



## Designation Consultation

This designation consultation is open for comment until 28/03/2024

### Give us your comments

Historic Environment Scotland consult with those who are directly affected by designation proposals – including owners, occupiers and tenants – and with the planning authority.

We also welcome comments from interested persons or groups.

When we consult about a designation case we will have carried out research and set this out in a **report of handling**. This report is an assessment produced for consultation and it sets out our view, including a proposed decision. The assessment is not intended to be a definitive account or description of the site or place. We consider the comments received before we take a final decision.

We consider comments and representations which are material to our decision-making, such as:

- Your understanding of the cultural significance of the site or place.
- Whether sites or places meet the criteria for designation.
- The purpose and implications of designating the site or place. We consider whether these are relevant to the case.
- Development proposals related to the site or place. Where there are development proposals, we consider whether to proceed with designation in line with our designation policy.
- The accuracy of our information.

You can find more guidance on providing comments and how we handle your information on our [website](#).

Information on how we treat your personal data is available on our [Privacy Notice](#).

### How to make a comment

Please send your comments to [designationconsultations@hes.scot](mailto:designationconsultations@hes.scot) and provide us with the case reference. You can also make comments through our [portal](#) by clicking on the link 'email your comments about this case'.

**If you are the owner, occupier or tenant or the planning authority please email us at: [designations@hes.scot](mailto:designations@hes.scot).**

If you are unable to email your comments please phone us on 0131 668 8914.



## Case information

<b>Case ID</b>	300070548
<b>Name of Site</b>	124 Balmore Road, Possilpark, Glasgow (Formerly Mecca Cinema / Vogue Cinema)
<b>Postcode (if any)</b>	G22 6LJ

<b>Local Authority</b>	Glasgow City Council
<b>National Grid Reference</b>	NS 58945 68266
<b>Designation Type</b>	Listed Building
<b>Designation No. and category of listing (if any)</b>	LB52634
<b>Case Type</b>	Building Preservation Notice

<b>Received/Start Date</b>	15/01/2024
<b>Decision Date</b>	Pending

## 1. Decision

<b>Previous Statutory Listing Address</b>	N/A	<b>Previous category of listing</b>	N/A
<b>New Statutory Listing Address</b>	124 Balmore Road, Possilpark, Glasgow (Formerly Mecca Cinema / Vogue Cinema)	<b>New category of listing</b>	C

Our assessment using the selection guidance shows that the building meets the criteria of special architectural or historic interest. The proposed decision is to list the building at category C.

## 2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

### 2.1 Designation Background

This building was previously proposed for listing in July 2023. We assessed the site and found the building to meet the criteria of special architectural or historic interest. Our decision, published on 12/01/2024 was not to list the building because the site



was subject to development proposals which were at an advanced stage (Case reference 300066994).

On 15/01/2024 Glasgow City Council (GCC) indicated their intention to serve a Building Preservation Notice (BPN) and asked us to consider the building for listing.

A BPN was served on 15/01/2024.

## 2.2 Development Proposals

The building is the subject of the following development proposals:

- Demolition of building (ref: 23/02390/BW). The application was validated on 21/11/2023 and granted on 22/12/2024.

In line with our policy, we may list a building [once a BPN has been served] even if there are development proposals at an advanced stage. (See 3.3 Policy considerations.)

## 3. Assessment

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### 3.1 Assessment information

We reviewed the site for listing following a listing proposal received on 07/07/2023. We decided that the building met the criteria for listing but did not proceed with a designation. We published our report on our portal -- [Former Mecca/Vogue Cinema, 124 Balmore Road, Glasgow, G22 6LJ \(300066994\) \(historicenvironment.scot\)](#).

During the previous review we visited the site on 04/01/2024 and saw the exterior of the building from the public realm. We did not visit the interior of the building because we were not satisfied that it was safe to do so. We referred to recent photographs of the interior provided by the owner. These photos showed that the interior of the auditorium had been completely stripped out with no fixtures or fittings remaining apart from the structural steel of the auditorium and the front foyer has been refitted for retail use.

We visited again on 18/01/2024 and saw the exterior and interior of the auditorium through a large gap in the west elevation. We noted that part of the asbestos roof had been removed. We did not see the interior of the rooms at the entrance to Balmore Road.

We have reviewed our previous assessment and considered whether any new information has become available about the building and its significance to ensure that our understanding is up to date. We have referred to the information gathered during the site visit of 18/01/2024 and have confirmed our previous references. We were also able to view Dean of Guild Court records which include the original



architectural plans and elevations (dated to 1932) of the building (see **Annex A**, Section 8, References). This additional information has had no impact on our overall conclusion.

## 3.2 Assessment of special architectural or historic interest

We have found that the building meets the criteria for listing.

We carried out an assessment using the selection guidance to decide whether a site or place is of special architectural or historic interest. See **Annex A**.

The listing criteria and selection guidance for listed buildings are published in Designation Policy and Selection Guidance (DPSG) (2019), Annex 2, pp. 11-13, <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/designation-policy>.

## 3.3 Policy considerations

Our designation policy is set out in the Designation Policy and Selection Guidance (2019) <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/designation-policy>.

Of particular relevance to this decision is the section on development proposals and designation set out at pages 7-8, including the specific reference to BPNs.

- We normally avoid intervening unnecessarily in the planning process or other regulatory processes where there are development proposals by adding a new designation. This may also extend to reviewing existing designations.
- We consider the individual circumstances of each case. In deciding whether to designate a site or place or amend an existing designation while there are ongoing development proposals, we will consider:
  - the implications of designation on development proposals;
  - the effect of the proposed development on the significance of the site or place; and
  - the extent to which plans have been developed for the site or place – where these are particularly advanced, we will not normally list or schedule.

Our policy also refers to BPNs.

- In urgent cases, planning authorities may consider serving a Building Preservation Notice (BPN) if it appears to them that a building is of special architectural or historic interest and is in danger of demolition or alteration which would affect its character. This is a form of temporary listing. Once a BPN has been served we have six months to assess the building for listing. We may list a building in these circumstances even if there are development proposals at an advanced stage.



In this case, we have decided to proceed with an assessment of the site and a proposal to designate while there are designation proposals affecting the site.

## 4.1 Consultation information

Consultation period: 07/03/2024 to 28/03/2024.

We have consulted directly with the: owners and the planning authority.

The consultation report of handling is published on our portal for comment from interested parties.

## 4.2 Designation consultations

### *Comments we consider*

We will consider comments and representations which are material to our decision-making, such as:

- Information about of the cultural significance of the site or place and whether it meets the criteria for designation.
- The purpose and implications of designating the site or place. We consider whether these are relevant to the case.
- Development proposals related to the site or place. Where there are development proposals, we consider whether to proceed with designation in line with our designation policy.
- The accuracy of our information.

### *Comments we don't consider*

We do not consider comments and representations on non-relevant/non-material issues, such as:

- Economic considerations
- Abusive or offensive remarks
- Whether you personally like, or do not like, a proposal

Our video about consultations explains how you can comment on our designations decisions, and what we can and can't take into account when considering your views. <https://youtu.be/ZlqU51tRA6g>.

## 4.3 Consultation summary

N/A

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# Designation consultation



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## ANNEX A

### Assessment of special architectural or historic interest

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#### 1. Statutory address

124 Balmore Road, Possilpark, Glasgow (Formerly Mecca Cinema / Vogue Cinema)

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#### 2. Description and historical development

##### 2.1 Description

Former 'super cinema' designed in a modern-classical style by architects John McKissack and Son (James McKissack) in 1932 and opened 1933. The building is a large, symmetrical, three-storey, wide rectangular plan purpose-built cinema with a stepped front elevation and pitched and piended roof auditorium to the rear.

The principal elevation has a central three-bay pilastered and architraved section of painted red sandstone over an 11-bay single storey ground floor block with painted tiles with painted sandstone blocking course. The entrance block is set forward from the stepped gabled and rendered auditorium which has stepped painted banding.

The side and rear elevations are rendered brick with roof pitch frame extending to ground to the south. The rear elevation has a boxed section protruding at mid height (the horn chambers). There is a large gap in the west elevation where demolition had begun (2024).

The roof is pitched (piended to the rear) and was formerly clad in corrugated asbestos sheets. These have been removed exposing the roof trusses. (2024).

The interior has been stripped out to the bare walls retaining the proscenium frame and steel framing of the balcony. The entrance section appears to have been refurbished for use as a retail unit. The rooms to the east of the plan were formerly used as the cinema offices and toilets.

##### 2.2 Historical development

The building is first shown on the Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1938, published 1946). It was designed as "The Mecca" cinema by John McKissack and Son to hold 1600 patrons and it opened on March 16 August 1933. A newspaper article from the following week recorded its opening under the management of George Smith and James Welsh (who were also Glasgow Corporation councillors) and was intended to serve the new municipal housing estate (*The Era*; Cinema Treasures; Peter, *Scotland's Cinemas*).



The Dean of Guild Court plans show that the building was commissioned by W H Martin and others, and it is thought that others included Smith and Welsh. (See Section 8).

In 1950 the cinema was taken over by George Singleton Cinemas Ltd. and renamed the Vogue Cinema.

The building ceased to trade as a cinema and in April 1968 was converted to a commercial bingo hall. The bingo hall closed in the 1990s and the auditorium has not been in use since this date. The entrance section of the ground floor was used as a retail premises until around 2021.

In 2005, the entrance canopy was removed (Scottish Cinemas).

There are currently no surviving interior fixtures and fittings to the auditorium. All that remains of the interior is the steel framing. Asbestos roofing was removed and there has been partial removal of exterior walls to the west (2024).

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### 3. Assessment of special architectural or historic interest

To be listed a building must be of 'special architectural or historic interest' as set out in the [Planning \(Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas\) \(Scotland\) Act 1997](#). To decide if a building is of special interest for listing we assess its cultural significance using selection guidance which has two main headings – architectural interest and historic interest (see Designation Policy and Selection Guidance, 2019, Annex 2, pp. 11-13).

The selection guidance provides a framework within which judgement is exercised in reaching individual decisions. The special architectural or historic interest of a building can be demonstrated in one or more of the following ways.

#### 3.1 Architectural interest

The architectural interest of a building may include its design, designer, interior, plan form, materials, regional traditions, and setting and the extent to which these characteristics survive. These factors are grouped under two headings:

##### 3.1.1 Design

The prevailing design for cinemas in Scotland during the 1930s was of classical inspiration with a mixture of classical motifs, such as columns or pilasters, largely pared back and including touches of modern architectural detailing, such as flat roofed canopies, horizontal string courses and innovative coloured lighting schemes. The main focus of the design was normally reserved for the entrance elevation with the sides and rear remaining blank and void of any architectural pretension.





The design of the former Mecca cinema is notable as a surviving example of a modern-classical cinema design, typical of its date, which remains largely unaltered to the exterior. The front elevation, built of dressed and carved stone (now overpainted) is of some quality with a distinctive pilastered and stepped centrepiece.

The association with the designer is of special interest in relation to the building's design. The architect James McKissack (1875–1940) attended the Glasgow School of Art and was apprenticed to his father John's practice which became McKissack and Son in 1900 when he became a partner. From his father's death in 1915, the architect specialised almost exclusively in cinema work producing commissions exclusively for Smith and Welsh and for one of the foremost film exhibitors in Scotland, George Singleton, more famously known as 'Mr Cosmo'. McKissack is recognised as one of Scotland's leading cinema designers (see McKean, p.63) and is praised along with some of his Scottish contemporaries in producing exceptional designs which are characterised by the variety in their style. McKissack's designed around 30 purpose-built cinemas across Scotland and rebuilt or adapted around another ten cinema sites. Several of his buildings are recognised through listing. Notable works include the category B listed former Riddrie Picture House 51104 and the most well-known, 'The Cosmo' (now the Glasgow Film Theatre) (LB33118), which is also category B listed.

### 3.1.2 Setting

Most large suburban cinemas of the period were designed with elaborate front entrance elevations prominent in the streetscapes in order to advertise the cinema. The Mecca cinema was a striking addition to the newly planned municipal housing area at Possilpark and was originally also set adjacent to the historic Saracen Foundry site (demolished in 1967) where many of its customers would have worked. Now largely isolated in its location at a major road junction and a later 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial park, the massing and profile of the principal elevation and the bulk of the auditorium acts as an architectural landmark in its setting. Some of the contemporary 1930s housing still survives as does the single storey interwar period row of shops to its north.

The building's location within this part of north Glasgow is connected to area's historical association with the local industry but is also notable for being conceived, through the patronage of corporation councillors, as a necessary facility, along with schools and churches in the interwar municipal housing scheme.

Glasgow boasted close to a hundred cinemas in the 1930s and could claim to have the largest number of cinema seats in Europe per head of population (Cinema Memory and Digital Archive).

### 3.2 Historic interest



Historic interest is in such things as a building's age, rarity, social historical interest and associations with people or events that have had a significant impact on Scotland's cultural heritage. Historic interest is assessed under three headings:

### 3.2.1 Age and rarity

The first cinema showing in Scotland was understood to have been around 1896, and in the following years existing buildings, such as village halls, were often repurposed as 'cinemas' to show films. The Cinematographic Act of 1909 was brought in to regularise construction because of the high risk of fire in the projection rooms. Early purpose-built cinemas were often small scale such as the Cameo Cinema (listed at category B, LB47783) in Edinburgh built in 1914.

Following a pause during First World War film production and cinema construction developed rapidly in line with the increase in cinema interest. American film studios led the way in film production in the earlier 1920s, following the development of cinema sound and the 'talkies'. From the mid-1920s the studios built their own large 'super cinemas'. They were usually purpose built and had highly stylised entrances fronting a plain brick hall or auditorium. The earlier examples were classically detailed using marble and gilt, before the development of the 'Atmospheric' style in the late 1920s.

From the late 1920s large scale super cinemas were built in Scotland emulating the picture palaces in North America. They were built by film distributors such as Odeon, Gaumont or ABC who usually employed specialist architects to design their cinemas, with the projects often carried to completion by local architects. This was the case at the New Victoria Cinema (listed at category A, LB30028) on Clerk Street in Edinburgh, designed by William Trent but overseen by the Edinburgh architect James Jerdan. Independent cinemas were typically designed by local architects who followed the trends of super cinemas elsewhere in the country. This was the case at Balmore Road although McKissack was a more established cinema architect than many who carried out independent cinema designs.

The Mecca is representative of the expansion during the 1930s of the cinema building type into Scotland suburbs, with most of the major inner-urban sites having been first established in the previous decade. Suburban cinemas often had a different architectural approach because they could be developed on virgin sites to cater for larger audiences with commodious plan forms. These expansive, windowless elevations were not hidden from the street and provided opportunities for advertising.

Cinemas were a common building type across Scotland and all cities and most small towns usually had at least one. Of the thousands built, only a relatively small number now survive in their original form. The Mecca cinema is not rare within its building type, but it is exceptional for its survival. There are increasingly few purpose-built cinemas of this date, design quality and style which survive with such a level of detail to the main elevation.



## 3.2.2 Social historical interest

Social historical interest is the way a building contributes to our understanding of how people lived in the past, and how our social and economic history is shown in a building and/or in its setting.

From the first public screening of moving pictures in 1896, cinema quickly established itself as the most popular entertainment activity in Scotland which continued into the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Mecca cinema adds to our understanding of the impact of the interwar cinema boom on leisure in a suburban part of Glasgow. Its subsequent conversion to a bingo hall and continued use until 1990s adds to the social historic interest of the area.

There is special interest of the cinema's location in Possilpark and the social historical interest of this area of Glasgow because it illustrates the changing needs of new communities established in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

## 3.2.3 Association with people or events of national importance

There is no association of special interest with a person or event of national importance.

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## 4. Summary of assessment

The Mecca cinema meets the criteria of special architectural or historic interest for the following reasons:

- It is a rare survival of a 1930s cinema which retains its architecturally distinctive character to the main elevation.
- It is a notable example of the work of architect James McKissack, a foremost Scottish cinema designer of the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- The cinema is an architectural landmark in the streetscape and its wider setting in Possilpark.
- It is of social historical significance for the association with town planning, leisure, and industry in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## 5. Category of listing

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Once a building is found to be of special architectural or historic interest, it is then classified under one of three categories (A, B or C) according to its relative importance. While the listing itself has legal weight and gives statutory protection, the categories have no legal status and are advisory. They affect how a building is managed in the planning system.

Category definitions are found at Annex 2 of Designation Policy and Selection Guidance (2019) <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/designation-policy>.

## 5.1 Level of importance

The building's level of importance is category C.

Buildings listed at category C are defined as 'buildings of special architectural or historic interest which are representative examples of a period, style or type'.

Taking into account the loss of the building's interior, category C is considered to be the most appropriate level of listing.

## 7. Other Information

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N/A

## 8. References

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Canmore: <http://canmore.org.uk/> CANMORE ID 1451810 - <https://canmore.org.uk/collection/1451810> (Aerofilm 1947)

### Maps

Ordnance Survey (surveyed 1938, published ca. 1946). Lanarkshire Sheet VI.NW. Southampton: Ordnance Survey.

### Archives

Architectural plans of 'Proposed Picture House, Balmore Road, Possilpark for W H Martin and Others' (1932) Dean of Guild Court Records, Mitchell Library. 1932/266.

### Printed Sources

Gray. R. (2011) *Cinemas in Britain, A History of Cinema Architecture*. Surrey: Lund Humphries. p.159.

Historic Scotland (2009) *Spotlight on Scotland's Cinemas*. Edinburgh: Historic Scotland.



McKean, C. (1987) *The Scottish Thirties*. Glasgow, Bell and Bain. p. 63.

Peter, B. (1996) *100 Years of Glasgow's Amazing Cinemas*. Edinburgh: Polygon.

Peter, B. (2011) *Scotland's Cinemas*. Isle of Man: Lily Publications Ltd. pp.98, 100.

*The Builder*, 15 July 1932, p. 108

*The Builder*, 28 October 1932, p. 744

*The Era*, 23 August 1933, *Glasgow's New Cinema*, p15.

Williamson, E., Riches, A., Higgs, M. (1990) *Buildings of Scotland, Glasgow*. London: Penguin Books. p.418.

## Online Sources

Cinema Memory and the Digital Archive

[Glasgow – Cinema Memory and the Digital Archive \(lancaster.ac.uk\)](https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/projects/cmda/index.php/ccintb-places/glasgow/)

<https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/projects/cmda/index.php/ccintb-places/glasgow/>

[accessed 11/01/2024]

Cinema Treasures. <https://cinematreasures.org/theaters/50796> [accessed 11/01/2024]

Dictionary of Scottish Architects – James McKissack biographical entry

[https://scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect\\_full.php?id=200414](https://scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=200414) [accessed 11/01/2024]

Dictionary of Scottish Architects – Mecca Cinema building entry

[Dictionary of Scottish Architects - DSA Building/Design Report \(January 10, 2024, 2:55 pm\)](https://scottisharchitects.org.uk/building_full.php?id=214502)

[https://scottisharchitects.org.uk/building\\_full.php?id=214502](https://scottisharchitects.org.uk/building_full.php?id=214502) [accessed 11/01/2024]

National Library of Scotland – Moving Image Archive Catalogue – Biography of 'Singleton, George'.

<https://movingimage.nls.uk/biography/10031> [accessed 11/01/2024]

Scottish Cinemas and Theatres Project. Scottish Cinemas Database –

[http://www.scottishcinemas.org.uk/glasgow/include.php?file=mecca\\_possil.html](http://www.scottishcinemas.org.uk/glasgow/include.php?file=mecca_possil.html)

[accessed 11/01/2024].

## 9. Indicative Map

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A map of the proposed listed building is attached separately.