



Historic England

Ms Stefanie Fischer
Burrell Foley Fischer LLP
Studio 9
Southgate Road
LONDON
N1 3LY

Direct Dial: 0207 973 3700

Our ref: PA00944345

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Dear Ms Fischer

Pre-application Advice

PEBBLES BUILDING, 55 HIGH STREET, TENTERDEN

Thank you for consulting Historic England on proposals for a new two screen cinema building in the grade II listed Pebbles building in Tenterden. I very much enjoyed our recent site visit which was helpful in understanding the proposed options. I hope the following is therefore useful as you continue refining proposals for a cinema here.

The Pebbles building (53 and 55 High Street) is significant as a good example of a pair of 18th century town houses. Constructed in timber, the building was detailed to appear grander than it really was by using timber blocks to imitate masonry on the ground floor and the quoins with tile hanging on the upper floors. All of this adds to its characterful appearance. No 55 - the subject of this pre-application - is now used as a shop while the rooms above are largely unused. These uses neatly fit the existing domestic plan form which survives, with the exception of the ground floor which has altered, largely intact.

An initial option for a cinema included locating one of two cinemas in the upper floors of No 55. This entailed the removal all of internal partitions on the first and second floor and the second floor structure, as well as surviving ground floor partitions to create a café. We assess this would cause a high level of harm to heritage significance as evidence of the building's domestic use, including the plan form and a good collection of historic joinery would be seriously compromised. We therefore endorse the decision to consider alternatives. Those alternatives includes low key uses in No 55 with a foyer on the ground floor and office use and possibly toilets on the building's upper floors while a detached cinema building would be constructed in the garden at the rear of No 55.

Two options for the cinema building are proposed. Both require the demolition of an



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unattractive rear extension which probably dates to the late 20th century. Option 1 is for a linear semi-subterranean building with a rooftop terrace for a café, at a height of 1.2m above ground. A small courtyard between the rear elevation of No 55 and the new building would also be created. Option 2 has a much more generous area between the new building and the rear elevation of No 55 which is consequently used as a café area and the roof of the new building would be 3m above ground.

In historic buildings terms both represent an opportunity to enhance the setting of No 55 with the removal of the unattractive extension and the re-creation of a courtyard to its rear, which historic mapping suggests once existed here. Although the new building in Option 1 would be lower, the roof top terrace would likely enhance its visibility in the garden. Overall, we express a slight preference for option 2 noting that this also requires less excavation and thus reduces the archaeological impact. I noted much evidence of historic joinery throughout the building and suggest there is an opportunity to enhance this with the removal of modern joinery and partitions where they exist, thus revealing more of the building's historic appearance. We also briefly discussed works to the basement of No 55 which is well lit to allow for its possible conversion to a bar. We think such a use is worth exploring to understand the extent of work required for its conversion to a bar, and the possible impacts this could have on the significance of the listed building.

In terms of the architectural language of a new building no elevations were provided because the plans are a high level, but in discussions on site a contemporary idiom was suggested. We think this could work well here provided the detailing and materials were all very high quality. Beyond the new building, it is desirable to reinstate a garden area which helps connect the building to domestic origins and allows the Town Council to sustain its use as a memorial garden which likely holds communal value for local residents. As the garden is very generous, it's feasible to sustain a large garden area even with the development proposed.

Understanding the archaeological implications of the proposal early in the development of your scheme and ideally before a final option is selected, is critical given the amount of excavation proposed. We therefore suggest early engagement with Ashford BC's archaeological advisors at KCC who will be able to give advice on the proposal including the level of detail (such as reports etc.) required to support any future application. We also suggest early engagement with the Planning Department at Ashford BC.

For any application you will also need to provide a heritage statement setting out the significance of the assets affected and the impact of your proposal on that significance as required by Paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework. In this



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case, the designated heritage affected includes the grade II No 55, along with any nearby listed buildings and the conservation area. You will also need to demonstrate that harm has been avoided or minimised in line with Paragraph 190 and that any remaining harm has clear and convincing justification as required by Paragraph 194. The Local Authority will then weigh the harm against the public benefits in the manner set out in Paragraph 196.

I hope this advice is helpful as you continue to refine your proposal. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. This advice and my recent site visit represent the one round of free pre-application advice that I am able to give. Any further advice would need to be charged for on a cost recovery basis. This is available through our extended pre-application service, details of which can be found at the following link: <https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/our-planning-services/enhanced-advisory-services/extended-pre-application-advice/>

Next Steps

We suggest you continue refining your proposal and seek pre-application advice from Ashford BC and their archaeological advisors at KCC. If you would like further pre-application advice from Historic England please contact me to discuss our extended pre-application service.

Yours sincerely

Alice Brockway

Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas

E-mail: alice.brockway@HistoricEngland.org.uk

PEBBLES BUILDING, 55 HIGH STREET, TENTERDEN Pre-application Advice

Information Provided

Report for Pre-application - The conversion of the Pebbles Building, No 55 High Street, Tenterden into a 2 screen digital cinema with a cafe/bar



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