	Front wing of N elevation	E	1.5m
3	3	West face of front wing	E	1.5m
4	4	Roller shutter doors. N facing elevation	SW	1.5m
5	5-6	W facing elevation	E	1.5m
<u> </u>	7	Roof detail	E	1.5111
6	8-9	S facing elevation	NE	1.5m
7	10	East face of front wing	NE	1.5m
8	11	Corner of E & S facing elevations	N	1.5m
9	12	Main entrance	NW	1.5m
	13	Main entrance lights in canopy	-	-
10	14	S facing elevation	NW	1.5m
11	15	View from park	SE	-
12	16	View from Northampton Rd	SW	_
13	17-18	View from Northampton Rd	W	_
14	19-20	View from Northampton Rd	NW	_
15	21-22	View from Northampton Rd	N	_
16	23-24	Ground floor. Auditorium	E	1.5m
17	25	Ground floor. Auditorium	NE	1.5m
18	26	Ground floor. Auditorium	E	1.5m
19	27	Ground floor. Auditorium – Balcony thru false ceiling	S	-
20	28	Ground floor. Auditorium	NE	1.5m
21	29	Ground floor. Auditorium– rear walled off area	N	1.5m
22	30-31	Ground floor. Auditorium – roof detail		-
23	32	Ground floor. Staff rooms and demolished stairs	S	1.5m
24	33	First floor. Door to staff stairs	S	1.5m
25	34	First floor. Landing	NE	1.5m
26	35	First floor. Balcony	NW	1.5m
27	36	First floor. Balcony	NE	1.5m
28	37	First floor. Balcony	N	1.5m
29	38-39	First floor. Roof structure above balcony	-	-
30	40	First floor. Projection room wall from balcony	Е	1.5m
-	41	First floor. Ventilation equipment from balcony	N	-
31	42	First floor. Landing	S	1.5m
-	43	First floor. Landing window detail	-	-
32	44	First floor. Landing ceiling decoration	-	-
33	45	First floor. Northern door to Projection Suite	N	1.5m
34	46	First floor. North doors to landing	S	1.5m
1	-	B+W film 2 record shot		
2-3	47-48	First floor. South stairs to Projection suite	S	1.5m

# Gazetteer of photographs continued

35mm	Digital			
Photo	photo			
number	number	Description	Facing	Scale
4	49	Top floor, Projection Suite. Corridor	N	1.5m
5	50	Top floor, Projection Suite. Battery Room	W	1.5m
6	51	Top floor, Projection Suite. Rest Room	SW	1.5m
7	52-53	Top floor, Projection Suite. Rest Room door	SW	1.5m
8	54	Top floor, Projection Suite. Rectifier Room	NW	1.5m
9	55	Top floor, Projection Suite. Rectifier Room	W	1.5m
10	56	Top floor, Projection Suite. Rectifier Room door	W	1.5m
11	57	Top floor, Projection Suite. Projection Room, S door	N	1.5m
12-13	58-59	Top floor, Projection Suite. Projection Room	NW/SW	1.5m
		Top floor, Projection Suite. Room N of Projection		
14	60	Room	SW	1.5m
		Top floor, Projection Suite. Ventilation equipment		
15	61-62	room	W	1.5m
16	63	Top floor, Projection Suite. Northern room	W	1.5m
17	64	Ground floor. Public stairs to road	E	1.5m
18	65	Rear yard	NW	-
19	66-68	N facing elevation	SW	1.5m
20	69	Entrance	SW	-
21	70	Windows above entrance	SW	-
22	71	Entrance	SW	-
-	72-75	Site from Northampton Road	various	-

## Appendix 3. Digital photographs





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