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Head of Planning
City Development Department
Level G3
Waverley Court
4 East Market Street
Edinburgh EH8 8BG

Our Ref: **1295**

8th April 2011

Dear Clare Macdonald,

Re: 11/00394/LBC Former Odeon Cinema, 7 Clerk Street, Edinburgh, EH8 9JH

OBJECTION

The Trust has examined this application by Duddingston House Properties for the above and wishes to comment as follows:

The Trust wishes to **object** to this application.

The conclusion of the reporter who considered the previous called-in application to demolish was that he was not persuaded that all alternatives to demolition had been fully explored. It is understood that the current application to demolish is based on the principle that the repair of the building is not economically viable and that it has been marketed at a price reflecting its location and condition to potential restoring purchasers for a reasonable period. The Trust continues to be unconvinced that the applicant has satisfied the criteria for listed building consent for demolition as set out in SHEP.

Through our work maintaining the Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland for the last 20 years, the Trust is acutely aware of the significant challenges faced by historic buildings at risk in the current challenging economic climate. In this context the Trust believes that the fact that four bids were received for the building, despite the very short marketing exercise over the festive period, demonstrates that there are potential restoring purchasers and an alternative to demolition.

Each of these four bids was dismissed as being significantly lower than the valuation of £2.83million. The Trust notes that in Historic Scotland's written submission to the Independent Reporter it is noted that:

"The 2003 valuation report, prepared for RBS, highlights a number of issues:

- that the building may have a market value of £2.3M if a marketing period of 18 months were allowed, and £1.8M if this period was six months."

This would suggest that the full valuation figure of £2.83million (as updated by Colliers in Feb 2011) is not a reasonable expectation when the building was marketed for such a limited time. The Trust would suggest that in fact the two bids of



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£1.6million and £1.45million, both exceeding 50% of the valuation figure, are reasonable given the short marketing period and the constraints related to the reuse of the building.

The Trust has some concerns about the methodology used to achieve this updated valuation figure. The selection of a range of buildings in various locations and conditions seems an overly simplistic way to calculate the value of such a unique and historic building. It appears to suggest that all B-listed buildings in a similar location are of equal intrinsic value. It is felt that the valuation fails to acknowledge the unique qualities of this particular building including the constraints arising from its national significance and listed status (it is also noted that HS consider the building to be worthy of Category A listing but are currently unable to upgrade the building in the face of a live application); the resistance by CEC to allow certain licensed uses, or the length of time the building has been on the market; and the current inability of potential restoring purchasers to raise finance. In addition, anecdotal evidence suggests that there are building defects which go beyond those mentioned in the applicants building survey report. The Trust would suggest that the current valuation fails to reflect the true condition of the building at present. The Trust feels that a true, reasonable and independent valuation for the site must be agreed.

It is widely acknowledged that in the case of Edinburgh's Odeon Cinema, even the academic interest from historians and architectural conservationists is outmatched by the intensity of emotion felt by local people who remember it in its heyday. Given the intense community campaign to save the building, the Trust believes that those involved in the future of the threatened building need to go the extra mile to not only secure its future but to recognise its intrinsic value as a cultural and community asset. These plans do not represent an acceptable loss of historic fabric. If approved these proposals would destroy the very heart of a much loved and nationally significant building, without regard to potential alternatives.

Gemma Wild

Gemma Wild
Technical Officer (Conservation and Design)

cc

Historic Scotland, AHSS, Cockburn Association, CTA Scotland

