

70-72 LA COLOMBERIE, ST HELIER, JERSEY

Report in response to an objection to the proposed Listing (grade 4)

Background

In January 2015, an appeal was submitted by MS Planning, on behalf of the owner, against the proposed listing (grade 4) of 70-72 La Colomberie (Colomberie Coach Station). Consequently, Jersey Heritage commissioned me to write a report on the value of the proposed listing, as I had undertaken the resurvey assessment of the building in January 2013.

I am a qualified architect and have worked on a broad range of new-build and refurbishment projects in London and Ireland. I graduated from Edinburgh University in 1981 (MA Arch) and returned to York University, Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies in 1990 to obtain an MA. Over the last ten years my work has focused on heritage - its protection and regeneration. Between 2010 and 2013 I was involved in the Historic Environment Resurvey of Jersey where I gained a detailed knowledge of the built environment across the Island. I have also undertaken listed building survey work for the Second Survey of Historic Buildings in N. Ireland. Since 2009 I have been a member of the statutory Historic Buildings Council of N. Ireland advising on the listing of buildings.

Colomberie Coach Station

Colomberie Coach Station sits on the south side of La Colomberie within an area of 1950s development including Colomberie Parade opposite. Blue Coach Tours originally operated their business from the building which is now functioning as commercial showrooms.

It is proposed as a listed building (grade 4) which is defined in Jersey's Minister for Planning and Environment's "Criteria for the listing and grading of heritage assets" as: 'Buildings and places of special public and heritage interest to Jersey, being good examples of a particular historical period, architectural style or building type; but defined particularly for their exterior characteristics and contribution to townscape, landscape or group value'.

Under this category it is recognised that buildings may not have well preserved interiors; that the exterior, while retaining its general characteristics and proportions, may be altered¹.

Colomberie Coach Station was considered and proposed for protection as part of an evaluation of Post-War buildings in Jersey in 2013, as part of the Historic Environment Resurvey overseen by Jersey Heritage.

The proposals for listing Post-War buildings were preceded by a thematic study of Jersey's post-war architectural heritage. The study included a review of a number of previous reports on various aspects of 20th century architecture in Jersey, published literature on this period and building reviews that had been published, consultation with the Ministerial Listing Advisory Group and the Association of Jersey Architects, and interviews with a

¹ Jersey Historic Environment Resurvey: Survey Guide

number of architects who were practicing in Jersey during this period. The team were closely advised by Elaine Harwood of English Heritage (now Historic England). The study took an overview considering building types, architectural style and integrity, rarity and historical importance. The significances of each building were identified within both the context of Jersey and the wider view of the UK. An exhaustive list of Post-War buildings in Jersey was drawn up and a careful comparative assessment made before recommendations for listing were put forward.

Listing Post-war Buildings

The evaluation of buildings for protection is a continual process. The significances of buildings change over time as their architectural and historical values are considered from perspectives where the surrounding environment; design theory and aesthetics; or social activities and attitudes are constantly changing. A seemingly ordinary building may become special as it remains the only example of its type in an area of extensive development, or it reflects a period of activity from which society has now progressed beyond. "Experience has shown that listing has to be one step ahead of fashion ..." ² to prevent the destruction of buildings of significance, especially in the case of post-war buildings where less time has allowed their true value to be recognised.

Within the requirements of special architectural and historical interest, it is recognised that an overview should be taken. Recognising the pressure on the environment and built heritage from ever-changing transport and communications, Historic England has carried out research to understand the character and significance of this heritage. It states that "transport networks are important agents for change within the historic environment and also have their own heritage" ³.

Further research by Historic England produced a thematic study of transport buildings which identifies the significances of such building types ⁴. It states that in addition to assessing each building's intrinsic value in relation to the transport system it relates to and the period in which it is built, in the case of transport buildings of the 20th century particular challenges occur in consideration for listing. The intended short operational life of many transport buildings may be a factor for consideration, alterations due to changing requirements may impact on the buildings significance, and the huge numbers of many structures such as multi-storey car parks of poor architectural quality may hide the special character of the few.

Transport Buildings in the UK

The relationship between social and economic activities and the environment is well illustrated by transport systems and their buildings e.g. the canal systems made the Industrial Revolution possible and the railways sustained it; air terminals expressed a 'brave new world' in their Modernist buildings while cars democratised travel.

Aside from the canal and railway systems the English listings illustrate the development of road travel from early toll houses in the 18th century, through horse stabling for horse-drawn trams to petrol filling stations and bus stations.

² Harwood, E. (2003) *England: A Guide to Post-War Listed Buildings*. Batsford, London.

³ Historic England, Transport and Communications NHPP 4B3

⁴ Historic England, Designation Listing Selection Guide.

There was a marked growth of the national road network in the 1920s and again in the 1950s when motorways were introduced. In the 1920s objection to the spoiling of the countryside by the new petrol filling stations led to individual, vernacular interpretation of the buildings (e.g. Clovelly Cross, Devon. Grade II). From the 1950s the oil companies purchased increasing numbers of petrol stations and incorporated company logos and standard designs resulting in the loss of the unique character of independent traders.

Historic England's 'Car Project' identified how our environment has been radically changed with car use, how the historic environment has adapted to larger roads and extensive car parking and the significances of the new associated building types that have been created to service cars - filling stations, garages and showrooms. The proliferation of motor transport means that the significance of the associated buildings is often taken for granted and, therefore, vulnerable to change and demolition.



Clovelly Cross filling station



Stockwell bus garage

Many public transport bus depots and garages evolved from earlier tram depots but new buildings often combined offices and parking areas sometimes showing innovative technological construction and architectural distinction (e.g. Stockwell in London, 1951-54, listed Grade II*). In the 1970s 'megastructures' were favoured such as car parks incorporated with shopping centres, leisure facilities and public transport (e.g. Preston Central Bus Station and Car Park, 1969, listed Grade II). These protected transport buildings in the UK generally reflect the needs of the large urban populations and the extensive transport systems needed to support them.



Preston Bus Station

Transport Buildings in Jersey

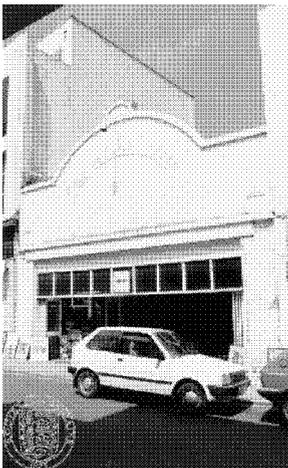
On the small island of Jersey the transport systems and their buildings are of a much more modest scale. Nonetheless, transportation, in all its forms, has made a significant impact on the environment, it has contributed valued buildings and bears witness to the island's changing history.

The first train ran on Jersey in 1870 between St. Helier and St. Aubin. The line was extended to La Corbiere and operated for the public in 1884. By 1928 buses and private cars threatened the future of the railway and this, coupled with a disastrous fire destroying the railway's rolling stock, forced the end of the railway in 1936. Jersey Eastern Railway opened in 1873 running between St. Helier and Grouville, and extended to Gorey in 1891. In 1923 the Jersey Motor Transport Company started a bus service across the island. The competition led to Jersey Eastern Railway operating its own bus service in 1926 but with little success and both its bus and train services closed in 1929.

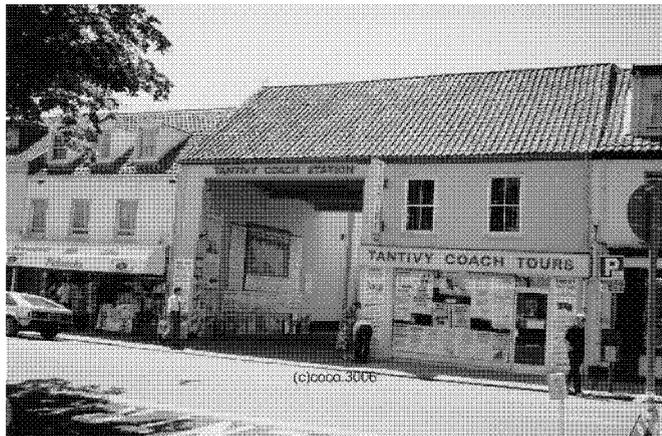
Stations along the length of each railway have survived; most have been converted to dwellings but are recognised as part of Jersey's transport heritage as potential / listed buildings.

Following a long tradition of horse-drawn buses on the island, dating back to 1788, motorised buses became established after transport restrictions during the First World War. Although a profusion of bus operators grew during the 1920s as bus travel gained momentum, by 1960 no independent operators could compete with the Jersey Motor Transport Company. Some of the independent companies, such as Tantivy, went on to concentrate their business on coach operations.

Few buildings remain as a record of this important aspect of island life. Le Sueur Coach Tours' 1931 garage with its simple facade remains in La Motte Street and Tantivy's garage still operate from an adapted historic building on The Parade. La Colomberie Coach Station is a significant extant example of a coach tour operator's combined garage, offices and public ticket office built in the post-war period when such business was instrumental in the island's developing tourism industry.



P. Le Sueur Ltd, La Motte St.



Tantivy Coach Station, The Parade

With the growing importance of the motorcar between the wars, several fine garages were built in a streamline modern style during the 1920s and '30s, both for parking and repair services such as First Tower Service Station, La Route de St. Aubin which is listed Grade 2 (HE1435). Peter Smith in his report on 20th century buildings in Jersey described it as

“a remarkable example of Art Deco style transport architecture, extremely well preserved. A great rarity, it would definitely be listable on the mainland”.



First Tower Service Station

This Grade 2 building stands out as a building of exception within the context of the UK as well as Jersey. However, the buildings on Jersey also need to be considered in their local context. The transport systems and their buildings illustrate the unique economic development and social history of the island.

Significance of La Colomberie Coach Station

Architectural Interest

The early Modern Movement influence in Jersey is mixed as seen in the difference between Les Lumieres, St. Brelade which is pure International Style and the former Art Deco Burton's building in King Street, both being built in 1932. There was limited building activity in the 1950s when, in Jersey, stylistic influences often remained historic e.g. F. Le Gallais and Sons (Listed Grade 3) with the exception of the Odeon Cinema (Listed Building Grade 1). The cinema developed the modern style adopted by Rank with its gentle curves, horizontal banding and minimal, integral decoration.

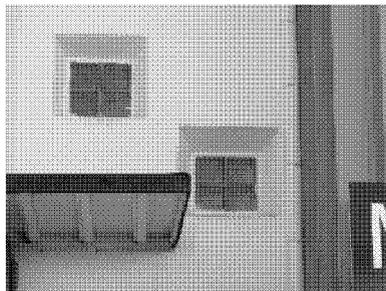
Colomberie Coach Station is located in an area of 1950s development. The buildings on La Colomberie confidently express the new modern era, departing from the old idioms of the neighbouring buildings. The architecture of the Coach Station complements Colomberie Parade opposite in its post-war Scandinavian influence. Elements are found in common with the Odeon cinema - the curves, horizontal bands and smaller square openings.

Other examples of 1950s buildings, mentioned in the appeal, are listed in Appendix A. These buildings either do not stand out as of special architectural interest or have suffered too much change to be considered for listing.



The coach station is made up of three sections of building. The rear section is of two structural bays, previously housing the coaches, now glazed in and used for commercial showrooms. The horizontal treatment of the upper storey, with a band of fenestration within lightweight paneling and small square windows punctuating solid masonry, is well proportioned and expresses 'form follows function' of the Modern Movement. The curved, rendered, ticket office also has pleasing proportions and echoes the rear building in its profiled paneling, horizontal band of windows and projecting thin canopy. The stairway section is the weakest part of the composition. It continues the square punctuations, this time with glass blocks which were a popular material of the time; however, the stepped, vertical window with heavy timber section is clumsy in relation to the adjacent planes and the lightweight steel windows. Although the various parts of the building are handled differently in detail the distinct volumes work together within the forecourt, visually connected by distinctive overhanging eaves to flat roofs.

The architecture of the coach station is not a 'High' architecture like Les Lumieres, St. Brelade or a grand statement like the First Tower Service Station. Although more functional, it does, however, show evidence of knowledge of popular aspects of design trends - its horizontality and simple relations of solid and void and the Art Deco design in its curves and patterning. The different sections fit with the varied functions of a coach station: the understated administrative section and the less restrained curved profile and projecting canopy making a theatrical statement to attract travelers.



The materials used are inexpensive but they are used to good effect to give texture to the building. The original fabric remains largely intact. In particular the steel windows (in other buildings so often replaced with PVC) to the first floor retain the character of lightness to the paneled sections. The original garage doors have been replaced but the additions are reversible and detract little from the original composition.

The massing of the building with the ticket office and garage set apart remains as originally conceived.

As a functional transport building Colomberie Coach Station expresses the changing design idioms of the 1950s used simply, and effectively. It draws on the post-war Scandinavian influences but it also has characteristics of the Art Deco style. The integration of both gives its distinctive character.

Historical Interest

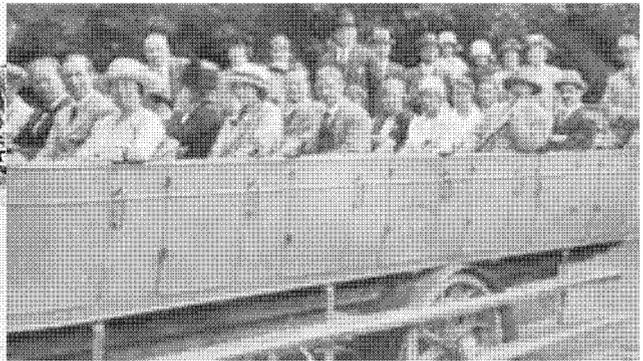
Tourism on Jersey became popular in Victorian times bringing with it new styles of architecture. Post-war development on Jersey focused on the renewal of the tourist industry and by the 1950s and 1960s it was the economic mainstay.

A long standing popular activity has been pleasure tours of the island. In the 19th century holidaymakers were taken on tours of the sites in horse-drawn carriages and enclosed coaches. These developed into horse-drawn and then motorised charabancs which were the forerunners of today's coaches. The coach operators on the island have long established businesses. Tantivy Blue Coach Tours, which still operates today, started with

a single horse and cart, expanding to motorised vehicles in 1923 and merging with Blue Coaches in 1996.



Tantivy Tours



Blue Coach Tours

The coach tours thrived in the post-war period and were an important driver in the growth of the tourist industry which was so vital for growth after the austerity of the war years.

Colomberie Coach Station is an important and rare built record of this economic and social heritage of Jersey. Its significance is increased by being a complete tourist facility with garage, administration, ticket office and forecourt.

Conclusion

Colomberie Coach Station provides a significant record of a particular type of building and its associated social heritage. As a coach station it illustrates a time in Jersey after the demise of the railways and at the beginning of the revitalisation of car and coach transport at the end of the restrictions of The Occupation. Built with the confidence of a flourishing tourism industry ahead, it expresses this important aspect of Jersey's economic and social position after the war. Although tourism extends from the Victorian times till today this building is a rare and concrete record of the industry in the emerging modern era of democratised travel. Independently run it was never subjected to standardised designs and it still retains its unique character of bold Modern style.

Taking its architecture and historic interest into account I conclude that Colomberie Coach Station is a building of 'special public and heritage interest to Jersey', as a good example of post-war building in Jersey in the architectural style of the 1950s and a rare example of a building type of the period which was of importance to the economic and social development of Jersey. It, therefore, meets the criteria for Grade 4 listing.

Noelle Houston MArch, MA
Consultant
19th May 2015

Appendix A

1950s Buildings

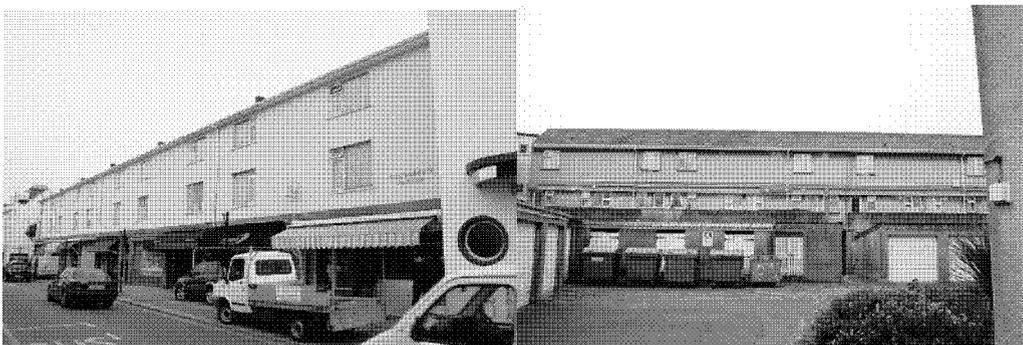
Berkeley Court

Berkeley Court is a small estate built privately in the early 1950s. It retains much of its character although it has lost some original fabric as the windows are now replacement PVC. The Scandinavian influence of the time of unadorned, balconied flats in blocks in open landscaped spaces, which was incorporated into Post War British housing designs, can be seen Berkeley Court. The proportions and simple elevational treatment with the expression of structure in the concrete balconies has been handled sensitively on the balcony facade, however, the opposite facade is plain and lacks an elegance of proportion. The overall layout has not adapted to the site as the rigid repetition of the block of flats makes orientation of some units poor and although there is one pleasantly planned garden external community spaces are not maximised. Balcony access was developed and featured in much Inter-War housing as can be seen in the Tower Road Maisonettes. It is not an innovative form in Berkeley Court.



Colomberie Parade

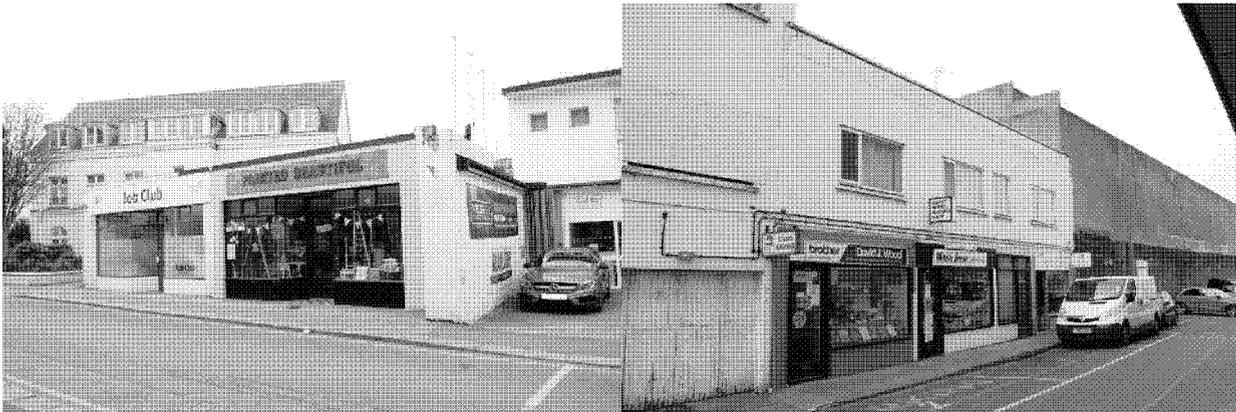
The parade of shops and flats on the north side of La Colomberie is part of the same 1950s development of the area as Berkeley Court. They are simple in the style of the time and again reflect Scandinavian influence of incorporating flats over shops in a parade. This parade lacks a certain finesse to the design. The windows are replacement PVC although the shop fronts are largely original with a subtle recess to the entrances.



These two groups of building are examples of 1950s architecture which show an awareness of the design concepts of the time. Each are modest architectural statements and lack a flair in design and detailing compared to international examples. Further consideration could be given to the development in regard to its heritage value in Jersey.

Nos 66-68 & 74-76 La Colomberie

The shops on the south side of La Colomberie are of little architectural value and no special consideration appears to have been shown to the buildings' design or detailing. Therefore, they do not meet the criteria for listing.



La Colomberie shops

Bath Street shops

92a-92c Bath Street

The applied Art Deco features on the Bath Street shops are minor and make little impression on the otherwise plain and poorly proportioned building and, as such, do not meet the criteria for listing.

Jersey Hospital, private wing. The Parade.

The 1950s hospital wing is of limited architectural significance within its period of construction. With its Ronez block facing and no structural expression it is a soft interpretation of modernism. A Classical symmetry has been forced arbitrarily on the main facade and its articulation is weak and superficial; the stair block fenestration disturbs the otherwise symmetrical south face. The decorative plaques are insignificant within the overall building form and are of poor artistic quality. As items of social interest they may be of artefact heritage value protected apart from the building.

The building does not display special architectural design or construction, nor is it significant historically and so does not meet the criteria for listing.



Charles Court. Charles Street.

The former Jersey Evening Post building in Charles Street was assessed as part of the thematic study of post-war buildings and rejected as a potential listing. Although designed

by Grayson (who is well represented on Jersey's Historic Environment Register) it was considered that much original fabric has been lost and that "the alterations have been very insensitive and the original interest of the building lost." (Elain Harwood).



Sources of Information

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