

Heritage Statement: Planned Gates and Railings

Installation at The Pavilion, 143-145 Oxford Road

The Pavilion building is located at 143-145 Oxford Road, on the corner of Oxford Road and Russell Street. The site is located equidistantly to the East and West boundaries of the Russell Street/Castle Street Conservation Area, just within the Northern boundary. Searches of the National Heritage List for England and on the Reading Borough Council list of locally-listed buildings confirm it is neither a statutory or locally listed building and is not noted as an important focal point in the Russell Street/Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal. However, it is a building with a certain character based on its original purpose as a cinema and the modifications previously made as part of the approved change from D2 to D1 use have sought to enhance these features.

It is unfortunate that the current open plan nature of the car parking area to the west of the site means it has become a focal point for antisocial behaviour. The secluded area towards Goldsmid Road, in particular, is regularly used for drug taking and as an open-air toilet, despite security lighting and close-circuit television surveillance. This is both unpleasant for the users of the car park and a significant health hazard for the church staff that are required to clean up used needles and human waste on a daily basis. Theft from and damage to cars and bicycles parked on the site has also become an issue, even during daylight hours and the proposal is therefore to install security gates at either end of the location to stop access, except to authorised users of the car park and existing bicycle storage.

Most of the buildings in the Russell Street/Castle Street Conservation Area date from the 19th century when decorative cast iron gates and railings would be a normal feature marking the front boundary of the property. The country-wide collection of cast iron to support the war effort prior to World War II means many of these are no longer in position, but some do still remain (presumably where safety was an issue) and the Russell Street/Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal notes that the interesting variety of original railings retained make a very positive contribution to the character of the Area. Indeed, historic photographs of the Pavilion as a cinema, such as the one below, show it with cast iron gates at the Oxford Road entrance to what is now the car park, though the height of these would not be sufficient for the purposes of this planning application.

The photographic record does not have sufficient clarity to allow an exact match to the style of the original gates and railings on the Pavilion site, so the design proposed, (an example of which is also shown below), seeks to harmonise both with the features of the Pavilion building such as the two rosettes and pilasters on the Northern façade, and with what can be seen of the arrowhead design of the original railings. This will both provide the required security for the car parking/bicycle storage space and enhance the character of the Pavilion site within the local area.

Historic Pavilion View



Proposed Gate and Railing Design Example

