
**Addition of Stella Cinema, 207-209 Rathmines Road Lower, Rathmines, Dublin 6,
To the Record of Protected Structures in accordance with Sections 54 and 55 of the
Planning and Development Act, 2000.**

Proposed Entry: Stella Cinema, 207-209 Rathmines Road Lower, Rathmines, Dublin 6

Photo of Structure



Introduction

In accordance with Section 55 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended), it is recommended to make the addition of the Stella Cinema, 207-209 Rathmines Road Lower, Rathmines, Dublin 6, to Dublin City Council's Record of Protected Structures (RPS).

Procedure Followed

In accordance with the procedures set out in Section 54 and 55 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, Dublin City Council indicated its intention to add the **Stella Cinema, 207-209 Rathmines Road Lower, Rathmines, Dublin 6** to the Record of Protected Structures. The proposed addition of this structure was first advertised in the Irish Independent on the **15th of May 2017**. The public display period was from **15th of May, 2017** to **27th of June, 2017** inclusive.

Request for Addition

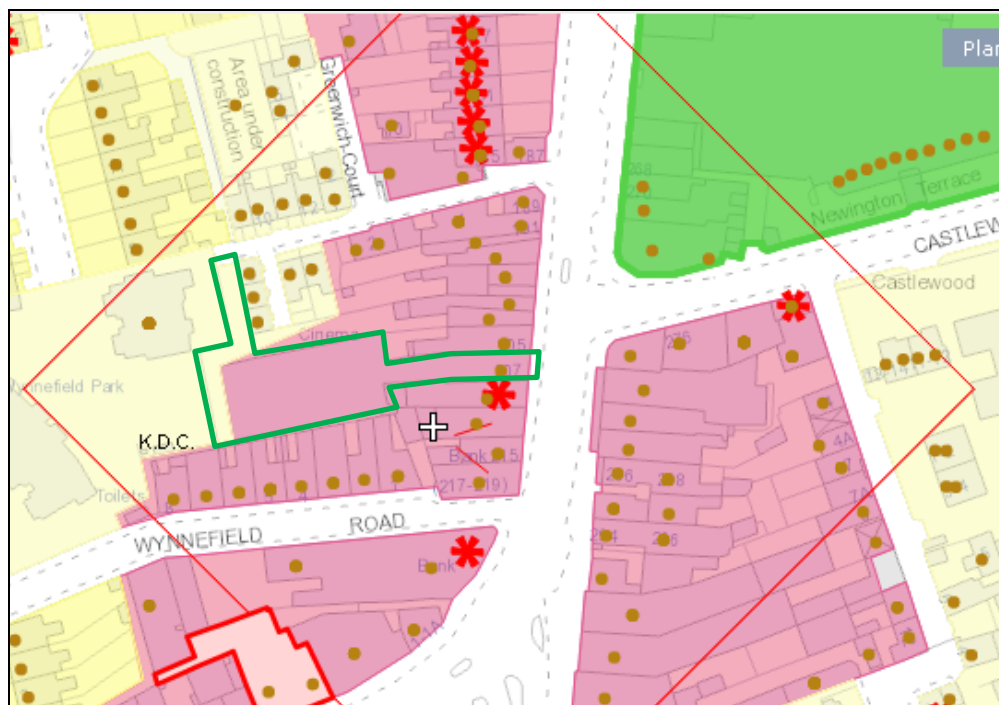
- Conservation Section, Planning & Property Development Department, Dublin City Council.
- Mannix Flynn, Councillor, South East Area Committee Meeting 09/05/06.

Summary of Applicants Reasons for Seeking Addition:

- Conservation Section, Planning & Property Development Department, Dublin City Council: Significant intact early cinema building.
- Councillor Mannix Flynn, at the South East Area Committee Meeting 09/05/06; Question 35 to Chief Executive: Can the Area Manager issue a full report with regards to the Stella Cinema in Rathmines? etc.

Site Location & Zoning Map:

Stella Cinema is located on Rathmines Road Lower. Access to the cinema auditoria is via a modest two-storey entrance building, located between a former bank (a protected structure, constructed 1919) and a two-storey red-brick shop. The location of the Stella Cinema, 207-209 Rathmines Road Lower, Rathmines, Dublin 6 is shown in green. The zoning objective for the site is Z4: To provide for and improve mixed services facilities (red coloured area). It is also a Key District Centre, K.D.C 7 (red square outline) as shown on the map below, as extracted from Map H of the Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022.



Recent & Relevant Planning History:

<i>Planning Ref.</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Decision</i>
3607/08	Demolition of existing structure, the construction of four storey over basement building containing pedestrian entrance from Swanville Place and pedestrian egress to Wynnefield Road, providing a fitness centre at basement, ground and first floors, retail fronting Lower Rathmines Road, and four no. two bedroom apartments and one no. three bedroom duplex all with balconies, refuse storage, 5 apartment storage spaces, second floor level private external space, new service connections, re-instatement of public footpath and all associated site works.	Granted; permission now expired.

Summary Description

This former cinema building was designed by Higginbotham & Stafford and built in 1923, and was unused for some time, prior to its recent acquisition. Attached two-storey entrance block to Rathmines Road, connecting to three-storey auditorium block to rear, via two-storey building. It is reported that there is a basement in the building.

The front of the building comprises a flat roofed, entrance block, with a parapet to the front, east elevation, with exposed hollow concrete block cladding, over boarded fascia and cinema entrance façade. Recessed glazed timber screen having glazed entrance doors with chrome steel handles, and solid timber side door, flanked by polished granite pilasters to street line.

There is a stepped curved roof to auditorium block, having steel trussed roof structure and corrugated asbestos sheeting. Yellow brick and rendered façades to rear and side elevations.



No access was provided to the internal spaces – the following information is derived from documentary evidence (recent film / photography), and from the Noel Keane video interview and interior tour ('Selling the Stella: behind doors of an old Dublin institution', Irish Times, 19 April 2016):

- *Decorative plasterwork & vents to original (concealed) auditorium ceiling. Original cinema seating. Original suspended projection room, complete with projectors and film reels. Mosaic floor to upper landing. Marble-clad staircases, steel handrails to lower staircase, painted steel balustrade with timber handrails to upper staircases. Historic sanitaryware in bathrooms. Historic signage evident internally.*
- *The original cast-iron boiler is located in the basement.*
- *Carpeted floors and rendered walls to internal spaces generally.*
- *In 2004, the ballroom was converted to a screening room, described as a 'ninety-seater fully-functional digital cinema'. (Interview with Noel Keane, 2016).*

The floor area of the Stella Cinema is approximately 1,460 square metres.

NOTE: No access was gained to the interior of the cinema. An Irish Times film from 2015 documents the current condition of the internal spaces including the entrance corridor, the auditoria, the projection room, and the main circulation spaces. The concealed decorative ceiling dating from the original auditorium (1923) is also documented.



Archival Photograph: Original 1923 ceiling to main auditorium (and 1981 suspended ceiling), 2015

www.twitter.com

Assessment of Special Interest Under the Planning & Development Act 2000

The structure is considered to be of special interest under the following headings:

Architectural:

Described in a 1923 advertisement in the Irish Times as ‘*The largest, best ventilated, and most luxuriously appointed cinema in Dublin*’, the Stella Cinema was one of the oldest cinemas in Dublin when it closed in 2004. Despite several phases of development and a period of disuse, the Stella Cinema retains much of its architectural character. The polished granite pilasters flanking the entrance date from the original 1923 façade. The original curved steel truss structure and ceiling over the auditorium, with plasterwork detailing and decorative vents, survive having been concealed above a suspended ceiling which was inserted when the auditorium was subdivided in 1981. The pedimented proscenium arch, which surrounded the original screen, is also intact. The original suspended projection booth is still in place. Mosaic flooring is evident at the entrance and on the upper landing, and may be concealed elsewhere below modern floor coverings. Chrome steel handles to entrance doors were a later addition but are of merit.

Historical:

The first cinema, dedicated to film, was the Volta Cinema on Mary Street, established by James Joyce in 1909. From this date on, there was a surge in cinema construction in the

city. Subsequent decades saw several more luxurious cinema houses being established, among them the Stella Cinema. Zimmermann refers to 'the Golden Age of cinemas', spanning three decades from the 1920s. Many cinemas from this period had additional functions, and echoing this trend the Stella Cinema also served as a public dance hall. In 2004, the Stella was noted as being the oldest cinema in Dublin with two screens (Kearns & Maguire, 2007).

Cultural:

In addition to being a centre for the exhibition of film, the Stella was home to a number of cultural events during its history. The early silent film screenings were accompanied by a cinema orchestra, 'one of the best orchestras in Dublin' according to a 1923 Irish Times advertisement.

'The cinema orchestra was under the direction of Miss Terry O'Connor, a brilliant musician and a Feis Ceoil medallist.' (Kearns & Maguire, 2007).

The Stella was one of a great number of cinemas and dance halls to emerge in the 1920s and 1930s, reflecting the burgeoning popularity of film and dance culture. These developments were not without detractors, but continued to thrive.

'While the cinema, jazz music and drinking were all condemned by conservative elements in Irish life in the 1920s and 30s, historian Diarmaid Ferriter has correctly and light-heartedly noted that "It is surely ironic, given the constant references to 'alien influences', that the Irish population became one of the heaviest cinema-going populations in the world, and were keen to drink as much as possible and dance from one end of the country to the other."' (www.comeheretome.com)

The dance hall on the first floor was a very popular venue. It suffered a decline in the 1940s but continued to be used as a venue for dance lessons. Several music gigs were held in the Stella Cinema in the 1970s, with the Boomtown Rats (December 1977) and Elvis Costello (March 1978) among the acts featured.

Social:

From the 1920s onwards, the suburban cinema became an integral part of the lives of Dubliners across diverse communities. In January 1940, the Rathmines Sub-Committee of the City of Dublin Child Welfare Movement organised a 'full programme of motion pictures' in the Stella Cinema, for local children. Over 1000 children and 500 mothers attended the screening (Irish Times, 12 January 1940).

Restrictions on Sunday film screenings were lifted in 1920. In Kearns & Maguire's A-Z of All Old Dublin Cinemas, Noel Twamley recalls the late cinema screenings on a Sunday night in the Stella.

'He also reminded us that in the 1940s the pubs closed at 7.30pm on Sunday nights and that quite a few of the "Garglers" would then make their way to the Stella to see a picture. Most suburban picture houses at the time would start their show at 8pm but the Stella management delayed their opening for half an hour in order to give the boozers time to go home, have their tea and then take in a movie.'

Significance/NIAH Rating:

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) has not been carried out for this area; however, its categories of special interest (architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, technical & social) and its rating system has been used to assess the structure in question. The NIAH identifies five categories of rating in seeking to rank buildings. The NIAH rating values are International, National, Regional, Local and Record Only (I, N, R, L, O). Structures which are considered of International, National, and Regional significance are recommended by the Minister to the relevant planning authority for inclusion in their RPS. Using the NIAH System of rating this structure is considered to be of Regional significance. These are structures or sites that make a significant contribution to the architectural heritage within their region or area. The Stella cinema is considered to be of Regional significance.

One of the earliest cinemas in the city, and the largest cinema in Dublin at the time of its construction in 1923, the Stella Cinema retains much of its architectural character and impressive original features such as the polished granite pilasters to the façade, the curved steel truss structure, decorative ceiling over the auditorium, mosaic floors and decorative stair balustrades. In addition to its architectural merits, it is a socially and culturally significant building - an exemplar of the many cinemas and dance halls to emerge in the 1920s and 1930s, reflecting the burgeoning popularity of film and dance culture.

Conclusion:

Stella Cinema, 207-209 Rathmines Road Lower, Rathmines, Dublin 6 is considered to be of Regional importance having architectural, historical and social significance/special interest.

Therefore, in accordance with Section 55 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) it is recommended to make the addition of the Stella Cinema, 207-209 Rathmines Road Lower, Rathmines, Dublin 6 to the Record of Protected Structures.

Submissions/Objections Received

No submissions were received in relation to the proposed addition of this structure.

Response to Submissions/Objections

No response required.

Meeting of the Area Committee

The proposed addition of the structure was originally brought forward to the Central Area Committee on the 8th of May 2017 where it was agreed by the elected members to initiate the procedure to add it to the RPS.

Recommendation

In accordance with Section 55 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, it is recommended that the Stella Cinema, 207-209 Rathmines Road Lower, Rathmines, Dublin 6, be added to the Record of Protected Structures in the Dublin City Development Plan 2011-2017. The making of an addition to the Record of Protected Structures is a reserved function of the City Council.

Dated this day the 23rd August 2017.

Richard Shakespeare
Assistant Chief Executive