

# FORMER ODEON CINEMA, EDINBURGH

*Historic Building Recording*

*for G1 Group*

*16/03430/FUL and 16/03428/LBC*

*October 2016*

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HA Job no.:	FOCE16
NGR:	NT 26184 72794
Parish:	City of Edinburgh
Council:	City of Edinburgh
OASIS ref.:	headland1-266933
SMR no.:	NT27SE 1636

Archive will be deposited with: Historic Environment Scotland

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## CONTENTS

1.....	INTRODUCTION.....	4
2.....	SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION.....	5
2.1	Site Location.....	5
2.2	Archaeological Background.....	5
2.3	Historical overview.....	5
3.....	AIMS & OBJECTIVES.....	6
4.....	METHODOLOGY.....	6
4.1	Historic Building Recording.....	6
4.2	Reporting and Archive.....	6
5.....	RESULTS.....	6
5.1	Basement.....	7
5.2	Ground Floor.....	7
5.3	First Floor.....	7
5.4	Second Floor.....	7
5.5	Third Floor.....	7
5.6	Exterior.....	8
5.7	Discussion.....	8
6.....	REFERENCES.....	9
7.....	APPENDICES.....	10
7.1	Appendix 1 – Discovery and Excavation in Scotland entry.....	10
7.2	Appendix 2 – Gazetteer.....	11

## FORMER ODEON CINEMA, EDINBURGH

### HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING

*Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by G1 Group to undertake a Level 2 historic building survey on the former Odeon at 7 Clerk Street, Edinburgh. The building opened in 1930 as the 'New Victoria' cinema, and was designed by W.E. Trent and J.W. Jordan for the Gaumont Company. It represents an unusual example of the 'atmospheric' style in Scotland with only one other surviving example, and has a number of interesting decorative features, not least the bright white Hathernware faience façade to Clerk Street. The cinema*

*underwent a number of structural changes in the 1950s-80s, including the division of the main auditorium to allow insertion of additional screens, before eventual closure in 2003. The current redevelopment aims to convert the building into a modern multi-screen cinema while restoring the 1930 interior to original condition. Recent removal of modern partitions, ceilings and finishes has revealed much of this original decorative scheme. This report presents a full descriptive record of the building after the soft strip, but prior to the completion of the restoration work and re-division of the auditorium.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by G1 Group to undertake a programme of historic building

recording in connection with the redevelopment of the former Odeon cinema at 7 Clerk Street, Edinburgh.

Planning permission for the development was granted by City of Edinburgh Council (16/03430/FUL and 16/03428/LBC) subject to a number of conditions, including one relating to archaeological works:

*No development shall take place on the site until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work (historic building recording, conservation plan, analysis & reporting, publication) in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Planning Authority.*

In order to fulfil this condition a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Headland Archaeology (2016) on behalf of G1 Group; setting out the proposed strategy for archaeological mitigation.

This included a programme of historic building recording to Level 2 standard (Historic England 2016), building on and updating an earlier Conservation Plan (Simpson & Brown 2007). The WSI was submitted to and agreed with John Lawson (CECAS) who advises the Local Planning Authority on archaeological matters. The survey was undertaken on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of October, 2016. The present report details the results of this work.

## 2 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Site Location

The proposed development is located at 7 Clerk Street, Edinburgh (centred on NGR: NT 26184 72794, Illus 1). The main entrance foyer occupies a relatively small façade on Clerk Street (Illus 2), with the main cinema building behind, filling the majority of the interior of a city block, and largely hidden from view. The rear of the building faces a recent student accommodation development on Buccleuch Street, formerly part of the cinema site. To the north and south, the site is bounded by the backs of residential tenement blocks, and their associated gardens and light wells.

### 2.2 Archaeological Background

The cinema is listed as a Category B historic building (Historic Environment Scotland reference number 30028). The site is located within the South Side Conservation Area as identified by Edinburgh City Council.

Previous archaeological investigations undertaken within the development area include standing building survey (Cressey & Mitchell 2014) and a subsequent watching brief (Cressey 2015) relating to the cinema queue shelter to the rear the building on Buccleuch

Street. A further watching brief (Hickman 2014) during the removal of the fly tower roof to the rear of the building was also carried out. These areas are no longer part of the present development area and are not discussed further below. As noted above, a Conservation Plan (Simpson & Brown 2007) relating to the site has also been produced. This provided a historical record of the cinema in its setting and its architectural significance. The results of this study will not be repeated in full beyond the following brief overview.

### 2.3 Historical overview

The plans for a new cinema were proposed by Provincial Cinematograph Theatres (under the umbrella of the Gaumont British Company) and approved in 1929. The design was by William E. Trent, the chief architect for the company and one of the most prominent cinema architects in Britain. The auditorium was designed in the 'atmospheric' style, which were popular in the United States and attempted to convey the illusion of an outdoor theatre. The main Clerk Street façade was clad in white Hatherware faience, which was very popular for cinemas of the period.

Demolition of shops, factory buildings, warehousing and a block of tenement housing facing onto Buccleuch Street was completed in the same year, and the 'New Victoria' was opened on 25th August 1930.

The first major alteration to the layout of the cinema was around 1954, when the proscenium was altered for the installation of Cinemascope. Later that decade, the Clerk Street façade was altered by removing windows flanking the entrance, and re-cladding these areas with dark marble. The first-floor café above the foyer was converted into a dance studio and the adjacent balcony largely filled in.

In 1960-1 a new screen and proscenium wall was installed in front of the original. In 1964 the cinema was renamed the 'Odeon'. At this time the redundant Wurlitzer organ was removed, new air conditioning installed, the stage was extended and the foyer entrance doors were repositioned further back.

The Odeon Cinema was first listed as a Category B historic building on 12th December 1974. A further extension to the stage and a new bar were installed in 1978-9.

The 1980s saw the subdivision of the auditorium into three, and later five cinema screens. This was achieved by separating the circle seating from the stalls with a new floor, and dividing the latter into two smaller spaces. Cinemas 4 and 5 were located in the fly tower behind the original stage.

In 1999, the balcony to Clerk Street was restored to original. The Odeon cinema moved to Lothian Road, and the building was closed in 2003. It has subsequently been subject to a number of proposals for re-use,

demolition and conversion. The listing status was upgraded to Category A in 2012.

The present redevelopment project aims to return the building to cinema use, with five modern screening rooms. It is intended that as much of the original 1930s decorative scheme and layout is visible to the public.

### 3 AIMS & OBJECTIVES

In line with the WSI, the purpose of the historic building survey was to provide an appropriate level of archaeological record to mitigate the loss and/or alteration of standing structures through demolition and conversion (following Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement (2016), Scottish Planning Policy 2014 ([www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)), PAN2/2011 ([www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)) and CEC's Edinburgh City Local Plan policies ENV2 and ENV9).

### 4 METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 Historic Building Recording

The work was undertaken as specified in the WSI and in line with the requirements of a Level 2 descriptive record (Historic England 2016), including:

- An archive assessment undertaken prior to the fieldwork. This will comprise consultation of the most easily available photographic and documentary records. This will include the National Map Library, the National Monuments Record of Scotland and other public sources as appropriate.
- A short descriptive summary of the building will include an assessment of the internal and external elevations/features and any other relevant constructional details. Some limited supporting documentary work will also be undertaken. This will include readily available information held at the National Monuments Record and the National Library.
- Annotation of the client's plans and elevations of the extant buildings.
- General photographic view or views of the significant features in context.
- A fully referenced detailed photographic coverage of the building, primarily identifying relevant internal structural and architectural details. This will provide a primary record of existing buildings within the complex and any significant features of architectural interest. This will be used in conjunction with the written record and provide an interpretative account of the building's phasing and development.

- A written account providing the date the record was made and the name of the recorders and a summary of the structure's form, materials and historical development.
- Recording will follow ClfA Standards and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures (ClfA 2014; online reference). Recording will be undertaken on pro forma record sheets. Digital images will be taken; a graduated metric scale will be clearly visible and a register kept.
- Floor plans and elevations supplied by the client in CAD format will be annotated and reproduced as necessary for the report.
- The client will provide details of specific conservation measures.

In practice, much of the documentary research requirement has been fulfilled by the earlier conservation plan (Simpson & Brown 2007), which has been referred to throughout this report. The plans supplied by the client have been included below (Illus 3-7), and accurately depict the building including downtakings, which had been completed by the time of the survey.

The photographic survey was undertaken using a high-quality digital SLR camera and is fully reproduced in gazetteer format in Appendix 2, with descriptive captions. This record comprises around 300 images. The Clerk Street façade, crush hall and auditorium were also recorded using photogrammetric techniques to allow the preparation of 3D models for use during reporting (Illus 8 and 9).

#### 4.2 Reporting and Archive

The results of the survey work are presented below. A summary report has been prepared for submission to *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland* (Appendix 1) and the OASIS database (ref: headland1-266933).

The complete project archive will be deposited with the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS) within six months of the completion of the project. The records (paper and digital) will be archived according to best practice guidelines set out by the Archaeological Archiving Forum.

### 5 RESULTS

The majority of the detailed record resulting from this survey can be found in the gazetteer (Appendix 2), which includes descriptions of each space and image, including discussion of condition and any significant downtakings and restoration work already completed. Each space has been allocated a number, comprising a letter (B = basement; G = ground floor; F, S and T are first, second and third floors respectively; E = external)

and a two digit number. For example, the ground floor foyer is labelled G01. These numbers are marked clearly on the plans (Illus 3-7) and also prefix individual image numbers. A total of 40 internal spaces have been described (some grouped together for brevity). General descriptions of each floor and the exterior can be found below.

The soft strip had already been undertaken prior to the survey, and so surviving original details were visible. This included the majority of the timber panelling and decorative plasterwork to cornices and ceilings in the foyer (G01), crush hall (G02) and café (F01). Much of this had already seen restorative work, which appeared to be of a good standard. The building was an active construction site, and this is clear in many of the photos. Materials and equipment were moved where possible when they were obscuring significant details.

## 5.1 Basement

The basement (Illus 3) comprises a space around 12m square, located below the north-eastern part of the entrance foyer. It is accessed by a steep staircase from ground floor store G08. Presently, the space is divided into two, with a large plant room (B02) separated on the southern side. A number of previous internal partitions had been removed, leaving the original white-washed brick outer- and dividing-walls exposed. The ceiling is of concrete supported in places by iron beams.

## 5.2 Ground Floor

The ground floor plan (Illus 4) clearly demonstrates how the cinema is essentially a combination of two buildings. The main Clerk Street entrance and foyer (G01) is oriented north-east to south-west above the basement, and is joined at the southern corner to the main auditorium building, which is aligned ENE-WSW (simplified in the gazetteer to E-W). In terms of circulation, cinema-goers would have entered through the foyer (G01) and either proceeded straight to the large crush hall (G02) for the back stalls (G03), boxes or lower circle, the north corridor (G09) for the front stalls (also G03), or taken the main stairs (referred to below as the north-east circulation F04) to the café (F01) and upper circle. The crush hall itself was an elegant curved waiting space. The ceiling was especially ornate and has been fully uncovered for the first time since the 1960s (Illus 9). To the east of the crush hall are a number of toilets and stores, and an additional stairwell for staff access to the upper floors (G04-08). There are also a number of auxiliary spaces in the north-west and south-west corners of the auditorium, including toilets, plant and service access to the upper floors (G09-10).

One of the more complex series of changes to the building has been the repositioning of the main screen and the proscenium. Originally, the screen was located on what is now the west wall of the auditorium building, with a small stage in front. The screen could be fully

lifted to reveal a larger stage behind for theatre performances. The pediment of the proscenium (still extant) projected forward from the screen by some distance, with the space behind filled by a coffered ceiling and tall flanking pilasters. It is not clear if the ceiling survives as it remained obscured at the time of the survey. These features were altered as early as 1954 to allow the installation of a Cinemascope screen.

A new screen wall was constructed in 1960-1 some way in front of the proscenium but loosely based on the original style. This was retained in the 1980s subdivision, albeit with an altered floor level.

## 5.3 First Floor

The first floor (Illus 5) broadly matches the footprint of the ground floor, albeit without the northern corridor (G09). The space above the foyer (G01) is occupied by a former café (F01) and associated toilets (F02). The level of this northern part of the first floor is around half a storey above the southern part, to allow additional height in the foyer (G01) below. This is most clearly evident in the north-east circulation, where an extra flight of steps takes the visitor from store (F05) up to the café (F01). The crush hall (F02) is also afforded extra ceiling height by its position under the higher section of the raked circle seating – the seats at this level are shown on the second-floor plan (Illus 6) and the circle seating generally is described as S07 below. Several stores were located east of the main auditorium (F05-08).

Since the cinema was divided into several smaller screens in the 1980s, the first floor level has been extended across the auditorium from the balcony forwards. This floor had been removed by the time of the survey, exposing the full scale of the original auditorium (Illus 9). This will only be a temporary situation, as this floor level will be reinstated during the present redevelopment work. The new upper screen will be positioned further back than the old one so more of the original decoration and the proscenium will be visible.

## 5.4 Second Floor

The second floor (Illus 6) comprises the upper circle of the auditorium (S07) with colonnaded rear circulation (S06), and further circulation, a hall and toilets to the east (S01-05). The staggered first floor level and the extra ceiling height allowed for in the café (F01) results in no further spaces at this level in the Clerk Street building.

## 5.5 Third Floor

The third floor (Illus 7) comprises a number of stores and offices (T01-02, T06-10), as well as the projector room (T05). The roof above the café (F01) is also accessible at this level. There is not currently any internal route to the

projector room, only small external walkways to north and south sides. This will be remedied by the current development. With none of these spaces being public-facing, there is little decoration or other original niceties, although there are still indications of the use of some of the rooms, such as projector equipment and film storage cabinets.

## 5.6 Exterior

Most of the exterior of the building is largely functional and unadorned, and indeed is only easily visible from the rear windows of the surrounding tenements. The notable exception to this is the two-storey Clerk Street façade (Illus 2). The choice of white Hathernware faience as cladding for this elevation was not unusual for this period. It appeared clean, was easy to install and cheaper than stone.

The central feature is a neat classical loggia, forming the first floor balcony. Four columns support a projecting cornice, above which the outline of the signage for 'New Victoria' are still visible. The loggia is flanked by narrow windows with art deco details, and two flagpoles. A central flagpole above has been a later addition.

The lower half of the elevation is obscured by 1950s dark red marble cladding at the sides, hoarding in front of the doors and an aluminium canopy. These will all be removed and restored to original – exposing the white faience, installing new replica doors with period geometric patterning and restoring the original canopy with 'readograph' show display board.

## 5.7 Discussion

The condition of original features, particularly decorative wood and plasterwork was remarkably good, having been largely hidden behind later plasterboard walls and lowered ceilings. Where original decorative finishes have already been restored, these appear to have been done to a high standard.

This survey has represented a unique opportunity to record as much of the original fabric of the 'New Victoria' cinema as possible. The original layout has been fully exposed, as have the original decorative features that are of such significance to the character of the building. At this point, it is still possible to distinguish original from restored, and the layout has not yet been altered to suit the needs of a modern, multi-screen cinema. Most notably, the auditorium has been restored to its original scale.

This survey has thus produced a detailed visual and descriptive record of all the exposed, original features of the cinema.

## 6 REFERENCES

- CIfA 2014 *Standards and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures*.
- Cressey, M 2014 *66 Buccleuch Street, Odeon Cinema, Edinburgh, Fly Tower, Archaeological watching brief*. CFA Ltd unpublished report.
- Cressey, M & Mitchell, S 2014 *66 Buccleuch Street, Odeon Cinema, Edinburgh, Historic Building Survey*. CFA Ltd unpublished report 3140.
- Hickman, S 2015 *66 Buccleuch Street, Odeon Cinema, Edinburgh, Fly Tower, Archaeological watching brief*. CFA Ltd unpublished report.
- Historic England 2016 *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice*, Historic England.
- Simpson & Brown 2007 *Odeon Cinema, Clerk Street, Edinburgh – Conservation Plan*. Unpublished client report.
- Wilson, D 2016 *Former Odeon Cinema, Edinburgh – Written Scheme of Investigation for Historic Building Recording*. Headland Archaeology Ltd unpublished specification.



## 7 APPENDICES

## 7.1 Appendix 1 – Discovery and Excavation in Scotland entry

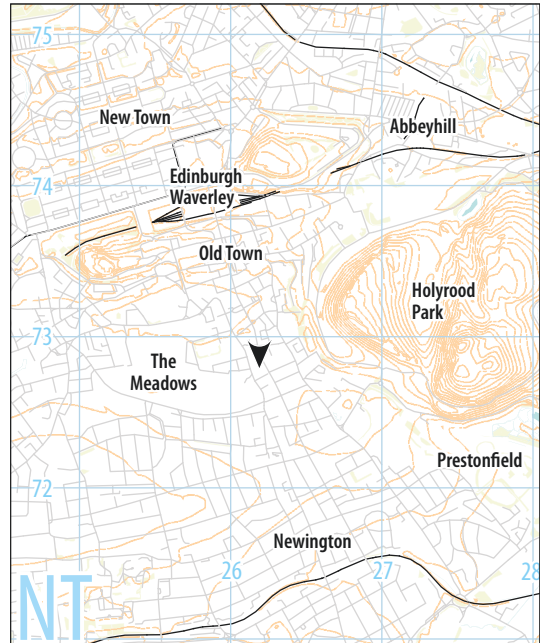
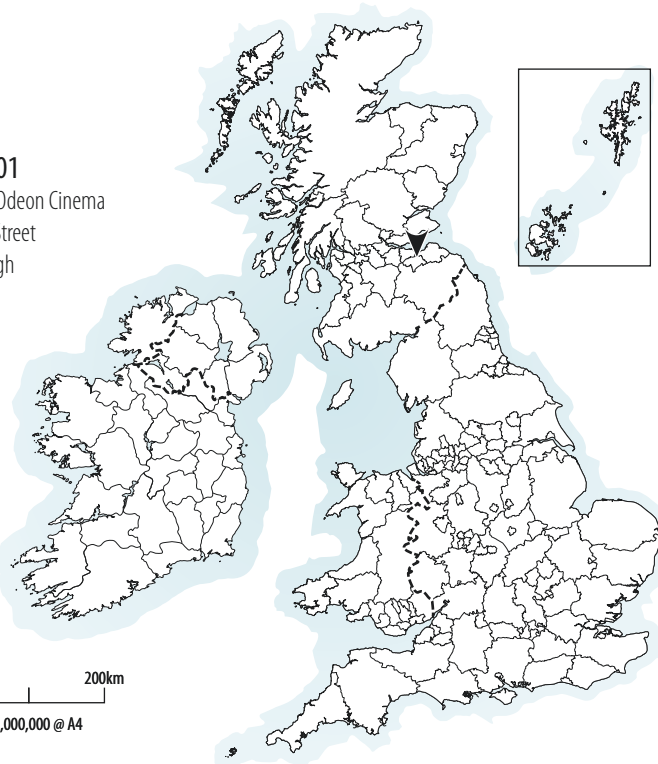
<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY:</b>	City of Edinburgh Council
<b>PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:</b>	Former Odeon Cinema, Edinburgh – Historic Building Recording
<b>PROJECT CODE:</b>	FOCE16
<b>PARISH:</b>	City of Edinburgh
<b>NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	Jürgen van Wessel
<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION:</b>	Headland Archaeology Ltd
<b>TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:</b>	Historic Building Recording
<b>NMRS NO(S):</b>	NT27SE 1636
<b>SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):</b>	Cinema
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS:</b>	None
<b>NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)</b>	NT 26184 72794
<b>START DATE (this season)</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> October, 2016
<b>END DATE (this season)</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> October, 2016
<b>PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)</b>	
<b>MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)</b>	Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by G1 Group to undertake a Level 2 historic building survey on the former Odeon at 7 Clerk Street, Edinburgh. The building opened in 1930 as the 'New Victoria' cinema, and was designed by W.E. Trent and J.W. Jordan for the Gaumont Company. It represents an unusual example of the 'atmospheric' style in Scotland with only one other surviving example, and has a number of interesting decorative features, not least the bright white Hatherware faience façade to Clerk Street. The cinema underwent a number of structural changes in the 1950s-80s, including the division of the main auditorium to allow insertion of additional screens, before eventual closure in 2003. The current redevelopment aims to convert the building into a modern multi-screen cinema while restoring the 1930 interior to original condition. Recent removal of modern partitions, ceilings and finishes has revealed much of this original decorative scheme. This report presents a full descriptive record of the building after the soft strip, but prior to the completion of the restoration work and re-division of the auditorium. As such it represents a unique record of the building when it is temporarily in close to its original layout and style.
<b>PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:</b>	None expected
<b>CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:</b>	
<b>SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:</b>	G1 Group

<b>ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	13 Jane Street, Edinburgh EH6 5HE
<b>EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>	<a href="mailto:jurgen@headlandarchaeology.com">jurgen@headlandarchaeology.com</a>
<b>ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)</b>	Historic Environment Scotland

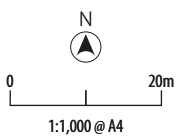
## 7.2 Appendix 2 – Gazetteer

FOCE/01

Former Odeon Cinema  
7 Clerk Street  
Edinburgh



Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2016



KEY  
[Red outline] development boundary

**HEADLAND**  
**ARCHAEOLOGY**

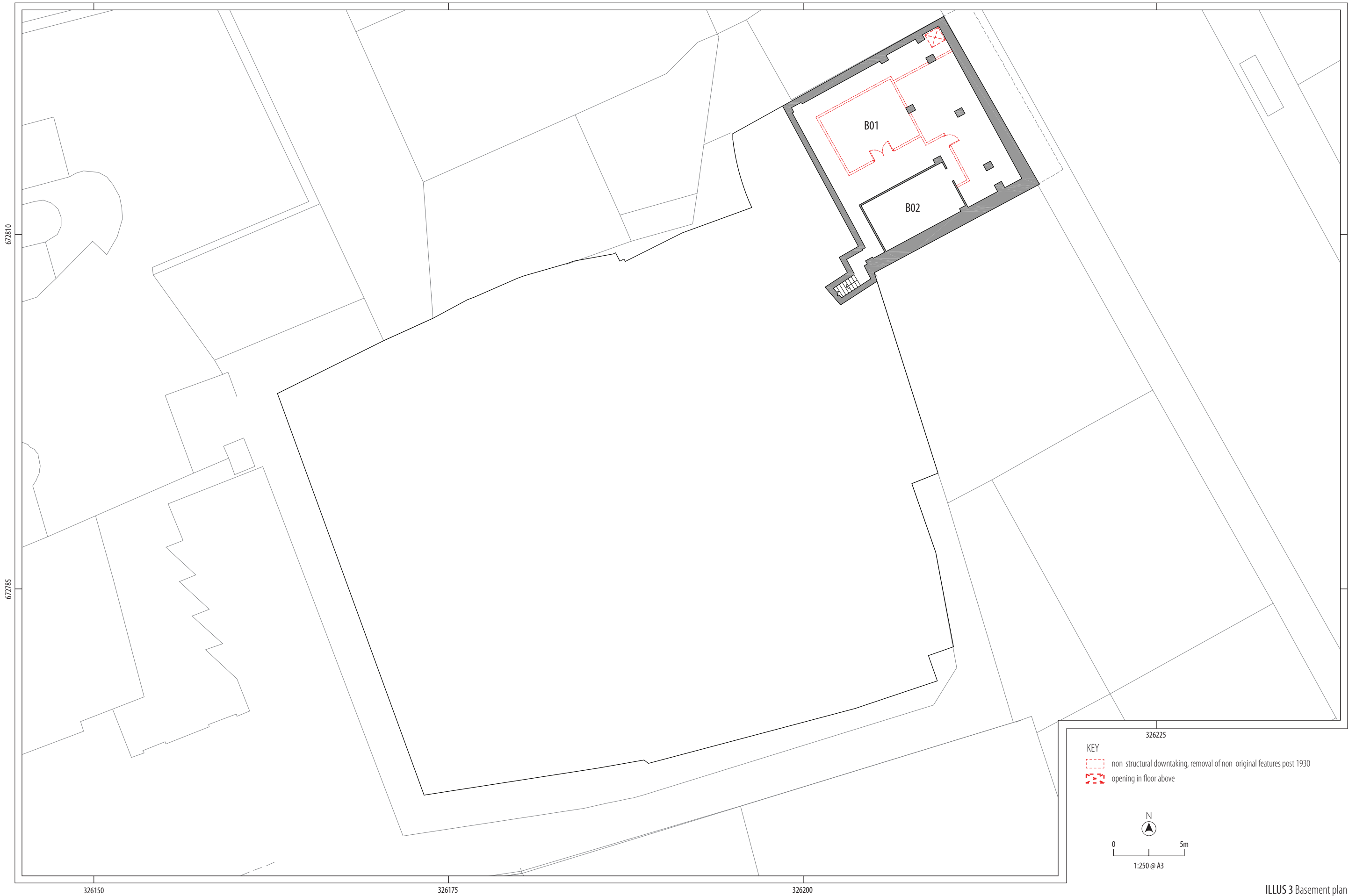
SCOTLAND

13 Jane Street  
Edinburgh EH6 5HE  
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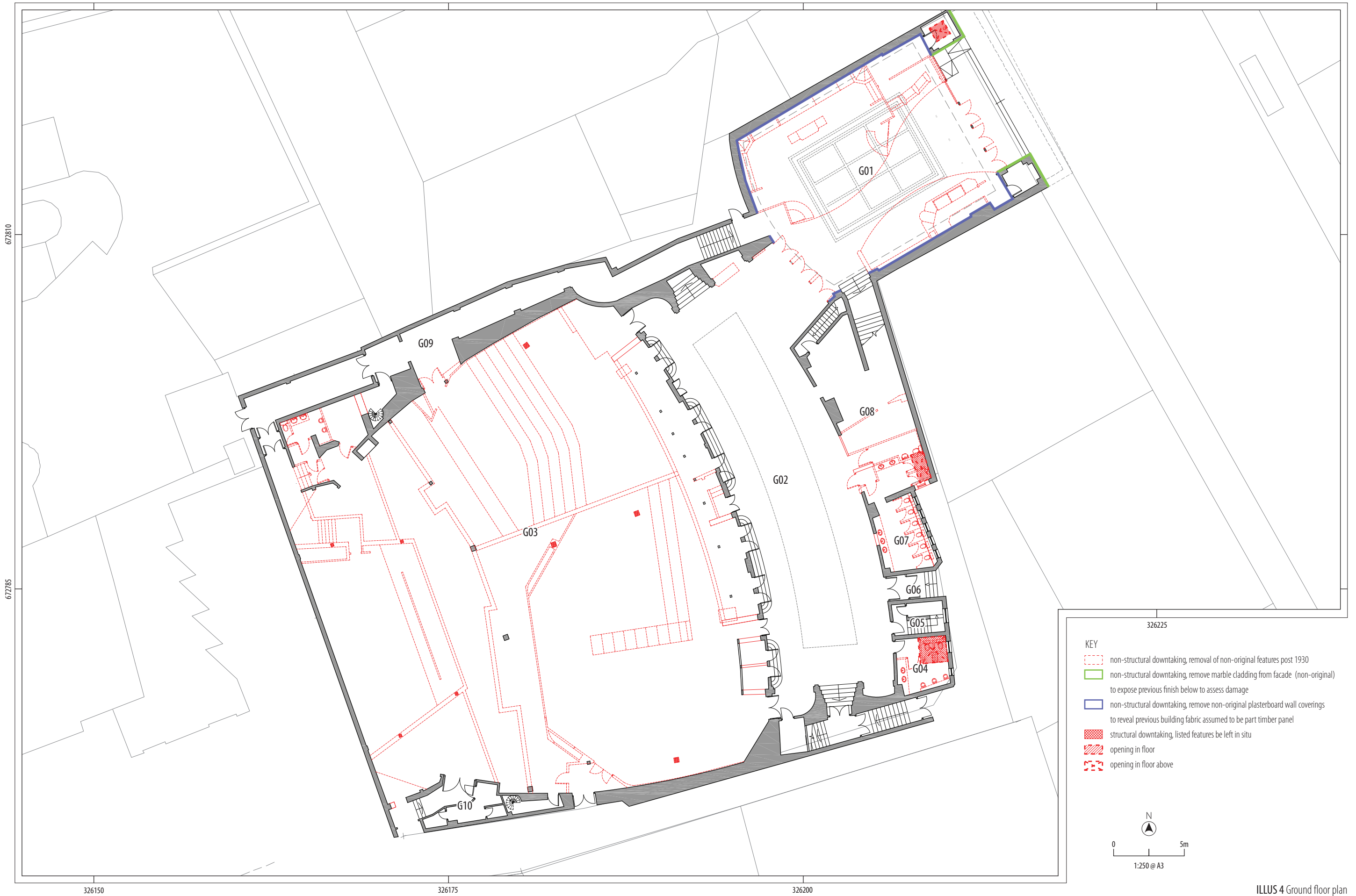
ILLUS 1 Site location



**ILLUS 2** Clerk Street façade, facing south-west. Some of the original lettering for the 'New Victoria' cinema is visible on the signage zone at the top of the elevation



ILLUS 3 Basement plan



326225

**KEY**

- non-structural dismantling, removal of non-original features post 1930
- non-structural dismantling, remove marble cladding from facade (non-original) to expose previous finish below to assess damage
- non-structural dismantling, remove non-original plasterboard wall coverings to reveal previous building fabric assumed to be part timber panel
- structural dismantling, listed features be left in situ
- opening in floor
- opening in floor above

N  
▲

0                      5m

1:250 @ A3

ILLUS 4 Ground floor plan





672810

672785

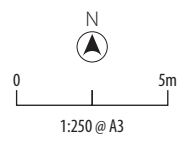
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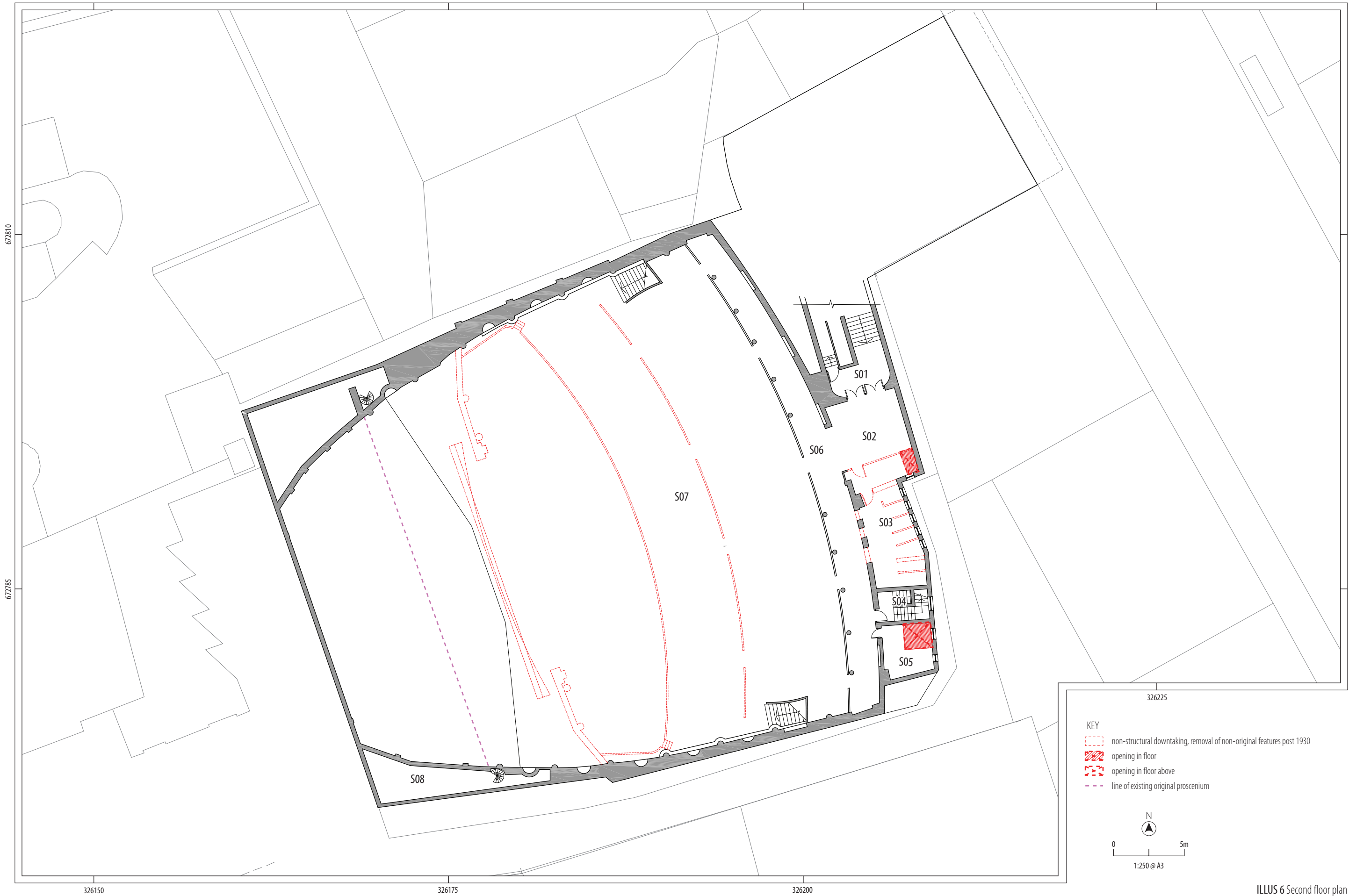
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326225

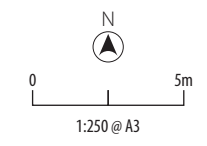
- KEY
- non-structural dismantling, removal of non-original features post 1930
  - opening in floor
  - opening in floor above
  - line of existing original proscenium



ILLUS 5 First floor plan

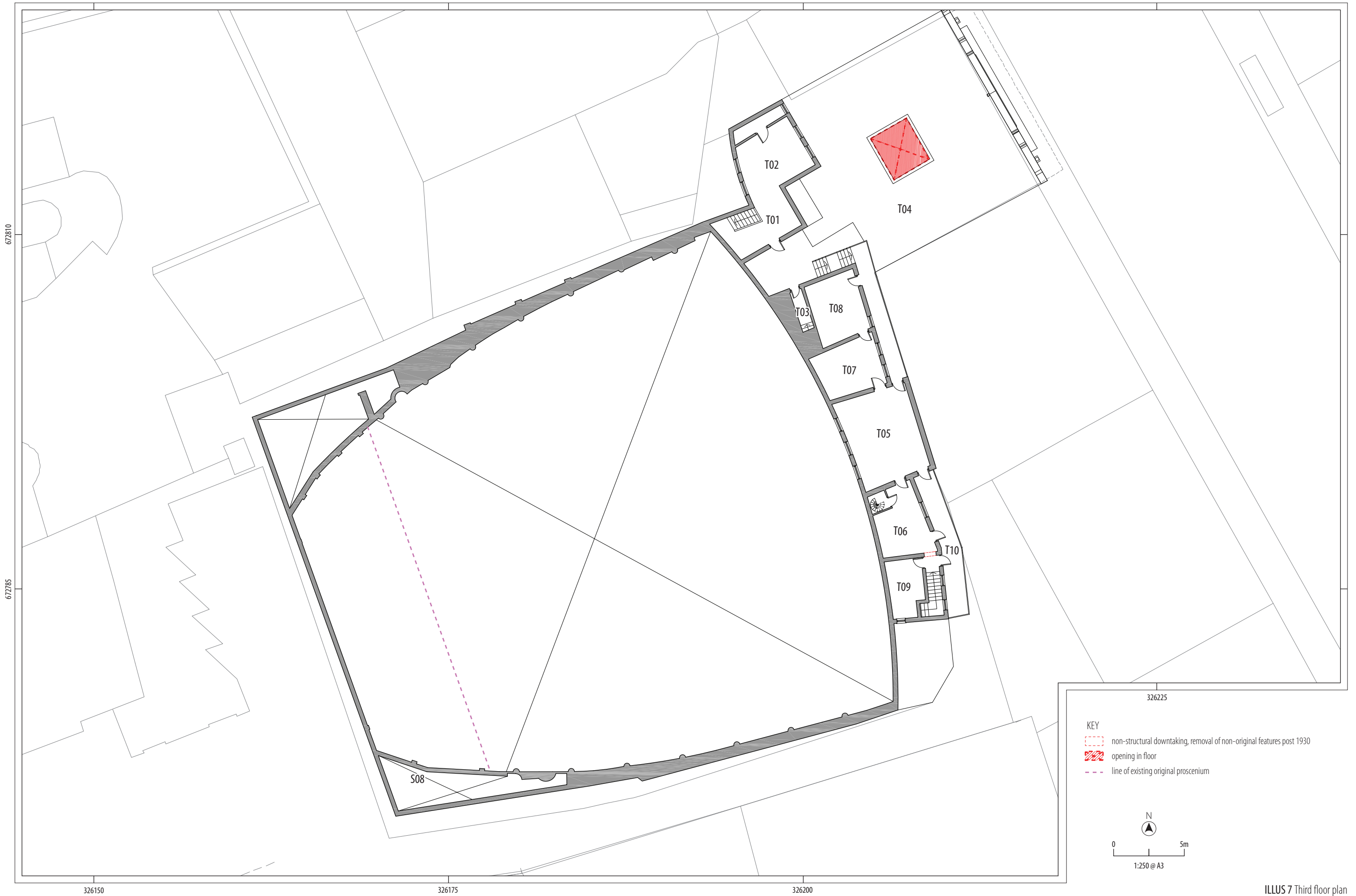


- KEY**
- non-structural downtaking, removal of non-original features post 1930
  - ▨ opening in floor
  - ▩ opening in floor above
  - line of existing original proscenium






ILLUS 6 Second floor plan





326225

**KEY**

-  non-structural dewatering, removal of non-original features post 1930
-  opening in floor
-  line of existing original proscenium

N

0 5m

1:250 @ A3

ILLUS 7 Third floor plan

8



9



**ILLUS 8** Ortho-image of crush hall ceiling, clearly showing restored plasterwork in white. This gives a great idea of the scale of the space in the original cinema

**ILLUS 9** View of photogrammetric 3D model of west elevation of auditorium.