

**Planning Application BH2021/01079 / 80,
The Hippodrome 52 - 58 Middle Street Brighton BN1 1AL**

The Regency Society welcomes these proposals as the first stage towards returning the building to beneficial use and supports them in principle, despite the application documents being seriously flawed.

The proposals provide a technical solution to two problems in one, the leaking auditorium roof and the deterioration of the poorly executed plaster ceiling beneath it. Removal of the excrescences on the roof is eminently desirable. Restoration of the entrance hall ceiling is a bonus.

However, the Heritage Statement is totally inadequate, relying on the description from when the building was listed in 1985, which was for identification only, rather than the more detailed though still not comprehensive description of 1999, which in any case is inaccurate in the light of more recent research.

There is no Statement of Significance, preventing a detailed assessment of the impact of the proposals on the special interest of the building. For instance, whether its heritage value warrants the retention of an openable glazed central rooflight, given the practical disadvantages and the initial and in-use costs.

The Design and Access Statement is barking up the wrong tree in claiming that the proposed fibreglass roof would mimic a lead roof in any respect except its colour. No evidence is given that the original glazed roof was replaced with lead; the weight and cost alone make it improbable. The original pitch of 25 degrees is too shallow for lead sheets without steps at regular intervals; reducing the pitch to 17 degrees would increase the solecism of even suggesting that Matcham's roof could have been lead covered. This does not make a fibreglass roof unacceptable, simply that there may be better options, technically and historically.

As a self-contained exercise addressing issues which could be the subject of an urgent works notice, there are not grounds for opposing this application, but further applications should be supported by a full Conservation Management Plan, including a proper assessment of its evidential, historic, aesthetic, and communal value, and by an Impact Assessment appropriate to a Grade II* listed building.

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