

Plans for casino at former cinema site

Doncaster's landmark Odeon cinema could be demolished and replaced with a casino, if developers get the go-ahead from councillors.

The 1930s Art Deco building on the corner of Hallgate and Thorne Road, which showed its last movie almost a year ago, is the subject of a planning application to demolish it by new owners Lazarus Properties.

They want to replace it with a brand new building which would encompass the town's first casino, bars, restaurants, a fitness club and offices.

But a campaign group is hoping an urgent decision by the Government will lead to the Odeon being protected under listed building status before it can be knocked down.

Friends of Doncaster Odeon spokesman Ray Nortrop said after the application was submitted this week: „Lazarus are entitled to make their application but the decision on our application to have the building listed through English Heritage is about to be made.“

A spokesman for English Heritage confirmed the matter was being treated as a priority case and added: „One of our designation experts has visited the site. We are in the process of submitting our report to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.“

Glyn Smith, of Lazarus Properties, said the Odeon plan was another example of investment in helping to regenerate Doncaster.“

In the past Doncaster's Mayor, Martin Winter, has declared

that he would not welcome a casino being built in Doncaster. A decision by the planning committee is expected within the next three months.

But Lazarus has already obtained a road traffic order to allow the pavements around the Odeon to be closed to enable the building to be demolished if they do get planning permission.

Peter Dale, Doncaster Council's director of development, said: „We have issued a notice for footway and road closures near to the site of Thorne Road and East Laith Gate, where the previous Odeon Cinema building stands.

„The notice in place began on February 1 2009 and ends on February 1 2010, giving the owners one year to carry out the intended works subject to all other formal procedures being in place.“