

ADDRESS

Brixton Markets - Reliance Arcade, Market Row & Granville Arcade (Brixton Village), BRIXTON

Parish BRIXTON
District LAMBETH
County GREATER LONDON

Case UID: 165754

Date First Listed:

Formerly Listed As:

RECOMMENDATION

Adviser: Ms D Keate

Outcome: No, do not list

Recommended Grade: NL

21-JUL-2008

Advice Text: After examining all the papers on this file and other relevant information and having carefully considered the architectural and historic interest of this case, the criteria for listing are not fulfilled.

CONTEXT

The three indoor markets at Brixton, Reliance Arcade, Market Row and Granville Arcade (known as 'Brixton Village') lie at the heart of Lambeth Council's planned regeneration programme: 'Future Brixton'. A plan commissioned by the Council in partnership with the London Development Agency has recently undergone public consultation. It includes the option of rebuilding the markets, and this has prompted this listing application. The markets are within the Brixton Conservation Area.

HISTORY

The modern shopping arcade, an indoor street lined with shops and covered with a glazed roof, appeared in late C18 Paris and was introduced to England by John Nash with the Royal Opera Arcade of 1817 (listed Grade I), closely followed by Samuel Ware's Burlington Arcade of 1818 (Grade II). This new concept of shopping was designed for a wealthy clientele, enabling them to browse exclusive shops away from crowded and dirty streets. In the mid century, cast-iron and glass construction enabled larger, more architecturally ambitious arcades to be built, now aimed at a broader range of affluent middle-class consumers. Usually designed by local architects, shopping arcades were built in significant numbers between 1875-1910 and featured in many provincial high streets nationally. Some were designed as a component of a larger development, of which the arcade entrance sometimes formed a grand centrepiece; others were ad hoc insertions between older buildings, a profitable means of exploiting long narrow plots of land. They varied from the very modest to the highly opulent, although they never quite aspired to the scale and grandiosity of some American and Continental examples. While there were variants in the plan form, they typically formed a corridor lined on each side with a single storey of shops, sometimes with an upper floor containing further commercial space. Some had tiered galleries leading to further shops, an impressive example being the Barton Arcade, Manchester of 1874 (Grade II*). After the Edwardian period, construction of shopping arcades declined in contrast to the rise of department stores. Relatively few arcades were built in the inter-war period, and after WWII the trend turned to large enclosed shopping centres. In recent years, however, shopping arcades have enjoyed something of a renaissance, for example the magnificent Cross Arcade, Leeds of 1898-1900 and Barton Arcade, Manchester.

The Reliance Arcade was built 1925-6 on the site of a large C19 house occupying a long plot of

land (bizarrely, the shell of the house was retained and straddles the centre of the arcade). Market Row was built c1928 to the design of RS Andrews and J Peascod. Granville Arcade, the last and largest of the three markets, was built 1935-8 to the design of Alfred and Vincent Burr and is named after the builder/developer, P Granville Grossman. It occupied the site of the Lambeth Carlton Club. The markets were refurbished in 1996, involving alterations to some of the façades.

There are no listed buildings attributed to the architects Andrews and Peascod. Alfred Burr was a respected architect who built a number of private houses. He designed the Government of Victoria Offices of 1907-9, part of Australia House, and 16 Gough Square, 1910-12, built for the curator of Dr Johnson's house which Burr restored, both listed Grade II.

DESCRIPTION

Reliance Arcade is a straight, narrow arcade running east-west from Electric Lane to Brixton Road, bisecting an architecturally-unrelated block of mainly inter-war buildings. The west elevation is of two storeys, the upper floor rendered with brightly-coloured modern signage. The ground floor entrance has a modern frontage with metal roller shutters. The east entrance façade is in buff faience with coloured Art Deco Egyptian-style detailing in the small columns to the upper-floor window and a coved cornice. There is an original sign above the entrance. The faience surround to the entrance has been painted and the two small flanking shop windows blocked. The roof is pitched, carried on simple curved steel arches; the glazing has been replaced. The interior is lined with mainly open-fronted shops.

Market Row occupies an infill site between the buildings on Electric Avenue to the north, Atlantic Road to the east, Coldharbour Lane to the south and Electric Lane to the west. There are three entrances and the arcades form a broad T-plan. The east and west entrances were originally similar, of two storeys and three bays with a shop to either side of the entrance, with a Diocletian window and oculus above, with small semi-circular windows to either side. The glazing has been infilled and the shop fronts replaced to the east; the west entrance has been heavily altered. Photographs indicate that the parapets have been raised. The south entrance is rendered, again of two storeys and three bays; the parapet may have been altered. Here, the neo-classical idiom of the other two entrances is not repeated (this may be due to alterations); there is horizontal glazing to the upper floor in the moderne style but the glazing looks replaced. The curved glazed canopies and ceramic roundels to each entrance date from the 1996 refurbishment. Inside, the pitched glazed roofs are carried on reinforced concrete open-arched trusses with roundels. The interior has shops on the ground floor, some enclosed with shop fronts, others open fronted with roller blinds. The upper floor contains offices. Some shop fronts retains original elements but are generally much altered.

Granville Arcade, now called Brixton Village, occupies a trapezoidal plot between Coldharbour Lane to the south, the railway viaducts to the north and west, and the 1904 steam laundry to the east. The twin main entrances to the south form an integral part of a four-storey block of flats with ground-floor shops: Granville House. This is faced in brown brick and render, of seven bays, with moderne fluted detailing to the narrow central bay. The ground-floor shop fronts have been replaced. The entrances have large, flat, slightly stepped arches, with full-height shallow canted bay windows above. From the entrances runs a pair of long arcades (First and Second Avenues) which diverge to fit the site, joined laterally by four more arcades of increasing lengths (Third, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Avenues) creating a ladder-like plan. There is a western entrance under the viaduct in Atlantic Road but this has no architectural treatment, and a further one to the north with a simple square arch. The arcades have pitched glazed roofs carried on curved steel trusses. The interior has shops on the ground floor, some enclosed with shop fronts, others open fronted

with roller blinds. The upper floor contains offices. Some shop fronts retain original elements but are generally much altered.

ASSESSMENT

Pre-1840 shopping arcades are rare; there are only five surviving examples nationally, all of which are listed. Most surviving arcades post-date 1870, and will be assessed according to their architectural quality, expressed through the treatment of the entrances, roof structure, decorative features and original shop fronts. Where arcades form an integral part of a larger design, the interest of the composition as a whole will also be considered.

There are 48 listed indoor shopping arcades in England, of which the majority were built between 1880-1910 when construction reached its zenith. The principal published sources for this building type are Margaret MacKeith's 'Shopping Arcades 1817-1939: a Gazetteer of Extant British Arcades' (1985) and 'The History and Conservation of Shopping Arcades' (1986). The former identifies 100 surviving arcades in Britain (although some of these may have since gone, and a few were overlooked). Twenty-one date from the inter-war period, and of these four are listed Grade II: The Avenue, Bridgwater which was built into an C18 frontage and retains its shops; The Quadrant Arcade, Regent Street (1921) and Prince's Arcade, Piccadilly (1930-33), both inserted into existing buildings, were the last of the West End arcades, continuing the tradition of exclusive shopping; and The Council House Arcade, Nottingham (1928) forms part of a grand neo-Baroque civic and commercial block. MacKeith notes that shopping arcades built after 1910 were insignificant with the exception of the Nottingham example above, and comments that 'they were a means of using "back land" sites in the cheapest possible manner and architecturally they were critically unworthy of notice'.

The Reliance Arcade's main claim to architectural interest is the east entrance. The Egyptian style became popular in the wake of the Tutankhamun discoveries and the Paris Exhibition of 1925, most flamboyantly in the multi-coloured 'Hollywood Egyptian' cinemas after Grauman's famous cinema in Hollywood of which the most notable (but not the only) surviving example here is the richly-ornamented former Carlton Cinema, Islington of 1930, listed Grade II*. However, it was also popular in Britain for commercial buildings, sometimes on a monumental scale such as the black-granite clad Palladium House in Argyll Street (1928-9), and there are numerous listed examples. While a pleasing incident in the streetscape, and very probably the only example of a shopping arcade entrance in this style, this diminutive building is of only modest quality. Here, the specifically Egyptian motifs are confined to two columns and coving; the rest is standard. It would therefore be unrealistic to compare its significance to that of the former Carlton Cinema, Islington, or to listed examples of commercial buildings in this style. Otherwise, the Reliance Arcade has very little to distinguish itself from other inter-war shopping arcades; the roof structure is of a standard, utilitarian design, there are no shop fronts of interest, and the west entrance has been adversely altered.

The entrances to Market Row have been much altered, but it is evident that they were only ever of limited architectural quality. Inside, the arched concrete roof trusses are an attractive feature but are not of special interest in engineering terms; again, there are no shop fronts of interest.

The Granville Arcade is the only one which was designed as part of a larger composition, but the entrance building, Granville House, is an undistinguished example of 1930s design. Internally, it is light and spacious and there is some interest for the market's 'avenue' plan, a pragmatic response to the site, but is otherwise a series of conventional arcades and shops which are much altered.

While listing is not recommended, the Brixton markets have considerable local interest as a characterful ensemble of shopping arcades which continue to serve a valued community function. With the exception of the east entrance to Reliance Arcade, their entrances are undistinguished, and in some cases much altered. With their arched roofs, Market Row and Granville arcades are pleasing spaces internally. Much of their character is derived from the mix of activities that take place, but that is an issue to be considered under area regeneration initiatives, not the statutory designation process. The criteria for listing are special architectural or historic interest in a national context, and those criteria are not met. Essentially, these are late examples of a widespread building type which had run its course in terms of architectural endeavour; they do not express anything new in terms of their construction or design, and there are no historical associations of national significance.

Conclusion: The three Brixton markets, Reliance Arcade, Market Row and Granville Arcade (Brixton Village), do not meet the criteria for inclusion in the statutory list.

Reasons For Designation Decision:

Reliance Arcade, Market Row and Granville Arcade (Brixton Village) are not recommended for designation for the following principal reasons:

- * While of considerable local interest, they are late and architecturally undistinguished examples of shopping arcades, and have undergone numerous alterations
- * While the east entrance to the Reliance Arcade has interest for its Egyptian detailing, an unusual feature in a shopping arcade, this is of modest quality and is not sufficient to over-ride the building's overall lack of architectural quality

VISITS

22-APR-2008 Partial Inspection

Access not gained to upper floor units.

COUNTERSIGNING

First Countersigning Adviser: Ms E Gee

Comments: Agreed. These markets are vibrant commercial and cultural institutions in Brixton that show a clever but typical response to urban infill for commerce. The Egyptian-inspired facade of the Reliance Arcade is the most notable architecturally, and is a charming response to the vogue for Egyptian detailing in this period. But none is architecturally, technologically or commercially special in a national context and we are not recommending listing. 25.07.08

Second Countersigning Adviser:

Comments:

HP Director:

Comments:

Proposed List Entry

Brixton Markets - Reliance Arcade, Market Row & Granville Arcade (Brixton Village)

NL

Case UID: 165754

Proposed LBS UID: 504957