

The Astoria Cinema Local List Nomination – Officer Report

1.0 Context

- 1.1 The former cinema known as the Astoria (originally the Broadway Cinema, opened 3 November 1922) stands at 71 Albany Road in the Earlsdon district of Coventry. Constructed for the silent film, during a period of expansion and civic optimism, the building served as one of the city's principal inter-war entertainment venues and remains a notable surviving example of its kind.

Builder: A.W. Pell.

Architects: Believed to have been designed by Ives & Rushby

Built: 1922



Figure 1: The former Cinema Astoria, 71 Albany Road, Earlsdon

2.0 Site

- 2.1 The large rectangular property occupies a prominent gabled frontage on the eastern side of Albany Road near the junction with Winifred Avenue. The site lies within a mixed residential and commercial streetscape in Earlsdon, approximately half a mile from Coventry city centre and railway station. The building is set back slightly from the pavement with approach steps and formerly a landscaped forecourt.

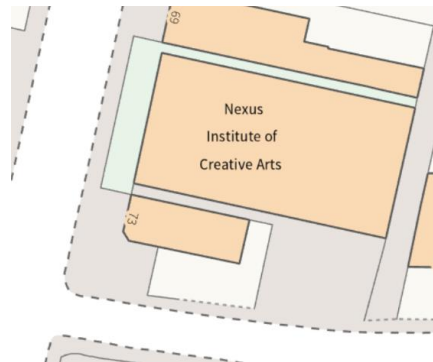


Figure 2: Site plan showing the former cinema the Astoria

3.0 Assessment – Discussion and Detail

External appearance

- 3.1 The building is notable for its Art-Deco frontage. It is built of red brick, with a pedimented gable and brick dentil coursing at eaves level and string course at the fourth floor. The ground floor entrance has metal framed glass double doors with margin light surround topped by an arched fan light. The opening is flanked by two six light windows with arched fanlight overhead. Above there are four double casement Crittall windows within segmental arch frames, all painted in blue. Brick pilasters break up the large façade and provide vertical emphasis and classical proportions to the building. Either side of the second-floor windows are two round windows. To the outer edges of the façade are two brick pilasters.
- 3.2 Coloured lamps originally highlighted the archway openings. The brickwork remains legible, and the architectural form retains its original rhythm of façade bays and portico approach. Alterations (such as an illuminated sign reading 'ASTORIA', a disabled access ramp, and changes to entrance doors) have been made, but the primary structural form and material character survive.

Internal appearance

- 3.3 The foyer once featured rich material finishes including oak-panelled walls, a rustic brick fireplace with art-metal candelabra, terrazzo floors and twin terrazzo staircases to the circle. The stalls area used Pavine flooring for acoustic control, and the auditorium was decorated with blue and gold plaster moldings, Futurist-style panels, and frosted coloured glass windows. A large 21 ft by 16 ft screen and orchestra pit further reinforced the building's grandeur.



Figure 3: Entrance Foyer and Concert Hall

- 3.4 Later changes included repainting ceilings, removal of decorative panels and replacement glazing; nevertheless, the spatial volumes, primary circulation routes and significant fixtures (terraces, stairs, stair cores) remain intact. The building comprises approximately 8,136 sq ft (755.85 m²) gross internal area over ground, first and mezzanine floors.

3.4.1 On the ground floor the property comprises a large reception area, with toilets and offices at the front with individual music rooms, teaching areas and a refectory behind this off a central corridor which runs from the front to the rear of the building. The refectory includes a kitchen area, a meeting area and toilets.

3.4.2 The first floor is accessed via a lift and stairs on both sides of the building at the rear, and comprises a large concert hall with a stage, and preparation areas. The mezzanine area looks over and is accessed from the first floor concert hall, as well as separate stairs on both sides of the building to the front, and provides an open-plan area as well as offices, a library and toilets. – Right Move

4.0 Assessment – Criteria

- 4.1 Historic: The building reflects the growth of the cinema industry in early 20th-century Britain, and its survival through wartime and post-war change adds to Coventry's urban narrative.
- 4.2 Architectural: The combination of high-quality brickwork, terrazzo detailing, oak paneling and decorative plasterwork demonstrates the standard of design found in purpose-built cinemas of the inter-war years.
- 4.3 Artistic: Decorative interiors featuring bespoke plaster moldings, painted panels and specialist lighting speak to the artistic ambition of the era.
- 4.4 Evidential: The extant fabric offers a tangible record of the planning, technical specification and experiential qualities of a 1920s picture palace.
- 4.5 Communal: The building has been a place of social gathering, culture and local memory for decades; its adaptation into other uses further demonstrates its continuing communal relevance.
- 4.6 Integrity: Although some decorative finishes have been removed or altered, the main structure, façade and internal spatial arrangement remain substantially intact.

- 4.7 Rarity: There are few surviving examples of suburban cinemas from this period in Coventry with such identifiable material quality and continued presence.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 The Astoria Cinema, Albany Road, Earlsdon, is of local significance for its historic, architectural, artistic, evidential and communal values. It is a well-preserved example of early 20th-century entertainment architecture, notable for its durable materials, refined detailing and cultural role in the city. It is concluded that undertaking a consultation on the nomination would therefore be beneficial to gain a greater understanding of the views of local people on the nomination's inclusion to the Local List of Heritage Assets and invite contributions which may further an understanding of the buildings heritage value.