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LPA ref: 2023/3870/P and 2023/3901/L

Brunswick Centre, London, WC1N 1AE
Application for Full Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent
Response Letter to Twentieth Century Society Comments

We write on behalf of, *Lazari Properties 2 Limited* ('the Applicant') to respond to comments received in respect of the pending applications for Full Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent (refs. 2023/3870/P and 2023/3901/L) at the Brunswick Centre ('the Site').

Background

The Brunswick Centre is a Grade II listed building in mixed use located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The Centre comprises an eight-storey building with residential units located above a public mixed use retail centre and central outdoor plaza. The Site also comprises two basement levels which are currently used for residential and commercial car parking, and plant/drainage associated with the above ground uses.

As part of their continued stewardship of the Brunswick Centre, the Applicant regularly monitor the occupation and vacancy levels of the Site. Through this continued monitoring, it has been identified that the subterranean car park at the Brunswick Centre is becoming increasingly underutilised, in part, due to a general societal shift towards more sustainable forms of transportation such as walking and cycling.

In order to ensure the continued success of the Brunswick Centre, it is therefore proposed to repurpose part of the underutilised two-storey car park beneath the Brunswick Centre to deliver a sustainable, smart hotel, which will complement and provide increased footfall to support the existing uses at the Site.

Pending Applications

An application for Full Planning Permission (ref. 2023/3870/P) was validated on 25 September 2023 for the following works:

"Change of use of part of basement car park and one ground floor retail unit to hotel with ancillary food and beverage use, including alteration to upper basement floor slab, installation of plant, acoustic enclosures and PV panels at roof level, and associated works."

A concurrent application for Listed Building Consent (ref. 2023/3901/L) was validated on 25 September 2023 for the following works:

“Internal and external alterations, including alterations to upper basement floor slab, strengthening of basement structural columns, installation of walls, fit-out and mechanical services at basement and ground floor levels, installation of plant and acoustic enclosures at basement and roof levels, installation of PV panels at roof level, and associated works in association with the change of use of part of the basement car park and one ground floor retail unit to a hotel.”

Consultation Response

This letter seeks to positively respond to the comments raised by the Twentieth Century Society in relation to the pending applications at the Site. We note that the Twentieth Century Society have no objections to repurpose the carpark as a hotel in principle, as the carpark is currently an underutilised space, and the basement levels of the Site are largely of neutral heritage significance.

From a review of the response received, we understand that two main comments have been raised as outstanding which we wish to respond to. These are:

1. Confirmation sought on whether the proposed lowering of the floor slab would impact the building's structure and the building's existing services; and
2. Clarifications sought in respect of the condition of the Brunswick Centre, and the requirement for repairs to be considered as part of the proposals.

Building Structure and Services

The project structural engineer, HTS, have reviewed the comment in relation to concerns of the structural implications arising from the removal of the diaphragm action currently provided by the slab at Level -01 and the detachment of the shear walls from the slab at this level. HTS confirm that the lowering of the existing basement B1 slab will not affect the overall stability of the building as the ground floor slab, which props the perimeter basement walls, is not affected by the works (except for a localised stair and lift opening).

The perimeter basement walls of the Brunswick Centre are propped by the Level B2 slab and the ground floor RC slab only, and the stability of the building is achieved through the reinforced concrete walls extending from basement Level B2 to roof level. The Level B2 slab, ground floor slab and stability walls of the building are not being demolished as part of the proposed structural works to form the Hotel, except for a new localised stair and lift opening through ground floor slab. There will therefore be no effect on the overall stability of the building.

The existing basement columns are currently 2 storeys tall, each of approximately equal length. Lowering the Level B1 slab will essentially make the basement columns 1 storey tall but of a greater length. The proposed structural investigations will look into how the reinforcement within the basement columns has been arranged. Strengthening works will only be needed to the basement columns if the existing reinforcement is found to not be continuous between Levels B2 and B1. If the reinforcement is found to be continuous, no strengthening works will be necessary.

Structural investigations to prove the construction of the RC columns in the basement have been undertaken, and further investigations are due to take place in due course, to confirm if any strengthening works the basement columns are required and further information will be provided in due course.

With regards to existing building services, the proposed hotel seeks to install independent services which will run separately to those of existing uses on the Site and therefore will not impact on the operation or

maintenance of the existing building services. In addition, the servicing for the hotel is proposed to run through existing risers and service ducts to minimise interventions into the historic fabric of the building.

Therefore, we consider that careful consideration has been given to the structural integrity of the building, and appropriate routing for proposed servicing, to ensure that the proposals will not have an adverse impact on the heritage asset.

Building Condition

At the point of submission of the planning application and listed building consent, limited information was available on the current state of the Brunswick Centre, and which areas of the building required repair.

As part of the pre-application discussions with the LB of Camden, it was agreed that a structural survey would be undertaken, relating to the areas of high significance in heritage terms, to determine the current state of the building in these locations and likely repairs required. The undertaking of the survey itself was deemed a heritage benefit to offset an element of harm from the proposals. This survey has now been submitted as part of this application, and a heritage offer put forward which sets out the repair works which would be undertaken in relation to this proposal, and how this is deemed to offset the less than substantial heritage harm caused by the proposals. This offer has been devised by the Heritage and Survey team at Purcell, working closely with Lazari and Camden to address issues with the concrete in areas of high and medium significance. The offer, which has now been accepted by Camden as proportionate to the heritage impacts of the scheme is in the form of an extensive suite of concrete repairs.

The survey work by Purcell found two distinct areas which, when combined, addressed a range of typological defects and improved as much high significance fabric as possible within the public realm. Therefore, a range of concrete repairs to the concrete that forms the area around the Curzon entrance and repairs to the distinctive ventilation grilles on the two main street elevations have been proposed and accepted by Camden.

Within the information provided in the heritage offer, careful consideration is given to the repair work required and the suitable approach to undertake such works to make sure they are durable and provide a suitable aesthetic match to the range of defects that has been found. This work will set in train a consistent and robust approach to the future conservation of the concrete at the Brunswick Centre.

Conclusion

This letter has been prepared to provide a comprehensive response to matters raised by the Twentieth Century Society during the consultation period.

Overall, it is considered that appropriate responses have been provided to respond to concerns raised, and we trust such responses have provided further context to the scheme.

Should you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact Nia Fraser (0207 333 6299), Sam Neal (0203 486 3312) or Hannah Davies (0207 333 6221) of this office.

Yours faithfully,



Gerald Eve LLP
Encl.