

Leicester
City Council

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WYCLIFFE

**LEADERS BRIEFING
CABINET**

**4th MARCH 2002
25th MARCH 2002**

**DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE FOR ST GEORGE'S CHURCH AND
THE FORMER ODEON CINEMA**

Report of the Director of Environment, Development & Commercial Services

1. Purpose of Report

Site development guidance has been prepared for St George's Church and the former Odeon Cinema. Both of these buildings are listed and stand within the St George's Conservation Area and Strategic Regeneration Area. Once adopted, the site development guidance will advise existing landowners and potential developers of the types of alternative uses that will be appropriate within these listed buildings, in the context of their historical importance and planning policies for the area. It is proposed that the site development guidance for both sites be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG).

2. Summary

The site development guidance for St George's Church recommends that if the Church is no longer to be used as a place of worship, then the most appropriate use of the building would be for community or leisure uses or uses linked to the proposed Cultural Quarter. The guidance for the Odeon Cinema recommends that public entertainment uses would be preferred, to maintain the character of the building. The full documents are appended to this report.

Consultation with property owners, adjoining landowners, the St George's Regeneration Company, the Leicester Regeneration Company (LRC) and other interested parties took place during December 2001 and January 2002. A summary of representations received is attached to the 'Supporting Information' document.

Both SPGs were included in the 'Sites and Opportunities' paper reported to the LRC Board meeting on 11th February 2002. Comments from the LRC's officers are included in the summary of representations attached to this report. No concerns have been raised about any potential conflict with the LRC's masterplan.

The Strategic Planning and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee considered the draft SPGs on 15 January 2002.

3. Recommendations

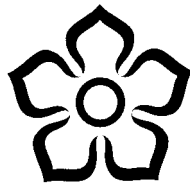
Members are recommended to **ADOPT** the site development guidance for St George's Church and the former Odeon Cinema as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

4. Headline Financial and legal Implications

There are no direct financial or legal implications.

5. Report Author/Officer to contact:

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WARDS AFFECTED

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**LEADERS BRIEFING
CABINET**

**18th FEBRUARY 2002
11th MARCH 2002**

**DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE (SPG) FOR ST GEORGE'S
CHURCH AND THE FORMER ODEON CINEMA**

Report of the Director of Environment, Development & Commercial Services

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1 St George's Church SPG

- 1.1 St George's Church, a grade II Listed Building, is presently used as a place of worship by the Serbian Orthodox Church.
- 1.2 The Church is identified as a 'community building' within the City of Leicester Local Plan (CLLP) and policies in this Plan and the proposed Replacement City of Leicester Local Plan generally seek to safeguard places of worship.
- 1.3 The continued use of the Church by the Serbian Orthodox Church would clearly meet Local Plan policies. However, if the building is no longer to be used as a place of worship, to keep it in an active and economically viable use it is necessary to consider other appropriate, alternative uses that might not strictly meet Local Plan policies.
- 1.4 The Guidance recommends that the most suitable alternative uses of the building would be for community and leisure purposes: a public or exhibition hall, an art gallery or a venue for the performing arts, linked to the Cultural Quarter. These types of uses would keep the building within the public domain, are likely to be less disruptive to adjoining residents and require fewer changes to the fabric of the building.
- 1.5 The Strategic Planning and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee supported the continued use of the building by the Serbian Orthodox Church and suggested that support be given to them to secure grants for the repair of the building.

1.6 A summary of other representations is attached. These are generally supportive of the Guidance. However, some consultees suggest that a wider range of uses should be considered. Others suggest that potential changes of use should be compatible with adjacent residential use. My responses to representations are included in the attached summary and I do not propose that any substantive changes are made to the Guidance.

2 Former Odeon Cinema SPG

2.1 The former Odeon cinema is listed Grade II and occupies a prominent location at the corner of Queen Street, Rutland Street and Southampton Street. The cinema closed in 1996 and a covenant placed on the building prevents its future use for the business of film exhibition.

2.2 The building is allocated for community, education and leisure uses in the CLLP. The building is also within the Rutland Street Potential Development Area (PDA) as identified in the proposed Replacement City of Leicester Local Plan. Priority land uses within the PDA are identified as residential, retail and major leisure uses; while offices, research and development/light industry and community facilities are also considered acceptable.

2.3 The proposals contained in this Guidance suggest that uses for public entertainment, such as a theatre or concert venue, or as a media centre, would be in keeping with the character of the building and would also keep the building within the public domain. The proposals also accept that there may be an opportunity for a sympathetic extension on the Queen Street side of the building.

2.4 The Strategic Planning and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee suggested that consideration be given to the removal of the covenant to allow the building to be used as an 'arthouse' cinema.

2.5 A summary of other representations is attached. Some consultees suggest the Guidance is too prescriptive with potential uses and that a wider range of uses should be considered. Some also suggest that alterations to the building should be considered as well as improvements to its appearance. Others again referred to the impact of potential uses on local residential amenity. My responses to representations are included in the summary and I do not propose that any substantive changes are made to the Guidance.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

1. Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications.

2. Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications.

3. Other Implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph References Within Supporting information
Equal Opportunities	No	
Policy	Yes	SPG constitutes planning policy guidance
Sustainable and Environmental	Yes	Sustainable and environmental issues are integral to the SPGs
Crime and Disorder	Yes	Crime and disorder implications have been taken into account in preparing the SPGs and the Leicestershire Constabulary has been consulted on proposals
Human Rights Act	No	
Elderly/People on Low Income	No	

4. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

Report to Strategic Planning & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee 15th January 2002
File No. N8.17

5. Consultations

These are referred to in the main body of the report.

6. Report Author

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DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE FOR ST GEORGE'S CHURCH AND THE FORMER ODEON CINEMA:

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS: GENERAL		
NAME & ADDRESS	COMMENTS	RESPONSE
St George's Regeneration Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> concerned about issue of SPGs at this stage, local planning policies give fair indication of range of possibilities. Further detail will only constrain Arts and Leisure's Cultural Quarter master plan, Leicester Regeneration Company's inner Leicester master plan and the buildings' owners; also concerned about SPGs being considered in isolation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>SPGs are produced to promote the re-use of these buildings and to offer guidance to potential developers. SPGs are also supported by Government advice.</i> <i>SPGs are meant to be site specific; following the lead from the overall Strategic Guidance.</i>
SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS: ST GEORGE'S CHURCH		
NAME & ADDRESS	COMMENTS	RESPONSE
Leicester Regeneration Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Useful that Guidance recognises that the need to upkeep the building may require consideration of more viable economic uses; Concerned about emphasis on 'public access only' uses, this may restrict opportunities; Delivery of Cultural Quarter is uncertain and other uses should be promoted where they support the regeneration of the area; Church has a number of associated car parking spaces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Guidance promotes a number of uses, but preferred use would be as a place of worship or for activities associated with the Cultural Quarter.</i> <i>Alternative uses can be assessed on their own merits but must have regard to local residential amenities.</i> <i>It is proposed that car parking within the churchyard be removed, future uses would rely on Rutland Street car park.</i>
Leicestershire Constabulary (Architectural Liaison Officer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No objections in principle, any change of use should reflect need for privacy and quiet associated with adjoining residential development and the churchyard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Cultural type uses should have only a minimal impact on residential amenities.</i>

Leicestershire Constabulary (Area Headquarters)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agrees with the proposed future uses, the location would pose problems if it became a night-club. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Night-club use not supported by the guidance.</i>
St George's Regeneration Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SPG suggests that a wider range of uses than those specified in the Local Plan will be acceptable, this should be made specific. • SPG should refer to cleaning of the building, • Church needs uses that will significantly increase the number of people using the building particularly during the daytime. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Accepted in the Guidance that if the building is no longer used as a place of worship then alternative uses would be acceptable, which is generally in accordance, with the Replacement Local Plan which promotes a wide range of uses within the Rutland Street PDA.</i> • <i>Cleaning can be included in the proposals for the restoration of the churchyard.</i> • <i>It is hoped that the preferred uses will result in a greater use of the building at all times.</i>
The Queen Street Apartment Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy with continuation of the existing use subject to building being kept in good order; • Endorses comments about uses that could cause nuisance to residential buildings; • It may be difficult to find a viable use for the building, particularly if public access is required; • More likely to find purchaser if change to residential was permitted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Residential use not considered to be appropriate: would harm character of the building and prevent public access.</i> • <i>It is considered highly desirable for building to stay in public realm in some way.</i>
Church Commissioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future uses will be considered on their merits and will need a variation of the covenant; • Use as a church is the optimum use but any community, leisure, retail restaurant, office or residential use would be acceptable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Noted, and covenant is referred to in the SPG.</i>

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS: FORMER ODEON CINEMA

NAME & ADDRESS	COMMENTS	RESPONSE
The Queen Street Apartment Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cinema is incongruous and is a poor example of its type. It is large, ugly and commercially unusable. • Consideration should be given to de-listing and demolition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Building was listed because of its historical and architectural importance.</i> • <i>No justification for its demolition.</i>

Leicestershire Constabulary (Architectural Liaison Officer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No objections in principle but would not support a night-club use on grounds of noise nuisance and anti-social behaviour: no CCTV cameras, narrow streets and poor lighting, increase in traffic problems and problems of crowd dispersal due to narrowness of footway areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Noted, however a night-club use falls into the same use classes order as a cinema (Class D2) and planning permission would not be needed for a change of use.</i>
Leicester Regeneration Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because the building is listed it is difficult to suggest uses that the market could provide; • Guidance should recognise the dilemma the listing presents in economic terms to assist delivery of new uses; • In order for building to brought back into use it is likely that most beneficial use will be uneconomic and, therefore, CPO may be required to bring building into use as part of regeneration strategy; • No mention of parking for any future uses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Guidance promotes a number of uses, it is important that any use is sympathetic to character of the listed building.</i> • <i>Multi-storey car park is available on Rutland Street.</i>
St George's Regeneration Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPG should give recognition to treatment of the blank walls that detract from the area, • Greater acknowledgement should be made of strategic location of the site, visible from the shopping core along Rutland and Halford Streets, • Until design of theatre and its public open space requirements are resolved it might be best not to be too prescriptive, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reference is made to opportunities for sympathetic alterations in the SPG.</i> • <i>Reference is made to the strategic location of the cinema.</i> • <i>Guidance refers to preferred uses but other uses would have to be considered on their merits.</i>
Shonki Brothers Surveyors (on behalf of the owner)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building now returned to a single auditorium: • A number of possible uses could cause disturbance to adjacent residential uses; • Any alternative use would need substantial expenditure; • Possible option of demolition and replacement with new high quality building for the Cultural Quarter should be considered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Noted.</i> • <i>Noted, but as already mentioned above some alternative uses would not need planning permission.</i> • <i>Unlikely that consent would be given for demolition given condition of the building and its importance as a listed building.</i>

St George's Church: draft Supplementary Planning Guidance

Ownership and Current Use

St George's Church was declared redundant in 1971. It was sold, along with the churchyard, to the Serbian Orthodox Church in 1984. It is understood that whilst the Serbian Church still uses the building and is generally content with the premises it would not object to relocation providing suitable premises were made available.

Site Description

St George's Church stands in the centre of its churchyard and is largely enclosed by adjacent factory buildings. The site provides a relatively secluded area of open space at the heart of the St George's Conservation Area (Map 1).

The Church is constructed of machine-cut ashlar sandstone (probably from Derbyshire) and comprises a tower, nave and chancel. The tower rises through three distinct stages and has tall finials at each corner. The tower appears to be little used although it still contains a bell and the entry through the western door is used for processional purposes. The two ante rooms seem to be little used, and there is evidence in the ceilings that repair works are required.

The nave and adjoining aisles are seven bays in length, separated by buttressed gables, with each bay having a tall window, with iron tracery, in a Perpendicular style. Inside the Church the nave and aisles are separated by an arcade of eight piers that extend to the ceiling creating a sense of space and light. The nave and aisles are occupied by pews used by the Church and still contain a number of original monuments (including the font which stands at the rear of the nave), plaques and paintings (the most notable being fourteen small pictures depicting the Stations of the Cross that are fixed to the walls of the aisles).

The Decorated style of the chancel reflects its later development. The chancel is narrower than the nave and has a raised floor area. The chancel is lit by three high level windows in the side walls and by a tall window stained glass window in the east elevation. The chancel contains a number of fittings associated with its use, in particular a stone carved basin and seating.

Historical Development

Demographic changes following the Napoleonic Wars resulted in the expansion of many towns, particularly in the Midlands and the north of England. It was seen as essential to build more Anglican churches in these towns to maintain social order and to counteract the growth of the non-Conformist churches. The Government, in response to this, passed the Church Building Act of 1818 which set aside £1 million 'for building and promoting the building of additional churches in populous parishes' and established a Church Building Commission with powers to acquire sites for new churches and churchyards.

In Leicestershire the Church Building Commissioners built only one church, namely St George's on a site within St Margaret's Parish. Commissioners' churches were expected to be built sufficiently distant from factories and noisy thoroughfares, so when St George's was

built it stood on the edge of the town overlooking open countryside to the east and west. Within fifty years the surrounding area had been largely built-up with houses and factories.

The Church was built between 1823 and 1827 by the architect William Parsons, at a cost of £16,600, and a churchyard, essential to provide extra burial space to relieve the overcrowded medieval parish churchyards, was laid out around the Church.

Commissioners' churches were built to a strict budget and designed to 'accommodate the greatest number of people at the smallest expense within the compass of an ordinary voice'. The churches had little architectural pretension and were usually built in a Gothic style, as this was considered cheaper than a Classical style. For all its Gothic appearance the original layout of St George's Church made no attempt to recreate a medieval church plan and was built very much in the Georgian 'auditory' tradition, essentially a large box with an altar at the east end in a shallow chancel, with galleries so that as many people as possible could be within hearing distance of the pulpit, which was the focus of the church service.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the Victorian revival of the Gothic traditions had introduced new doctrines in the style of church worship which had an impact on the design of churches and in particular a return to the medieval church plan featuring a distinct chancel. The design of Georgian churches was frequently seen as un-Christian, not worthy of the Anglican liturgy and Georgian churches were very often 'corrected'. St George's did not escape alteration with the addition of a larger chancel in 1879 by A. W. Blomfield, described by Betjeman (1993, p 42) as 'a specialist in spoiling Commissioners' churches' (Map 2).

Following a fire in 1911 the Church was largely rebuilt and restored by W. D. Caröe, the nave needed complete rebuilding and the tower and chancel needed heavy restoration.

Significance of the building

St George's Church ranks as a very important building both locally and nationally. It is a good example of a Commissioners' church relating to a specific period of church building and is representative of the style of churches built during the Georgian period. The building also demonstrates a clear sequential development with the addition of the Victorian chancel.

The Church was built specifically to serve the growing population of Leicester and therefore reflects the social and economic changes that were taking place in the early nineteenth century.

The building is also a good example of the work of three architects, the local Leicestershire architect William Parsons, who built the original church; Sir A Blomfeld, a nationally important architect, who was responsible for the chancel; and W D Caröe, senior architect to the Church Commissioners, who was responsible for the restoration in 1911.

Conservation Designation

The importance of the site is recognised by the designation of St George's Church as a Listed Building for its special architectural and historical interest, the first new church to be

built in Leicester since medieval times. The area around the Church was designated as a Conservation Area in May 1989.

Listed building consent will therefore be required for any works to the Church.

Planning Policies

St George's Church is identified as a 'community building' within the City of Leicester Local Plan (CLLP) and the authorised use of the building falls within Class D1 (Non-Residential Institutions) of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987. Policies in the Local Plan generally seek to retain community facilities and, in particular, Policy C25 seeks to safeguard places of worship, although a change of use from an established place of worship may be permissible if it is the only way of retaining an architecturally important building or because of locational problems. Other policies seek to protect listed buildings from demolition and unsympathetic alterations and to preserve the character and appearance of conservation areas. The churchyard is identified as a 'Green Space' in the CLLP and policies in the Plan generally seek to protect and enhance these areas and to improve access to them.

The Replacement City of Leicester Local Plan considers it is essential to preserve places of worship and where buildings are vacated the viability of use by other religious groups should be considered. Policy CL12 of the Replacement Plan seeks to resist the change of use of places of worship unless the building is not considered suitable for continued use. The Church is within the proposed Rutland Street Potential Development Area (PDA), which seeks to encourage the regeneration of the area by encouraging the regeneration and refurbishment of buildings and by allowing a range and mix of land uses. In the Rutland Street PDA, the priority land uses are identified as residential, retail and major leisure, while other land uses considered acceptable in the area are offices, research and development/light industry and community facilities.

The Replacement Plan also contains general policies that seek to protect listed buildings from demolition and unsympathetic alterations and the character and appearance of conservation areas.

The site is included within the St George's Strategic Regeneration Area (SRA), adopted as supplementary planning guidance in February 2001. The guidance recognises that the sympathetic conversion of the Church is likely to be an important factor in the successful regeneration of the area as a whole and suggests that the Church is suitable for community and leisure uses (Classes D1 and D2 of the Use Classes Order).

Other Constraints

The land registry search identifies a number of covenants attached to the building, in particular:

- that the building is only to be used as a place of worship by the Serbian and Greek Orthodox Churches.
- that the building shall be kept wind and water proof.
- that the Church Commissioners are entitled to 50 % of the enhanced value of the Church if it is sold or leased.

Opportunities

There is clearly a need to address the future of the Church in the context of the regeneration of the area as a whole. However there are two critical factors that will need particular regard in considering future uses of the building:

- as a listed building any future uses must be sympathetic to the building, preserving its special character and appearance, particular attention will need to be paid to the preservation and protection of the original fabric and fixtures.
- the terms of the covenant restrict its use to a place of worship. Any alternative uses will need the approval of the Church Commissioners to amend the covenant.

Given the special character of the building it would also be highly desirable to ensure that:

- the building is retained within the public use. It has been used as a public place of worship for over 170 years and it would be appropriate to maintain a similar degree of public access.
- the physical relationship between the Church and its churchyard is maintained and, where appropriate, enhanced.

It is also considered that any future use of the building will need to have regard to:

- local amenities, many of the surrounding commercial buildings are now being converted to residential properties. As a result any future uses will have to have regard to local residential amenities and this may require restricted hours of use and acoustic insulation of the building to prevent noise nuisance.
- Car parking, there is no provision for any car parking in association with the Church and no additional parking will be allowed within the churchyard.
- Access for the disabled, there is no provision for any disabled access into the Church and any future use will be expected to make provision for disabled access.
- Signage: the display of signage for any commercial uses is not acceptable on the Church itself.

Future Uses:

Continued Use as a Place of Worship

Planning Policy Guidance note 15 (PPG15) suggests that the most appropriate use for a listed building is very often that for which it was originally designed. The continuation of that use should therefore be the first option when considering the future of the building. The continued use of the Church by the Serbian Orthodox Church would clearly meet the advice contained in PPG15 and the policies contained in the CLLP and the Replacement Local Plan.

However PPG15 also recognises that not all original uses will be now economically viable and in this respect it is doubtful whether the Serbian Church community has the resources to maintain the fabric of the building. Therefore, to facilitate their continued use and to increase the viability of the building it may be necessary to consider a physical sub-division of the building to allow a sharing arrangement between the Church and another user.

The best way of securing the upkeep of a listed building is to keep it in active and economically viable use and therefore, notwithstanding the Local Planning policies, it may

be necessary to consider other alternative uses which would be appropriate, in whole or part, for this building:

Non-Residential Institutions and Assembly and Leisure Uses within Classes D1 and D2 of the Use Classes Order

The SRA recommends that the most suitable use of the building would be for community and leisure uses within Classes D1 and D2 of the Use Classes Order. Given that the present authorised use of the building falls within Class D1 of the Use Classes Order, planning permission would not be required to use the building for similar uses which also fall within Class D1, such as for educational purposes, for a public or exhibition hall or as an art gallery.

However given the nature of the building and space within it, it may also be desirable to consider a change of use to uses falling within Class D2 of the Use Classes Order. For example the building has been identified as a possible venue for the performing arts, linked to the Cultural Quarter now being developed within the St George's area by the City Council. These types of uses are likely to be less disruptive to adjoining residents and require fewer changes to the fabric of the building. As a performance venue for example the space within the building would be retained and the building would also remain within the public domain. These uses could also be appropriate partners for the Serbian Church and may be acceptable to the Church Commissioners.

However some Class D2 uses may not be acceptable. A dance hall or night club use for example is likely to generate late-night activity, causing problems of noise and nuisance, and may also result in damage or require alterations to the fabric of the building, not only for operational purposes but also to reduce their impact on the adjoining residential properties.

Office or Business Uses within Class A2 or B1 of the Use Classes Order

Office type uses may be appropriate for the building and may be acceptable partners for the Serbian Church and the Church Commissioners. However such uses are likely to be private uses such that the building is no longer accessible to the public and are also likely to require the sub-division of the internal space, which would have a significant impact on the character of the building.

Retail

Retail uses may be appropriate for the building and may be acceptable partners for the Serbian Church and the Church Commissioners. Such uses would also allow the public access to the building but any sub-division of the internal space would have a significant impact on the character of the building.

Food and Drink Uses within Class A3 of the Use Classes Order

These types of uses generally have sufficient resources to enable the satisfactory maintenance of the building but may not be an appropriate partner for the existing Church or acceptable to the Church Commissioners. The use would also allow public access in to the building. They may also require alterations to the fabric of the building not only for operational purposes but also to reduce their impact on adjoining residential properties.

Residential Use

Conversion to residential use is undesirable. The building would no longer be accessible to the public and the sub-division of the internal space to provide residential units will have a significant impact on the character of the building.

Sources

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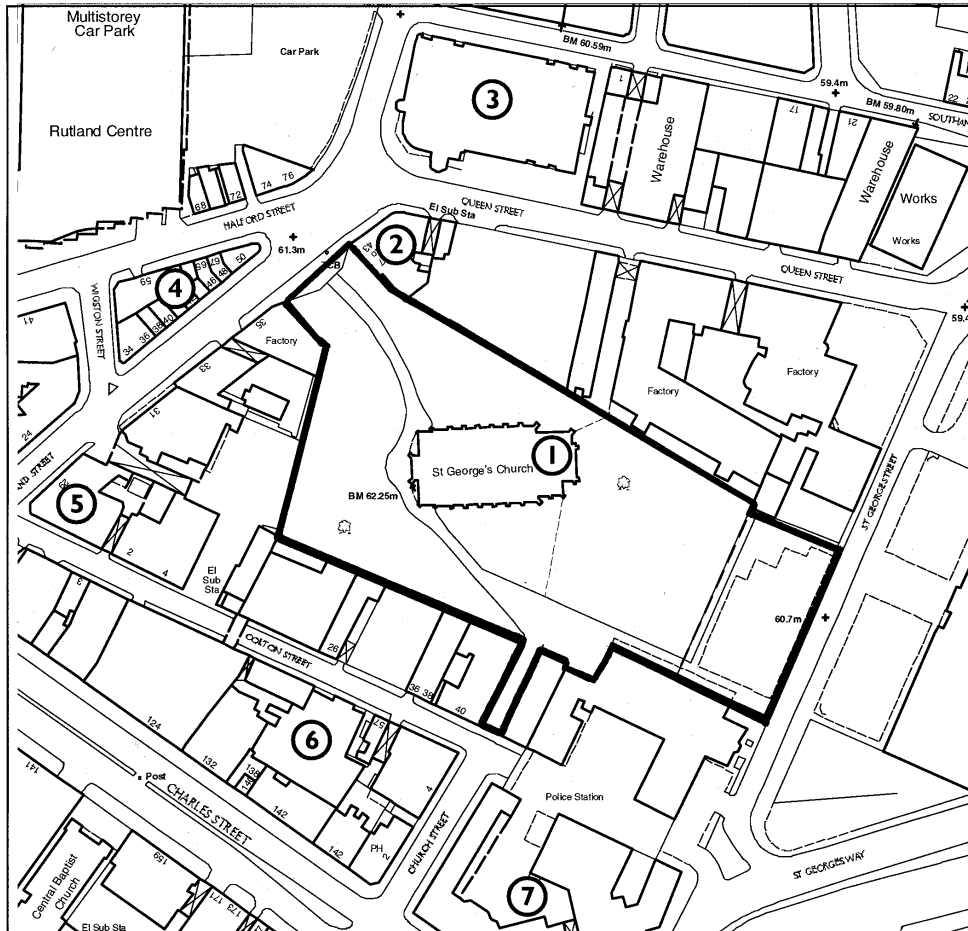
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St George's Church: Map I - location and context

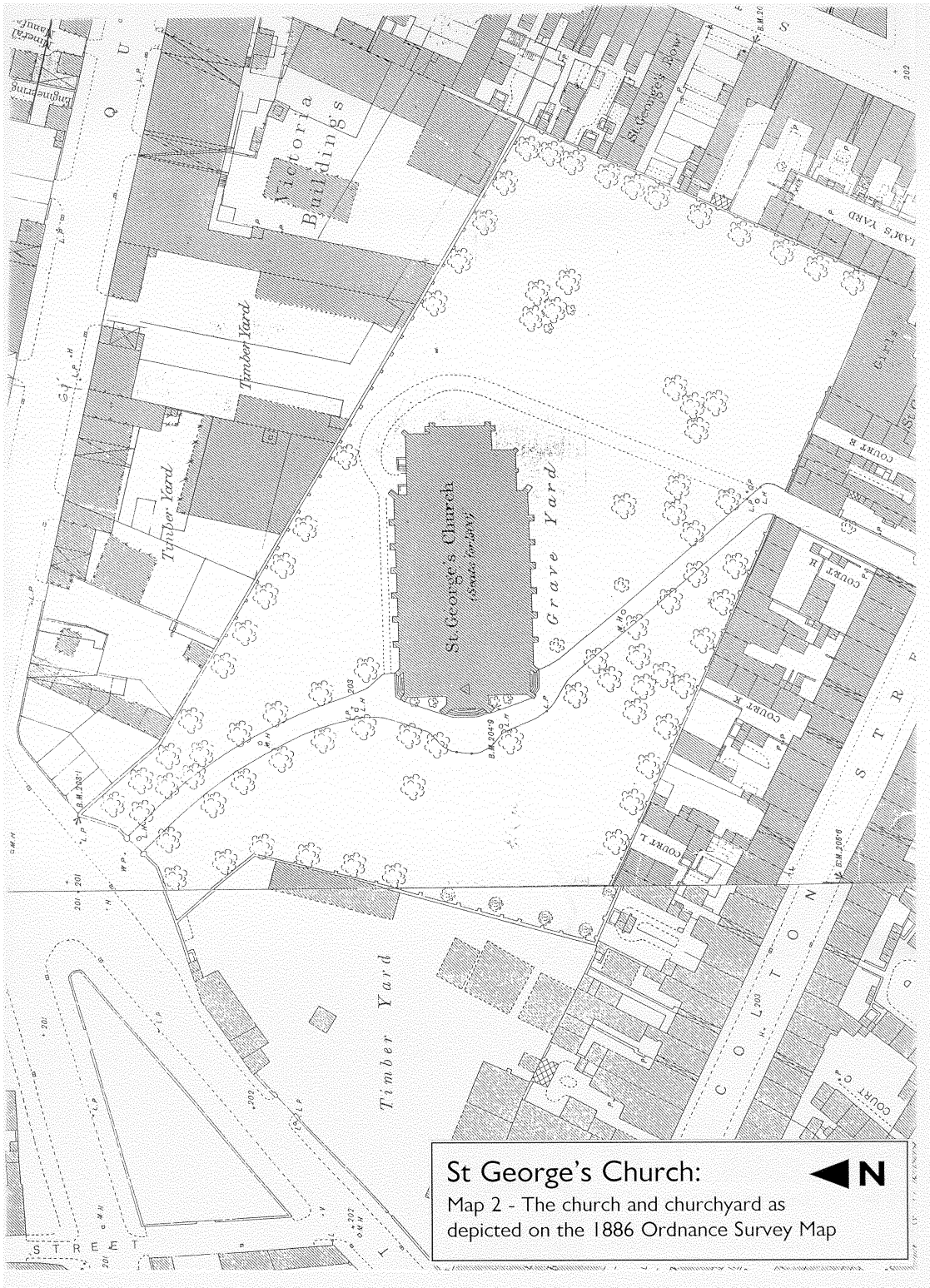


Listed buildings

1. St George's Church and grounds
2. 37-43 Rutland Street
3. Former Odeon Cinema
4. The Exchange Building Rutland Street
5. 29 Rutland Street
6. Former Guild for the Disabled
7. Charles Street Police Station



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Former Odeon Cinema: draft Supplementary Planning Guidance

Site and Location

The former Odeon cinema occupies a 0.25 hectare site in a prominent location at the corner of Queen Street, Rutland Street and Southampton Street, approximately 1 km to the east of Leicester city centre (Map 1). The building is currently vacant.

Ownership

The building is privately owned. The agents for the building are Shonki Brothers (contact Mr K Sangra), 55 London Road, Leicester (Tel. 0116 254 3373).

Historical Development

Following the Cinematograph Act of 1927 the principal cinema groups developed a new generation of 'super' cinemas. These new cinemas were essentially functional buildings designed for the showing of movies.

Oscar Deutsch founded the Odeon circuit of cinemas in 1930 with the aim of establishing a cinema in every town with a population over 25,000. The early Odeons were built in the south of England and a clear house style was quickly developed, usually with a flamboyant exterior so as to be as visible as possible on the high street, and clean lined interiors with the minimum of decoration.

In 1934 the office of Harry Weedon, a prominent Birmingham architect, was employed to design all the Odeon cinemas in the north of England and Wales. The principal architect responsible for the design work was Robert Bullivant, who developed a distinctive house style of dramatic exteriors, combining faience and high quality brickwork.

The Leicester Odeon cinema was designed by Robert Bullivant and built between 1936 and 1938, opening in July 1938. When built, the cinema had a capacity of 2,182, with 1,307 seated in the stalls and 875 in the circle. Although the cinema was sub-divided into three smaller screens in 1974, the sub-divisions have recently been removed, largely restoring the original internal layout.

The building finally closed as a cinema in 1996 following the construction of an out-of-town multiplex and has since remained vacant.

Description of the Building

The building is in Art-deco style, with the main entrance on a curved frontage strategically located on the south-west corner so that the building provides the focal point for the views along Halford Street and Rutland Street. There are five sets of three steps up to the entrance. Above the entrance are four white faience tile buttresses with curved tops which divide five windows, either side of which are flanking curved brick towers. The side and rear elevations are massive brick walls, built up to hide the pitched roof. The intricate detailing of the brickwork, however, adds interest to the huge expanse. The building is built-up to the

back of pavement on Southampton Street, although there is a forecourt parking area on Queen Street.

The internal layout comprises a circular entrance foyer, corridor and stalls on the ground floor. The stalls retain much of the original plaster decoration on the walls. The original staircase survives with fitted seating in the foyer to the circle, while an area between the foyer and the circle has curved ends and coving. The circular bar area above the foyer has been rebuilt. The recent removal of a number of suspended ceilings has revealed previously hidden original details, notably cornices and ceiling plasterwork.

Assessment of the Significance of the Building

The building is one of the key landmark buildings in the St George's Conservation Area and represents a relatively unspoilt example of 1930s cinema architecture designed by one of the leading national architects in the field. A considerable number of original external architectural features have survived and, following the removal of internal sub-divisions, the original scale of the auditorium has been restored and many of the surviving decorative features have also been revealed. The building also has a fine façade typical of the Odeon style combining faience and high quality brickwork.

Conservation Designation

The building was listed Grade II in 1997 in recognition of its architectural and historic importance. Listed Building Consent will be required for any external or internal alterations which would be likely to affect the character of the building.

The building is also within the St George's Conservation Area.

Planning Policies

The building is allocated for community, education and leisure use in the City of Leicester Local Plan. Although vacant, the permitted use of the building falls within Class D2 (Assembly and leisure) of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987.

The building is included within the City Council's proposed Cultural Quarter. The building is also within a Potential Development Area (PDA) in the deposit copy of the Replacement City of Leicester Local Plan. Within PDAs, development, regeneration and refurbishment of buildings will be encouraged by allowing a range and mix of land uses. In the Rutland Street PDA, the priority land uses are identified as residential, retail and major leisure, while other land uses considered acceptable in the area are offices, research and development/light industry and community facilities.

The building forms part of a larger potential development site on Queen Street in the St George's Strategic Regeneration Area, adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance in February 2001. This states that any conversion of the building has to be sensitive and sympathetic to its existing character. Potential use as an arts cinema is identified.

Other Constraints

At the time of its sale, a covenant was placed on the building preventing its future use for the business of film exhibition as defined by section 21 of the Cinemas Act 1985.

Alterations to the building

Any proposal for the re-use of the building will need to respect the architectural form and character of the building. However, there may be the opportunity for a sympathetic extension on the Queen Street side of the building, where there is at present an unattractive forecourt car park. This could be in the form of a lightweight glazed structure that will also enable level access to be provided into the building.

Opportunities

The building is a prominent landmark in the centre of Leicester and the City Council would wish to see the building retained and converted to an appropriate use as part of the regeneration of the St George's area as a whole. However, there are two important factors that need to be given particular regard when considering future uses of the building:

- As a listed building, any scheme for the conversion of the building must be sympathetic and preserve its special character and appearance. The newly re-created character of the auditorium as a single large space should be retained.
- The covenant on the building preventing its use for the business of film exhibition.

Alternative uses

Cinema: Planning Policy Guidance note 15 (PPG15) suggests that the most appropriate use for a listed building is likely to be the use for which it was originally designed. The preferred use, therefore, would be for the building to be re-used as a cinema, although this would require a variation of the existing covenant on the building.

However, if the covenant remains in place, reuse as a cinema is not an option and it is therefore necessary to consider other alternative uses which would be appropriate for this building in order to keep the building in an active and economically viable use:

Other uses within Class D2 (Assembly and Leisure) of the Use Classes Order

The following uses would be likely to fall within the Class D2 classification of the building and planning permission may not be required for the use, although Listed Building Consent would be required for any external or internal alterations which affect the character of the building.

Theatre or Concert Hall: Other uses for public entertainment, such as a theatre or concert venue, would be in keeping with the character of the building and would be likely to be acceptable. They would also keep the building within the public domain. A possible problem

may be in providing space for stage sets and changing rooms and the possibility of extending the building at the rear may need to be considered.

Nightclub: Use as a nightclub may be acceptable, depending on internal alterations that may be required. However, disturbance to future occupiers of nearby buildings that are being converted into residential use would need to be considered. Signage would require special consideration.

Uses within Class D1 (Non-residential institutions) of the Use Classes Order

Given the nature of the building and space within it, it may also be desirable to consider a change of use to uses falling within Class D2 of the Use Classes Order.

Public hall/conference venue/exhibition hall: These uses would also ensure the building is publicly accessible. These types of use may also require fewer changes to the fabric of the building and be less disruptive to future occupiers of nearby buildings that are being converted into residential use.

Place of Worship: This use would also be likely to retain the building as a single auditorium, although any alterations would need to be carefully considered.

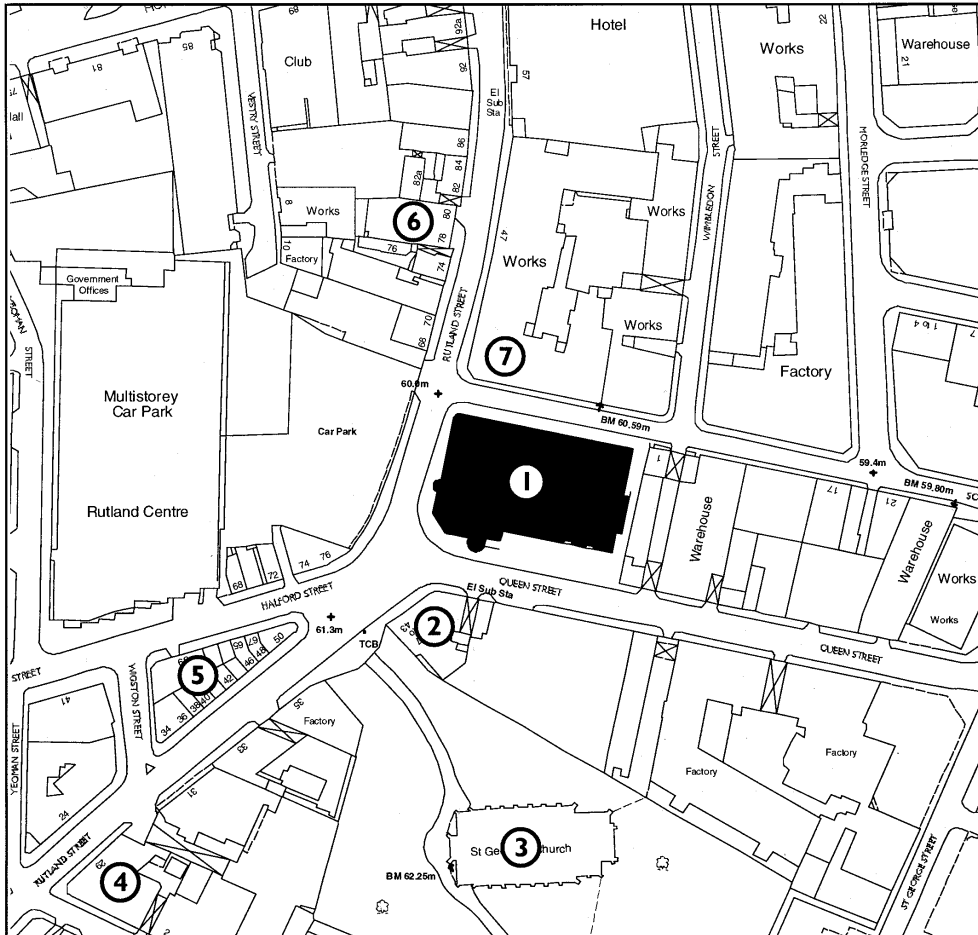
Food and Drink uses within Class A3 of the Use Classes Order

These uses would also keep the building in public use and retain the internal space. The operators of types of uses also generally have sufficient resources to ensure the satisfactory maintenance of the building. However, alterations to the fabric of the building, such as the provision of kitchens and a ventilation system, would need to be sympathetically designed. Details such as external signage would require special consideration.

Other uses

Media centre: This option is based on ideas for a Cultural Quarter within the St George's area. If sympathetically designed, the opportunity may exist to convert the main volume of the building into a variety of interchangeable spaces for arts and media-based businesses and organisations.

Former Odeon Cinema: Map I - location and context



Listed buildings

1. Former Odeon Cinema
2. 37-43 Rutland Street
3. St George's Church and Churchyard
4. 29 Rutland Street
5. The Exchange Building Rutland Street
6. 78-80 Rutland Street
7. Alexandra House



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