

**Application Name: Former Bradford Odeon**

**Number:** 467099  
**Type:** New  
**Heritage Category:** Scheduling

**Address:**

Former Odeon Cinema, Princes Way, Bradford, West Yorkshire, UK

County	District	District Type	Parish
	Bradford	Metropolitan Authority	Non Civil Parish

**Recommendation: Reject****Assessment****CONTEXT**

We have received an application to assess the former Bradford Odeon Cinema for scheduling. This building is currently covered by a Certificate of Immunity from Listing (issued 5 August 2009); however this does not grant immunity from designation under scheduling legislation. Furthermore as the building is in neither domestic nor ecclesiastical use, it could technically be scheduled under the 1979 Act if it is shown to be of national importance. The building lies within a Conservation Area but is under threat of demolition and redevelopment (see Conservation Area Consent application 08/06392/CAC). It is also understood that this scheduling assessment and the uncertainty of its outcome is delaying the sale of the property. There is local public and media opposition to the demolition of the building.

**HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION**

The history and description of the former Bradford Odeon has been set out more fully in previous advice to the Secretary of State, most recently for the Certificate of Immunity in 2009 (LMS 167127). In summary, the building was designed by the local architect William Illingworth for Provincial Cinematograph Theatres (PCT) and was opened in 1930 by Gaumont (which had bought PCT in 1929). It included a cinema/theatre auditorium with over 3000 seats (thought to be the third largest at the time nationally, and the largest outside London, both the other two being subsequently demolished), a dancehall/ballroom and restaurant in addition to a number of lounges and other front of house circulation spaces. The building is steel framed and its rather eclectic external architectural treatment makes extensive use of white faience, featuring Art Deco,

Baroque and Classically derived architecture to complement that of the neighbouring (and earlier) Alhambra Theatre (grade I listed). The Bradford Odeon's most distinguishing features are probably the domed, corner entrance towers. The interior was extensively altered in 1969 (by the then owners Odeon) to create two separate cinemas and a bingo hall in the original auditorium. The original, complex front of house circulation spaces have also been extensively altered, including the complete replacement/relocation of a principal staircase. A proportion of the original internal decorative treatment survives within the building, some areas believed to be almost completely intact (such as the dancehall) but other areas extensively damaged (such as much of the front of house circulation spaces). The exterior of the building has also undergone a degree of alteration.

## ASSESSMENT

Although under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979) the former Bradford Odeon could be scheduled if it was shown to be of national importance, modern practice favours the use of listing legislation for the designation of buildings. Indeed, following recent heritage protection reform, government guidance (Scheduled Monuments March 2010) states that "For historical reasons, some buildings are both scheduled and listed (under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). Where appropriate, these buildings will be progressively 'de-scheduled' in favour of management through the listing regime." There are some buildings (including some C20 structures) that are currently scheduled, but not listed. These are typically military, civil defence or utility buildings which are generally of national importance for historical rather than architectural reasons. They are also normally considered to be more appropriately managed as preserved monuments rather than being open to alteration and adaptive reuse where listing is the more appropriate management tool. Even if the Bradford Odeon could be shown to be of national importance, it is difficult to see how scheduling could be an appropriate management tool for the building; such designation implies that adaptive reuse is inappropriate, whereas adaptive reuse is likely to be the only way that the building may have a sustainable future. Unlike listing, where if the criteria are met then designation by the Secretary of State is mandatory, new scheduling is normally only applied in cases where designation is deemed to be helpful for the future management of the monument. However here the question is hypothetical: the Bradford Odeon is not of national importance and thus does not meet the criteria for scheduling.

Annex 1 of the government guidance "Scheduled Monuments" (March 2010) sets out the eight non-statutory selection criteria which are taken into consideration when assessing sites for scheduling. These are considered in relation to the former Bradford Odeon below:

\* Period: The former Bradford Odeon represents one of a large number of different entertainment venues that were in use in the first half of the C20 including piers, sports grounds, theatres, skating rinks, and concert halls and is one of a very large number that survives nationally. Although as it is principally a cinema (and thus an example of a particularly significant and new form of entertainment venue from the period) it can be

regarded as being representative of the period, it is only one of a large number of types of site (such as automobile factories, airfields, secondary schools, radio masts) that can also be seen as being representative of new developments in the early C20. This compares to earlier periods (medieval, early Bronze Age etc) where the range of representative sites is much more restricted.

\* **Rarity:** Early C20 cinemas are not nationally rare. Cinemas designed and termed 'super cinemas' (generally taken to be those with auditoria with over 1500 seats and including additional entertainment facilities such as restaurants and/or dance halls) are indeed rarer and those of the size of the Bradford Odeon (designed for in excess of 3000 seats) is rarer still. However good, intact examples including cinema, restaurant and dancehall do survive nationally such as the Leeds Majestic (1921, 2,800 seats) and the Gaumont State in Kilburn (1937, 4004 seats).

\* **Documentation:** Unsurprisingly for a C20 building, some documentation in the form of plans, early photographs and other records do survive concerning the building, however the known surviving documentation is not complete and does not include (for instance) a complete set of original architect drawings.

\* **Group Value:** The Bradford Odeon does have a degree of group value, particularly with the adjacent Alhambra Theatre (as has been noted in previous advice). However the Alhambra (with its impressive Edwardian interior) is designated in its own right and on its own merits and does not require the additional designation of the Odeon to protect its significance. If the Odeon was the earlier building of the pair, the group value aspect might have been a more significant consideration in terms of national importance: as it is, the design of the Odeon is seen as being derivative of the earlier building.

\* **Survival / Condition:** The Bradford Odeon still stands as a building, however later C20 alterations have seriously compromised the original design and thus its potential national importance. The subdivision of the auditorium resulted in the loss of such features as the front of the upper balcony as well as the removal of original fixtures and fittings. The original complex front of house arrangement has also been lost by the extensive removal of walls, the insertion of new stud walls and ceilings, and most damagingly the insertion of a new large stairwell.

\* **Fragility / Vulnerability:** Although the building is thought to be under threat of demolition, relative to other scheduling candidates nationally (such as prehistoric earthwork sites or fragmentary medieval ruins which have no current protection and can often be completely removed without any need for planning permission or other consent), the Bradford Odeon is not vulnerable to unconsidered destruction. The building is included within a Conservation Area and thus requires Conservation Area Consent (taking into consideration the building's contribution to the local historic environment) prior to demolition.

\* **Diversity:** The Bradford Odeon is of some significance for being an example of a super cinema which included a diversity of facilities including a large auditorium for both cinema and stage shows, a dancehall, restaurant and coffee bar, however it is only the dancehall that survives largely intact, and even this has been subdivided internally.

\* **Potential:** There is some potential that further areas of original features survive concealed behind dropped ceilings and partition walls, however it is also known that

there are extensive areas of lost features behind later surfacing. The building is not known to include any particular technology of national importance in its design or construction that may be revealed by archaeological analysis.

## CONCLUSION

After examining all the records and other relevant information and having carefully considered the national importance of this case, the criteria for scheduling are not fulfilled: Contrary to the belief of the applicant, the former Bradford Odeon is not the last surviving 1930s super cinema, nor is it the largest. Its original design has been significantly compromised by later alteration and although large amounts of original decoration is thought to survive, a very large proportion, including most of its fixtures and fittings, have been lost. The building does have some group value (particularly with the grade I listed Alhambra) and can be seen as being representative of its period, however neither of these factors make the Bradford Odeon of national importance. The association of the building with William Illingworth, its various owners, its builder, nor the large variety of acts that performed there also do not confer national importance upon the building. The building's significance is suitably recognised by its inclusion within a Conservation Area and its addition to the schedule is not recommended.