

## ADDRESS

BBC Television Centre, including the main circular range excluding the spur,  
the original scenery block and the former canteen, WOOD LANE,  
HAMMERSMITH

Parish HAMMERSMITH  
District HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM  
County GREATER LONDON

Case UID: 163253

Date First Listed:

Formerly Listed As:

## RECOMMENDATION

Adviser: Ms E Gee

Outcome: Yes, list

Recommended Grade: II

17-JUN-2009

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 fulfilled.

Following the DCMS decision to list a smaller part of the complex than we recommended, we have amended the list description to include the central ring of the building and Studio 1. The revised list description is appended to this advice. The DCMS decision letter is included below:

"PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990  
BUILDINGS OF SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST  
BBC TELEVISION CENTRE, INCLUDING THE MAIN CIRCULAR RANGE EXCLUDING THE  
SPUR, THE ORIGINAL SCENERY BLOCK AND THE FORMER CANTEEN, WOOD LANE,  
HAMMERSMITH, LONDON

With reference to the English Heritage adviser's report dated 25 February 2008 (with proposed amendments to the list entry dated 26 November 2008) regarding the request that the above building be considered for inclusion in the statutory list, I am now in a position to advise you of the Secretary of State's decision.

The Secretary of State has now completed his consideration of all the evidence, including taking into account advice from English Heritage, CABE and representations by others, and has decided to list the BBC Television Centre at Grade II. The Secretary of State considers that the central ring and studio 1 are of sufficient architectural or historic interest to merit listing. The Secretary of State is not persuaded that the other studios, the scenery block or the canteen are of special interest but he considers that it would be difficult to exclude these buildings from the listing given their structural attachment to the central ring and studio 1. The Secretary of State has therefore asked that the list entry should make clear that the studios, apart from studio 1, the scenery block and the canteen are not considered to be of special interest.

The Secretary of State considers that that the central ring and studio 1 merit listing both in terms of their architectural special interest and their historic special interest, as the first purpose built broadcasting studios in the country, built for and used by the nation's main television broadcaster. In relation to the central ring, he has noted in particular the entrance hall with its John Piper mosaic; the central drum with its mosaic tiles; the Huxley-Jones gilded sculpture of Helios; and the full-height glazing of the stair and original clock. The Secretary of State has noted that studio 1

features the well-known atomic dots and the name of the building, as well as a cantilevered porch on its exterior. He has further noted that studio 1 forms part of the main view of the BBC Television Centre complex from Wood Lane. The Secretary of State does not consider that studio 1 is of interest internally.

Having considered all the evidence, the Secretary of State is not persuaded that the other studios are of sufficient interest to merit listing. He has noted English Heritage's view that the studio block is integral to the functional history of Television Centre, and that it has some architectural interest in terms of its external design. However, while the Secretary of State accepts that the other studios are of some interest, he considers that the repeated and extensive modifications that have taken place since these buildings were built have diminished much of the architectural and historic interest they once possessed. The Secretary of State considers that the list entry should make clear that the studios, apart from studio 1, are not considered to be of special interest.

The Secretary of State is also not persuaded that the scenery block is of sufficient interest to merit listing. He has noted English Heritage's advice that the scenery block is of special historic interest for the key role it played in the development of Television Centre, as well as of some architectural quality for the curved frontage with diaperwork, and the barrel-vaulted roof. The Secretary of State considers that any architectural interest is very limited. As the first building to be constructed on the Television Centre site, the Secretary of State accepts that the scenery block has a degree of historic interest, however, he does not consider that this amounts to special historic interest. He considers that nothing in the building itself illustrates its association with Television Centre or with broadcasting. Its layout and construction are generic and give no clue as to its history or original purpose. Furthermore, the building has been heavily and permanently altered, which has further compromised such interest as remains. The Secretary of State considers that the list entry should make clear that the scenery block is not considered to be of special interest.

The Secretary of State has noted English Heritage's advice that the canteen is a good period design, a significant part of the Television Centre site and also of historic interest. However, he is not persuaded that the canteen is of sufficient interest to merit listing. He considers that any architectural interest is very limited. Furthermore he considers that any historic interest is diminished by both by the fact that the canteen does not directly illustrate its association with the story of Television Centre or broadcasting, and by the extent of the alterations that have taken place. The Secretary of State considers that the list entry should make clear that the canteen is not considered to be of special interest.

I should be grateful if you would suggest amendments to the list entry to reflect the Secretary of State's decision as set out above. Once these have been agreed between us, we will add the BBC Television Centre to the list at Grade II."

Conclusion:

VISITS

COUNTERSIGNING

First Countersigning Adviser:

Comments:

Second Countersigning Adviser:

Comments:

HP Director:

Comments:

Proposed List Entry

WOOD LANE

White City

BBC Television Centre, including the main circular range excluding the spur, the original scenery block and the former canteen

II

Case UID: 163253

Proposed LBS UID: 502981

Central ring and Studio 1 of this purpose-built television studio complex. Graham Dawbarn of Norman & Dawbarn; Partner in Charge Walton H. Lindsay. Planned from 1950; Central ring built 1955-60. Contemporary style. Other sections of the complex are not of special interest: the outer ring of studios, the scenery block of 1953-54; the canteen of 1954-55, the completed spur of 1964, 1978, 1983-8 and 1995-8, and the east tower to the southeast of the site.

**MATERIALS:** Steel frame with brick cladding and areas of curtain walling, in-filled with glass, opaque panels and tiling, and mosaic cladding.

**PLAN:** The listed area comprises the circular drum at the centre of what is broadly a 'question mark', although the attached outer ring of studios and the later spur are not of special interest, and the square Studio 1 to the east.

**EXTERIOR:** The distinctive drum, affectionately known as 'the doughnut', forms the core of the complex, and the area of special interest. It features a curved glazed quadrant to Wood Lane, raised on a two-storey colonnade of pilotis, and flanked by brick walls that continue the curve to each side. The windows at second to sixth floor here, and those from first floor and above fully lining the inside of the drum, are square metal casements surrounded with opaque spandrels or mirrored fixed lights. The pilotis are faced with a random mosaic of black, grey and white rectangular tiles. Lower and to the left is the predominant Studio 1, its front elevation a blind brick wall with a distinctive pattern of 26 white atom-like discs; the lettering above, which announces this as the BBC Television Centre, is a recent replacement; the entrance has a flat cantilevered canopy which has been glazed-in latterly. Through the colonnade is the circular courtyard of the drum which features a sculpture of Helios by T.B. Huxley-Jones, this a gilded muscular figure set on a slightly tapered column that rises through a shallow bowl set on four legs; the fountain is now filled with skylights for the offices below. The drum features eight storeys of offices and studios. To the south is a glazed and advanced full-height entrance tower with the distinctive cantilevered staircase visible through the tall window. The lower level of the courtyard wall is faced with a mosaic of sea green tiles with a stepped pattern picked out in red tiles. To the north is the main entrance hall and to the right of this is the full-height glazing of the eight-storey stair tower with original clock culminating in the circular glazed plant enclosure on the roof. Extending to the right of the ceremonial front are the successive phases of the later spur development (with clear divisions in the brickwork) and not of special interest. Projecting to the rear of the drum are two short but full-height office spurs with grey and blue chequer tile banding. The central ring is otherwise wrapped by a lower ring of studios and a taller wedge-shaped office block, these identified externally by square hopper windows in concrete surrounds that punctuate the sinuous brick wall; this ring (other than Studio 1) is not of special interest.

**INTERIOR:** The interior has been much modernised, however there some features of special interest, which are identified here. The stair tower to the south features a concrete cantilevered dog-leg staircase with polished timber handrail and blocky lettering to identify each floor in the linoleum. The main entrance hall features a dazzling, abstract, multi-coloured John Piper mural executed in mosaic by Dennis M. Williams; a wall of vertical timber boarding to full height with mezzanine balcony; and a lattice grid ceiling. The interior of Studio 1, and indeed the other seven studios attached to the outside of the drum, is much modernised and very little original fabric survives; these interiors are not of special interest. Other interior spaces such as offices and the modern canteen are also modern and not of special interest.

**HISTORY:** In 1936, the British Broadcasting Corporation made the first regular television broadcasts in the world from studios at Alexandra Palace. The success of the pre-war experiments showed that purpose-built studios were needed, but it was only in 1949 that the BBC acquired 13 acres on the site of the Franco-British Exhibition at Shepherd's Bush. The architect for the site was Graham Dawbarn, known for his airport termini designs such as Brooklands in Surrey, Ringway in Manchester and Elmdon, Birmingham. A large design team was involved in the design and construction of the Television Centre, led by the Partner-in-Charge, Walton H. Lindsay, but the envelope on which the original design was sketched in December 1949 was Dawbarn's own.

This plan was designed to be as compact as was possible for such a large undertaking, yet capable of

extension. It had also to be built in phases, and in this and its centrifugal arrangement it resembles Heathrow (a project for which Dawbarn had submitted a proposal and was passed over in favour of Frederick Gibberd) and the new universities of the 1960s. Dawbarn's sketch of December 1949 showed a hollow drum of offices ringed by studios, linked by a circular corridor on their outer face to a single scenery block and canteen. Artists, administrators, technical operations and scenery thus followed separate flow diagrams, kept apart except for on the studio floor. A colonnade shielded the entrance from Wood Lane, and the audience entrance to the largest studio.

Government restrictions on building through its loan sanction and licensing of materials ensured that building, begun in 1950, was then halted until 1953. Instead the BBC remodelled the former Gaumont Studios at Lime Grove, the Riverside Studios and (later) Shepherd's Bush Theatre. When work resumed at White City in 1953 it was on the peripheral scenery block, completed with offices as well as workshops so that it could function as an independent unit until the main building was completed. Work then began in 1954 on another peripheral building, the original canteen, which doubled as a rehearsal space. Work on the central offices and studios began in March 1955, and the main (third) phase was completed in 1960. When built, it was the largest television studios in Europe. The Italian sunken garden in the Blue Peter Garden was designed by Percy Thrower (1913-88) in 1978 and re-sited above this is the bronze head of Petra the dog, d.1977. The spur was completed between 1967 (TC8) and 1969 (News studios), and more studios were added in 1978, 1983-8, and in 1995-8.

#### SOURCES

'BBC Television Centre Scenery Block, White City, Wood Lane' RIBA Journal (September 1954) pp. 447-51.

'Second Television Building, White City' The Architects' Journal (6 Oct. 1955) p.451.

'BBC Television Centre, White City' The Architects' Journal (23 June 1960) pp.957-961.

'BBC Television Centre, Wood Lane' The Builder (15 July 1960) pp.98-103.

BBC publication (2003), 'A Return to Form'.

Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner (1991), 'The Buildings of England London 3: North West', p.225.

#### REASONS FOR DESIGNATION

The central ring and Studio 1 of the BBC Television Centre is designated for the following principal reasons:

- \* It has special historic interest as the country's first purpose-built studio complex devoted to television (in which Britain had a pioneering role), built for, and still used by, the nation's main television broadcaster;
- \* Designed in the Contemporary style, the distinctive circular drum has a strong period feel, good detailing and a celebrated facade featuring the façade of Studio 1, with its atomic discs and the curved curtain wall on pilotis;
- \* The central ring contains art of special interest such as the sculpture of Helios by T.B. Huxley-Jones, and the vibrant John Piper mosaic mural in the entrance hall;
- \* This large and busy site has been much expanded and the special interest is confined to the central ring of the main building and Studio 1, excluding the seven peripheral studios and the interior of Studio 1, the scenery block, the canteen and the later extended spur.