

Meridiana Hotel

43 -44, Argyle Square London WC1.

### **Heritage + Planning Statement**

This application is to restore the rear extension demolished prior to the Covid Pandemic 2020, when underlying structural and service issues with the former extension became apparent.

The rear extension was initially refurbished, see below, however more substantial repairs were required. The owner took action being unaware of the planning implications. This application is to rectify the situation. An enforcement notice was served to restore the structure.



The rear extension was a three storey structure, lower ground upper ground and 1<sup>st</sup> F mezzanine. Accommodation comprised bedrooms on each floor and shared facilities. Access was via lobbies at each floor level and from the staircase mid flight 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> F.

Following demolition, the rear wall and temporary works were exposed prior to be sealed as the current aerial views shows below.



Intermediate stage following demolition.



Works stage to make water tight following enforcement.





Ariel and plan view of the rear elevation and adjoining properties.



There was an exchange of emails during 2020 between the applicant and the council regarding unauthorised demolition. This application now seeks to restore the extension and carryout improvements to the design.

**From:** Lamont, Katrina <[Katrina.Lamont@camden.gov.uk](mailto:Katrina.Lamont@camden.gov.uk)>

**Sent:** 16 September 2020 11:28

**To:** Marie Louise Caruana Galea - MCGARCHITECTS <[mlouise@mcgarchitects.eu](mailto:mlouise@mcgarchitects.eu)>

**Subject:** RE: EN 20/136 Hotel Meridiana 43-44 Argyle Square

Dear Marie Louise,

I hope you are well.

Following our correspondence in March regarding the demolition of the rear extension, can you advise if any further work has taken place? As discussed, listed building consent and planning permission is required first before any further work takes place. I note we have not received any applications so I assume the rear extension has not been replaced.

Kind regards

Katrina Lamont  
Planning Officer

Telephone: 020 7974 3255

## **PROPOSAL SUMMARY**

The proposal is to construct the demolished former extension in Smeed Dean Yellow (London Stock) brickwork, with brick arches over timber vertical sliding sash windows and timber doors. The flat roofs will be lead with nominal parapet walls capped with a re-constituted stone coping course. This will undo harm to the heritage asset (NPPF para 200) and restore the form of the listed building.

The footprint of the extension is slightly greater (6.8sqM) than the former structure and this allows for improved accommodation at the lower level. To the upper levels, a two storey 'duplex' is proposed removing primary access from the stair leaving the former doorway as a means of escape route.

The construction will be built to meet the current building regulations as a minimum and better for environmental standards to minimise as far as possible the carbon output of the building.

There are no proposed internal alterations or alterations to the front elevation. This application focuses solely on the demolished rear structure.

## **Background.**

The application site is currently in use as a hotel and occupies two of the original buildings forming the Georgian terrace that forms the west side of Argyle Square. The both buildings are listed as part of a group listing along with the other terraces of buildings that form the square. Argyle Square is an example of Georgian town planning and architecture. The buildings listing relates primarily to the contribution that their front façades makes to the cohesion of the square.

The listing description for 43-44 Argyle Square is below:

*"TQ3082NW ARGYLE SQUARE 798-1/90/49 (West side) 14/05/74 Nos.36-47 (Consecutive) and attached railings (Formerly Listed as: ARGYLE SQUARE Nos.7-25, 26-35, 36-47 (consec))*

*GV*

*II*

*Terrace of 12 houses, now mostly small hotels, forming the west side of Argyle Square. 1840-49, altered. Yellow stock brick with later patching, No.42, stuccoed. Nos 36 and 37 stuccoed ground floors. Nos 38-40 and 43-46 channelled cement ground floors. No.41, painted ground floor. 4 storeys and basements. 2 windows each. Nos 36 and 47, single storey, 1 window entrance extension on return. Architraved, round-arched ground-floor openings. Doorways, where unaltered, with pilaster-jambs carrying cornice-heads; patterned fanlights and panelled doors. Entrances to Nos 36 and 47 in single storey extensions on return. Nos 36 and 47, square-headed ground floor windows. Gauged brick flat arches to assortment of recessed casements and sashes on upper floors; 1st floors with architraves and cast-iron balconies. Parapets. INTERIORS: not inspected. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings with bud finials to areas. (Survey of London: Vol. XXIV, King's Cross Neighbourhood, Parish of St Pancras IV: London: -1952: 105)".*

Argyle Square was developed in the 1840's/50's and is a reasonably typical example of a mid 19th Century street pattern and layout of open spaces. Four storey town houses surround the square which have a restrained classical appearance with consistent parapet lines, decorative stucco banding, large first floor windows with stucco surrounds, arched ground floor doors and a parapet concealing the roof, mansard roofs are a feature of the adjoining streets. The central area contains sports and recreational zones with mature trees on the boundary.

## **Nation Planning Policy Framework.**

NPPF was revised 2021. It carries forward many of the previous policies. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England, revoking and replacing the previous Planning Policy Statements and Planning Policy Guidance notes.

The NPPF constitutes guidance for local planning authorities and decision-takers and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications (para 13). The NPPF is strong in its presumption in favour of sustainable

development and considers that local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development (para 6). It further states *'decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development'* (para 187).

Paragraph 17 confirms that, within the overarching roles the planning system ought to play, a set of core land-use planning principles should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. These principles include:

Proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places the country needs.

Encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value.

Conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.

The Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore, significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system (paragraph 19). To help achieve economic growth, local planning authorities should plan proactively to meet the development needs of business and support an economy fit for the 21st century (paragraph 20).

Investment in business should not be over-burdened by the combined requirements of planning policy expectations. Planning policy should recognise and seek to address potential barriers to investment, including a poor environment or any lack of infrastructure, services or housing (paragraph 21).

It is recognised that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. *'Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people'* (para 56). It is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes (para 57).

Para 60 states *'Planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness'*. Para 61 further considers *'Although visual appearance and the architecture of individual buildings are very important factors, securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations. Therefore, planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment'*.

Para 63 confirms that *'In determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which help raise the standard of design more generally in the area'*. Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions (para 64).

Local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. In developing this strategy, the local planning authority should take into account:

- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- The wider social, cultural and economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
- The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (paragraph 126).

Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including development affecting the setting of the heritage asset), taking into account the available evidence and any necessary expertise (paragraph 129). In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities, including the economic vitality; and
- The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (paragraph 131).

Paragraph 132 confirms that, when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to, or loss of, a Grade II listed building, park or garden, should be exceptional. Substantial harm, to or loss of, designated heritage assets of a higher significance should be wholly exceptional. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use (paragraph 134).

Local planning authorities should assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, outweigh the benefits of departing from those policies (paragraph 140). In assessing the determining of development proposals, local planning authorities should apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 197).

Indeed, the ministerial foreword by Greg Clark confirms that *'The purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development'* and that *'development that is sustainable should go ahead, without delay – a presumption in favour of sustainable development that is the basis for every plan, and every decision'*. In addition, the ministerial foreword confirms that *'in order to fulfil its purpose of helping achieve sustainable development, planning must not simply be about scrutiny. Planning must be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which we live our lives'*.

### The Development Plan

A Development Plan for the application site to comprise as the London Plan (March 2021) and the Camden Core Strategy 2010–2025 (November 2010) and the Camden Development Policies 2010-2025 (November 2010).

### The London Plan

Policy HC1 (Heritage conservation and growth) confirms, inter alia, that development affecting heritage assets and their setting should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural details.

### Camden Local Plan 2017

Policy D2 (Heritage) confirms, the Council will preserve and enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens.

## Camden Development Policies 2010 (November 2010)

Policy DP24 (Securing High Quality Design) requires all developments including alterations and extensions to existing buildings, to be of the highest standard of design and to consider character and setting, proportions of the existing building, quality of materials, and the appropriate location for building services equipment.

Policy DP25 (Conserving Camden's Heritage) advises in respect to listed buildings, that the Council will preserve and enhance listed buildings and will prevent the total loss or substantial demolition of a listed building unless exceptional circumstances are shown that outweigh the case for retention; only grant consent for a change of use or alterations and extensions to a listed building where it considers this would not cause harm to the special interest of the building; and not permit development that it considers would cause harm to the setting of a listed building. The policy also confirms the Council will protect remains of archaeological importance by ensuring acceptable measures are taken to preserve them in their setting, including physical preservation where appropriate and that it will seek to protect other heritage assets including Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest and London Squares.

The policies confirm that in order to maintain the character of Camden's Conservation Areas, the Council will, inter alia, only permit development within conservation areas that preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area; prevent the total loss or substantial demolition of an unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area where this harms the character or appearance of the conservation area, unless exceptional circumstances are shown that outweigh the case for retention; will not permit development outside of a conservation area that causes harm to the character and appearance of that conservation area; and preserve trees and garden spaces which contribute to the character of a conservation area which provide a setting for Camden's architectural heritage. The policy also confirms the Council will take account of conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans when assessing applications within conservation areas.

## Camden Planning Guidance 1 – Design (2011)

Para 3.20 highlights that works to listed buildings are assessed on a case by case basis, taking into account the individual features of a building, its historic significance and the cumulative impact of small alterations. Para 3.22 confirms that the Council has a statutory requirement to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. The Council will consider the impact of proposals on the historic significance of the building, including its features, such as original and historic materials and architectural features, original layout of rooms, structural integrity and character and appearance.

Para 3.23 confirms the Council's expectation that original or historic features are retained and repairs to be in matching material. Proposals should seek to respond to the special historic and architectural constraints of the listed building, rather than significantly changing them.

Para 3.26 notes that some works that are required in order to comply with the Building Regulations may have an impact on the historic significance of a listed building and will require listed building consent.

Para 3.29 recognises the role that the historic environment can play in reducing the impact of climate change. For example, reusing existing buildings could avoid the material and energy cost of new development. The Council seeks a balance between achieving higher environmental standards with protecting Camden's unique built environment.

## Evaluation – Constraints and Opportunities

This section summarises the constraints and the opportunities presented by the potential development;

### Site Constraints

- ❑ The site is located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and therefore proposals must comply with Policy DP25 of the Camden Development Policies 2010-2025. Development will only be permitted within Conservation Areas which preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area.

- ☐ The application site itself is a Grade 11 Listed Building, therefore any proposal must comply with relevant statutory policy on listed buildings and with Policy DP25 of the Camden Development Policies 2010-2025. Alterations to a listed building will only be granted consent where it is considered that these would not harm the special interest of the building.

### Site Opportunities

- ☐ Improvement to the character and rear appearance of the property, enhancing the historic and architectural quality of the Listed Building.
- ☐ Improvements to visitor accommodation in Camden and increase in hotel bedroom stock within walking distance of St Pancras International, Kings Cross and Euston Stations.
- ☐ Introduction of sustainability initiatives on site.

### Design Proposals.

Please refer to the plans, sections and elevations which show the comparison between the former rear wing, the current status and the proposed rebuilding of the accommodation.

The rear extension was undergoing refurbishment and decorative works and it became evident that the structure was unsound and required rebuilding. The owner demolished the wing and Camden served an enforcement notice to rectify the situation.

The owner is now submitting an application to meet those requirements set out by Camden. The delay arises due to lost trading income during the Covid Travel restrictions.

The rear extension will be marginally larger 6.8sqM than the previous wing. This allows for the thicker walls to improve thermal insulation and improved standards of accommodation. There is no increase in room numbers.

The proposed works retain courtyard area to the side and rear boundary as is the usual pattern for these properties.

### Appearance.

The Extension will be rebuilt in Smeed Dean Yellow (London Stock) brick with soldier course over timber 6-over-6 sliding sash windows. The courtyard access door will be a 4 panelled timber door. All joinery will be recessed behind the outer brick leaf to match existing characteristics of the main building. Window cills and coping stones will be re-constituted stone. All materials are an improvement over the former white painted rendered finish with uPVC joinery fittings.

### Secure By Design

The issue of Secure By Design has been taken into consideration in the formulation of this development proposal. Accordingly, all doors and windows will wherever possible, comply with Secure By Design accredited products. Door locks and standards, account taken of LPS 1268 (Draft Standards) for hotel doorsets, in conjunction with the requirements of English heritage conservation principles. Window standards, specification will incorporate enhanced security performance of casements, where feasible in line with the BWF: TWAS, timber window accreditation scheme.

### Refuse

The application proposals have no implications in respect to refuse arrangements as there is no increase in hotel rooms proposed. The Meridiana Hotel has existing refuse arrangements which will continue unchanged.

### Amenity of Proposed Occupiers

In respect to the new extension, all of the proposed bedrooms will be well lit through appropriate window sizes. It is of course in the applicant's best interest to ensure all of the hotel rooms are of high quality and well lit. It is not



considered the development has any adverse impact on any of the neighbouring buildings. Indeed, the new accommodation will be much improved.

### Amenity of Occupiers

The applicant has carefully considered the position of windows and layout of bedrooms and bathrooms in respect to the development proposal to avoid any impact on amenity through the positioning of the proposed hotel room windows.

No windows are proposed directly facing neighbouring windows. Furthermore, the proposed rear extensions are to be located in the same location as the existing rear extensions.

### Access.

There is no change of access to the hotel and internal circulation is retained.

### Heritage Statement

In accordance with the requirements of the NPPF this element of the statement describes the significance of the heritage assets affected by the development proposal.

The purpose of this statement is to assist with the determination of the application by informing the decision takers on the effects of the development on the historic built environment. Value judgements on the significance of the heritage assets presented and the effects of the proposals upon that significance are appraised. This statement also sets out how the proposals comply with the guidance and policy of the NPPF and local policy framework. Specifically, this assessment assesses the significance of the relevant designated heritage assets and the affects of the development upon them. Each of these matters are now considered in turn below.

#### The Significance of the Relevant Heritage Assets

In respect to the relevant heritage assets there are two principle assets affected by this proposal. The host building itself which is a Grade II Listed Building and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area in which the application site is located.

#### 43-44 Argyle Street

The application site forms part of a Grade II Listed Building.

*"TQ3082NW ARGYLE SQUARE 798-1/90/49 (West side) 14/05/74 Nos.36-47 (Consecutive) and attached railings (Formerly Listed as: ARGYLE SQUARE Nos.7-25, 26-35, 36-47 (consec))*

GV

II

*Terrace of 12 houses, now mostly small hotels, forming the west side of Argyle Square. 1840-49, altered. Yellow stock brick with later patching, No.42, stuccoed. Nos 36 and 37 stuccoed ground floors. Nos 38-40 and 43-46 channelled cement ground floors. No.41, painted ground floor. 4 storeys and basements. 2 windows each. Nos 36 and 47, single storey, 1 window entrance extension on return. Architraved, round-arched ground-floor openings. Doorways, where unaltered, with pilaster-jambs carrying cornice-heads; patterned fanlights and panelled doors. Entrances to Nos 36 and 47 in single storey extensions on return. Nos 36 and 47, square-headed ground floor windows. Gauged brick flat arches to assortment of recessed casements and sashes on upper floors; 1st floors with architraves and cast-iron balconies. Parapets. INTERIORS: not inspected. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings with bud finials to areas. (Survey of London: Vol. XXIV, King's Cross Neighbourhood, Parish of St Pancras IV: London: -1952: 105)".*

#### Bloomsbury Conservation Area

The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (adopted 18th April 2011) provides some

relevant background information on the site. Paragraph 5.230 of the appraisal confirms that the area around Argyle Square was one of the last land parcels to be developed in the 1830's and 1840's having previously been the site of the failed Panharmonium Pleasure Gardens, an over ambitious and short-lived project from 1830-1832. The surrounding streets are likely to be built earlier, Crestfield Street and Birkenhead Street were laid out from 1825; Argyle Street from 1826 and St Chad's Street from 1827. However, it is noted that *"the architectural and historic interest of this area is reflected in the fact that the majority of the buildings are listed. The conversion in the 20th Century of a number of properties to hotel use has given rise to a plethora signage, painted brickwork, additional downpipes and unsympathetic replacement of sash windows and front doors that detract from the homogeneity of the terraces."* It is noted that four storey town houses around the square have a classical appearance with consistent parapet lines decorative stucco banding, large first floor windows with stucco surrounds, arched ground floor doors with a parapet concealing the roof.

In addition to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal Management Strategy, the applicant has a given consideration to the 'Argyle Square - A Guide to it's Conservation Area Enhancement' produced by the Friends of Argyle Square. The intention of this guide is *"to provide building owners, planners and enforcement officers with information that will help everyone make better decisions leading to an enhanced environment, less abortive work and high capital values"*.

It is stated that when considering building work that reference to the guide will offer opportunities to ensure that improvements are in keeping with the historic character of the square and help to reinstate historic features where they have been lost or damaged in the past. This will help reinforce Argyle Square as an attractive destination for everyone. It is suggested that following the guide can make a worthwhile contribution to making Argyle Square the premier address in Kings Cross/St Pancras.

#### Impact Assessment of the Application Proposal

This section of the heritage statement considers the impact of the proposed works on the heritage assets of relevance and in particular the age and special interest of the existing rear extensions which are proposed to be demolished and the proposed replacement new extension which is the subject of the application.

#### Impact on 43-44 Argyle Square

The application site was listed on 14th May 1974. The rear extensions were built sometime in the mid-late 1970's after the original listing notice. The rear extensions did therefore play no part in contributing to the listing of the original building. Indeed, it is considered that the poor quality of the existing rear extensions actually detracts from the special architectural and heritage characteristics of the building.

The rear extension had no original features and external brickwork has been rendered with a white paint finish. Windows are PVC and there are no internal window surrounds. There are no cornices in the rooms. Services tended to be surface mounted.

It was considered that the former rear extension was unattractive and provided no positive benefit to the Grade II Listed Building. There was a significant conflict between the concrete render of the extensions and, the brick of the original building.

The proposed rear extension is broadly similar in scale and mass to the former structure. The use of London stock bricks will provide a much more appropriate rear extension in terms of the materials which, is to be welcomed. As such, the use of yellow stock brick and lead roofs, are considered to result in significant improvements to the host buildings being more respectful to the listed building than the existing rear extension.

Overall however, it is considered that notwithstanding the lower ground room is larger, that the rebuilt extension will not result in an impact that is significant. It will be broadly speaking of equal mass bulk and profile to the adjoining properties both in Argyle Square and Argyle Street. As a consequence, it is considered that the other public benefits of the application are sufficient to justify a grant of planning permission and approval of listed building consent.

## Impact on the Bloomsbury Conservation Area

The key contribution of the application site to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area is its contribution to the setting of Argyle Square through its form as part of the west terrace. In this respect, the application proposal has no impact of the setting of the building in the context of Argyle Square or the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The rear of the application site, falls in an area of “*back to back*” residential development in an area which is used as an area for back yards. As such, it is not considered the application proposal has any adverse effect on the setting of the rear of the building. All of the properties along the western side of Argyle Square and, Argyle Street have rear extensions. This area of houses forms an island bounded by St Chad Street, Belgrove Street/Argyle Square and Argyle Street.

It is therefore considered that the impact to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area is less than significant. Accordingly, the public interest in approving hotel accommodation is considered to be significant enough to justify the grant of planning permission.

### **Summary**

The former rear extension was of no architectural or historic merit and was demolished. It is the applicant’s view that the proposed rebuilding works will enhance the appearance of the listed building at the rear and will have a positive impact on the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The sensitive design improvements to the rear of the building also contribute to the local distinctiveness of the neighbourhood whilst carefully enhancing the character of the conservation area. It is, therefore, the applicant’s view that no harm arises from the application proposal.

The application provides sustainability benefits with improved insulation and carbon reduction measures.

To conclude, we have demonstrated that the proposal complies with relevant local planning policy and that there are additional material considerations in support of the application. We therefore respectfully ask that Full Planning Permission, Conservation Area Consent and Listed Building Consent is granted for the development.

