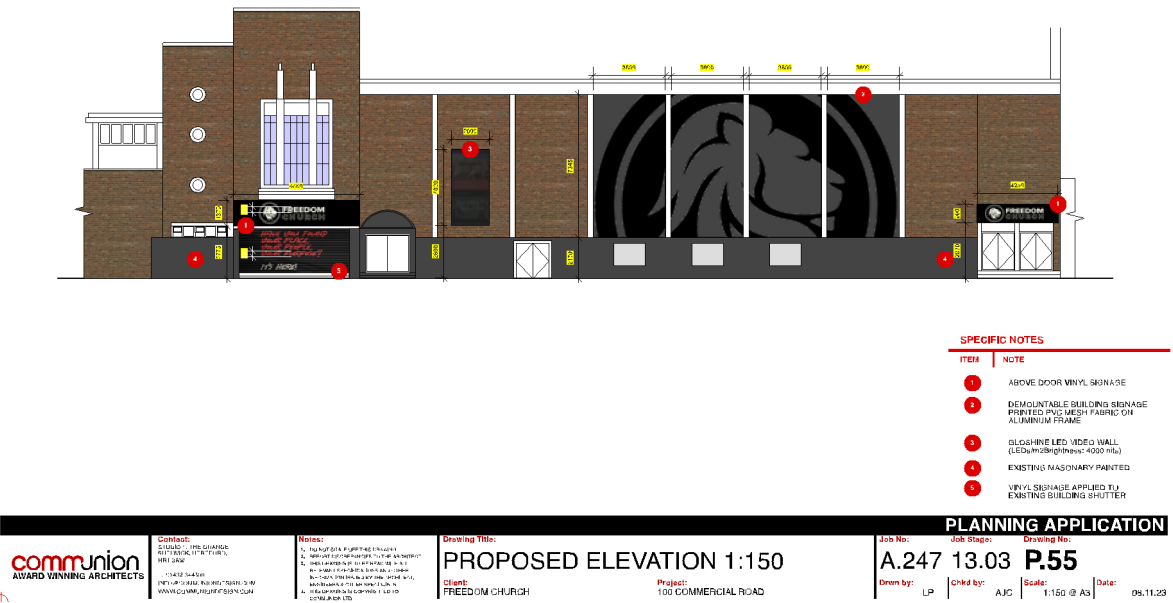


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Withdrawn proposal for advertising consent

condition, with an individual commenting that the proposals would ‘bring some life to a tired building’. The supportive representations also expressed that the proposals were in keeping with the appearance of the area, with similar examples referenced including the ‘display at the new Art College building’, ‘the advertising already on display along Edgar Street’, and ‘free-standing advertising boards’ within the city of Hereford.



The objecting representations expressed that the proposals would be a ‘distraction to traffic’ and other uses of Commercial Road, noting, in particular, the brightness level of proposed LED video wall. Individuals also objected to the scale of the proposals which was felt to be ‘excessively designed’ and would ‘dominate the street’. Likely referring to the proposed demountable signage, the representations expressed that a large composition would not be in keeping with the character of Commercial Road. Objections also expressed that the design of the proposals would ‘harm the character and appearance of the City Central Conservation Area’.

We have reviewed the representations received and are grateful for all of the opinions expressed. It is good to witness the local community caring strongly about retaining the character and appearance of our city and wish to see it sensitively enhanced. As such, we have undertaken a review of the design in order to respond positively to the representations. One objection to the withdrawn proposals commented that 100 Commercial Road is ‘an interesting Art Deco building that deserves respect’, a sentiment with which we wholeheartedly agree. As such, we have carefully considered the heritage and architectural style of the building in our revised design.

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Considering the history of 100 Commercial Road

Through the process of reviewing the proposed external advertising, the history of 100 Commercial Road has been considered. A purpose-built cinema, it was constructed in the 1930s on the site of a former prison and forms part of a building type which emerged in the early twentieth century.

	
1928 (surveyed) Herefordshire XXXIII.16 NLS	1937 (surveyed) Herefordshire XXXIII.16 NLS

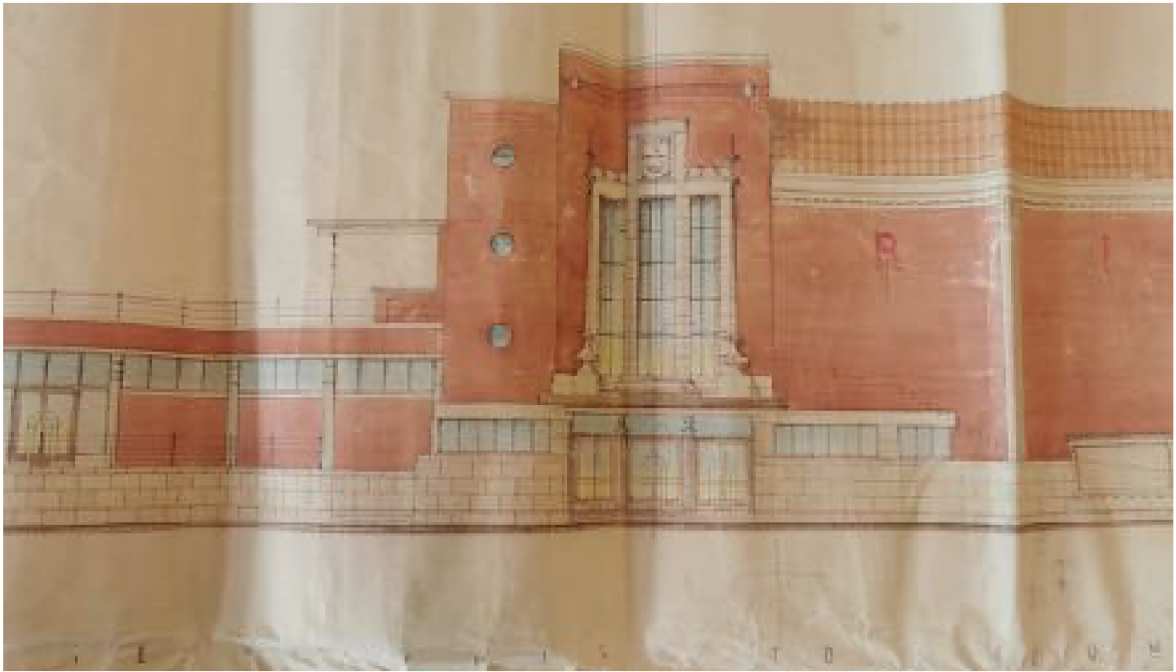
Highly popular in urban areas, cinemas were often built with capacity for several thousand viewers - Green's Playhouse in Glasgow had a impressive 4000 seats. Going to the cinema provided a form of escapism and the architecture of their buildings sought to reflect this.¹ Often conceived like stage sets, cinemas could have highly decorative interiors with stylistically diverse designs ranging from classical grandeur featuring corinthian columns to fantastical creations using historical or imported motifs, with the aim of creating an atmospheric experience. Other cinemas, however, took a different approach. Odeon, for example, emphasised the elevations of their buildings, creating frantic exteriors with comparably plain interiors. Landmarks in new suburban



Proposed design option for a cinema on Commercial Road

¹ Elian Harwood, *Art Deco Britain: Buildings of the Interwar Years* (Batsford: 2019).

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Proposed design for a cinema on Commercial Road

housing estates, Odeon cinemas became recognisable through their architecture. Often utilising an Art Deco style, they regularly had vertical and horizontal elements spreading outwards and upwards, creating a strong dynamism in towns and cities. This approach was also emulated by others such as Paramount, and can be seen to an extent in the designs for 100 Commercial Road.

Drawings of the proposed cinema in Hereford from the 1930s show a strong Art Deco influence, with bold geometric forms and moulded detailing above the entrance porch. Its design loosely resembles Josef Hoffmann's Stoclet Palace, Belgium (1905-11). The use of red brick evidences a strong northern European influence, particularly Scandinavian, from which Britain drew heavily during this period, notably for public architecture. The use of brick also creates a sense of texture and visual interest without encrusting the building with ornament. The elongated plan of the building resembles an ocean liner, with its rounded prow and porthole windows, suggesting that cinema visitors could go on a voyage to new and unknown worlds.



Proposed design for a cinema on Commercial Road

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The cinema in Hereford, as built, was slightly more stripped back than proposed, for example the sculptural panel above the porch was omitted and along with the roof terrace, likely due in part to the economic challenges of the 1930s. Sometimes termed 'Depression moderne', 'art moderne', or 'streamline moderne', this was a lighter Art Deco style that emerged in the 1930s which conveyed the impression of luxury and utilised modern technology, but with economy of design and artfully simple lines.² The original plans also show that typeset lettering was originally proposed across the long street-facing facade. However, historic images show this lettering positioned above the porch, which is likely linked with the omission of the sculptural panel.³



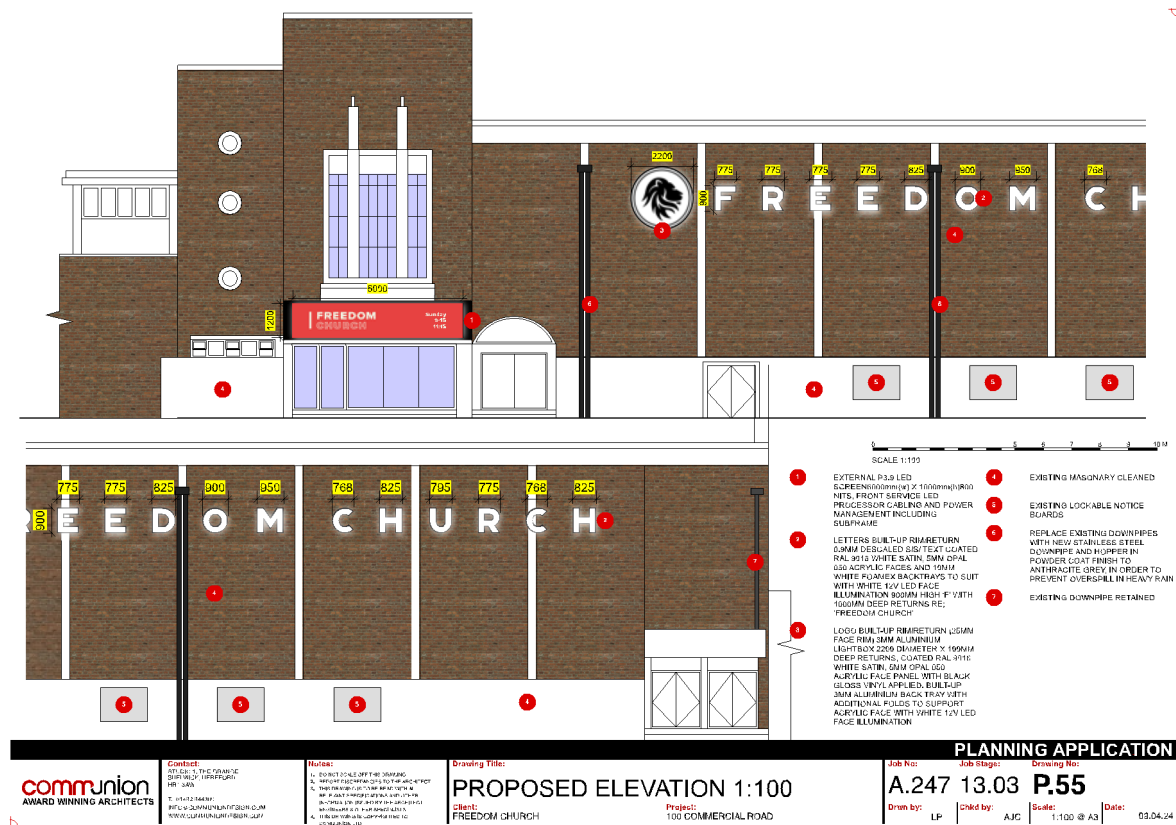
100 Commercial Road, former cinema, present-day *Google Street View*

The Ritz Cinema, as it was called, opened in Hereford in January 1938 with a showing of *Maytime* starring Jeanette McDonald and capacity for 1012 patrons. Over the remaining twentieth century the building predominantly remained a cinema, however its fortunes oscillated. Renamed ABC in the early 1960s, it reduced its capacity to 378 in 1972 and later closed in 1977. It re-opened in 1984 as the Classic Cinema, before being renamed Cannon in 1987. It was then named MGM and then became ABC again after a management buyout. In 2000, Odeon took over the cinema before moving out of the building in 2014. Since its closure, the building has been used by Freedom Church.

² Elian Harwood, *Art Deco Britain: Buildings of the Interwar Years* (Batsford: 2019).

³ Cinema Treasures, 'Odeon Hereford' (<https://cinematreasures.org/theaters/24769/photos/222146> accessed 03 May 2024).

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Revised proposal for advertising consent

Revised design

The revised design has picked up on the design and heritage of the building. The proposed lettering along the street facade draws directly from the early design concepts for the former cinema, where 'Ritz' was assuredly articulated across the long elevation. Other cinemas, such as early Odeons, often used similar bold and backlit lettering to advertise themselves to customers.

The original street entrance to the cinema has been previously altered from its original curved form, with a rectangular canopy now in situ. The form reflects a marquee - a projecting structure often placed over the entrance of a cinema, theatre, hotel or casino - which would include the name of the premises and the entertainment showing. They could be backlit and were often surrounded by light bulbs. The revised design draws in this design form and proposes a light-box in this location, a subtle change which is in keeping with the cinema heritage of the building.

As well as reflecting the history and design of the building, the revised proposal is also in keeping with the character of the conservation area. The Central Area, Hereford Conservation Area encompasses the centre of the city and extends north to New Market Street, and south to Hinton Road beyond the King George's Field.

The Conservation Area has a varied character and appearance, with a historic core centred around the cathedral and open space to the east and west with Castle Green and the King George V Playing Fields. To the north and west of the historic core, the

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conservation area is predominately urban in character, and commercial premises occupy many of the buildings at ground level. A mixture of residential premises is also present. The buildings are varied in their design, age and style and predominantly date from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with some more recent in-fill development and some older examples.

100 Commercial Road is located near the boundary of the Conservation Area in the north-east corner. The street has a number of brick buildings, including the post-modern Monkmoor Court opposite, and Jacob's Court at 58 Commercial Road (now occupied by Yates), with an eclectic mixture of baroque revival detailing.

The street is lined with commercial premises and is a well-known hub for Hereford's nighttime economy. The revised proposals for 100 Commercial Road will fit with the varied design and style of advertising along the street. Other examples of large lettering on Commercial Road can be found on the Merton Hotel and Jacob's Court, now Yates, and the proposed light-box will not only reflect a cinema marquee but also exist in dialogue with lighting associated with the surrounding bars and food premises.

In tangent with the proposed advertising on 100 Commercial Road the building will be cleaned, significantly improving its appearance and enhancing the conservation area. Therefore, the character and appearance of the conservation area will be preserved and enhanced by the proposals.

Conclusion

The proposed design for advertising signage on 100 Commercial Road has been revised following a previous withdrawn application. The new design looks to respond positively to comments and ensure that proposals resonate with the design and history of the former cinema and the character of the conservation area. As such, the proposed lettering draws on the original design proposals for the building and the light-box reflects the use of marquees over cinema entrances. Additionally, the revised design is in keeping with the commercial character of the street and will preserve the appearance of the Conservation Area.

We trust that the above allows a useful dialogue with Herefordshire Council and will enable the proposal to be met with a favourable response.

We look forward to working with you on this project.