

Our Ref: VH/KN0047/23

23 April 2024

Camden Council
Planning - Development Control
Camden Town Hall
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Dear Sir / Madam,

The President Hotel, 56-60 Guilford St, Russell Square, WC1B 4HP
Application for Advertisement Consent
Planning Portal Reference PP-12967859

We are instructed by Imperial London Hotels Ltd. to submit this application for advertisement consent for a scheme of signage at the above site.

Specifically, the application proposes:

“Display of 1x non-illuminated fascia sign with lettering; 2 x internally illuminated fascia signs, 2 x non-illuminated fascia signs”

The application has been submitted online via the Planning Portal and in addition to the completed forms, comprises the following:

- Site Location Plan;
- Planning Drawing Pack ‘Exterior Signage dated 04/04/24 Rev D’

This letter forms part of the application and should be read in support of it.

Background

The President Hotel is a prominent and well-known hotel on the corner of Russell Square and Guilford Street, within the borough of Camden. As part of a rebranding and updating exercise the applicant is proposing a new scheme of signage that simplifies, refines, and streamlines the signage on site.

Site and Surrounds

The hotel is located close to Russell Square and Russell Square Underground Station. It extends to 7No. floors with the ground floor of the hotel on the Russell Square elevation occupied by commercial



operations, retail units, cafes, and coffee shops etc. The hotel occupies the ground floor of the Guilford Street elevation.

The hotel enjoys views directly over Russell Square, within a highly urbanised and busy location of the Holborn and Covent Garden Ward. Both Russell Square and Guilford Street are busy through routes of the city and have high levels of both vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

The area surrounding the hotel is mixed in nature, with many restaurants, cafes, and shops at ground level with residential or hotel accommodations above. Great Ormand Street Hospital is to the north of the site and University College London has several buildings nearby.

In terms of designations, the hotel falls within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area as well as the Central London Area as allocated by the Camden Local Plan. There are several Listed Buildings within proximity of the site including the Grade II* Russell Hotel.

Planning History

The following relevant planning history has been identified.

2021/5980/A Installation of four flags above the main hotel entrance canopy.

02-02-2022

Refused

2020/2047/P Change of use to partial ground floor and basement level of hotel (Class C1) to a restaurant (Class E), replacement and alterations to windows and doors, infill of lightwell, alterations to the planters and planting of new trees, and associated works.

23-07-2020

Granted

2015/5328/A Display of 5x internally illuminated fascia/lettering signs to front and side elevations and 2x externally illuminated projecting signs.

24-09-2015

Granted

2013/7539/P Replacement of window to create a fire escape door and installation of steps and railings.

09-12-2013

Granted

ASX0104438 The display of an internally illuminated fascia sign to both Guilford Street and Russell Square frontages, together with an internally illuminated projecting sign to the Russell Square frontage. As shown on drawing numbers 152(P)400, 4338-FASCIA 420, 4338-GLOBE 725.

25-04-2001

Granted



9502025R1 The erection of a seventh floor roof extension to provide "living -in" staff accommodation for the hotel, as shown on drawing numbers 545/1A & 2A, as revised by letter dated 2 February 1996.

05-02-1996

Granted

8900327 The erection of a UPVC conservatory and sixth floor roof extension to the east wing as shown on drawings numbered 271/1B 271/2a and revised by letter dated 18th April 1990.

29-06-1989

Granted

8501234 Formation of new entrance to carver restaurant. (As shown on drawings numbered 44A 467-1 & 467-2).

24-07-1985

Granted

Proposal

This proposal seeks to provide clear and high-quality signage that is both in line with hotel branding and sympathetic to its surroundings and host building. The current signage is somewhat tired and dated and as such consent is sought for a new scheme that will bring the external branding and signage up to date.

Consent is sought for 5No. signs on the Guilford Street elevation of the hotel. As part of this work, the large vertical signs will be removed, this will serve to 'tidy up' and simplify the external look of the building as a whole.

Proposed Signs

Sign A – Non-Illuminated Fascia Sign with Lettering

One non-illuminated 'President Hotel' sign will be placed on the main Guilford Street fascia. The sign will be constructed of quartz grey aluminium with white lettering applied to the face. It will extend to circa 6.5m in length and 0.58m in height.

Sign B – 2No. Internally Illuminated Fascia Signs

One sign will be positioned on each end of the main Guilford Street fascia, as detailed within the drawing pack. The signs are of aluminium construction with white lettering and will be internally illuminated. Each sign will be circa 0.58m in height and circa 1.4 meters in length.

Sign C - Non-Illuminated Fascia Sign

This sign is a quartz grey aluminium fascia sign that will run the length of the main Guilford Street fascia, an acrylic pattern will form a border to the individual letter sign. The sign will extend to circa 11.6 meters in length and will be circa 0.58 metres in height.



Sign D – Non-illuminated Fascia Sign.

This sign will be fitted to the under-croft fascia, over the main entrance, it will be quartz grey aluminium and sized in line with the existing fascia.

Planning Policy

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states: “*if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the Planning Act, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.*” Any issue that relates to the use and development of land is capable of being a material planning consideration; this includes Government statements of planning policy.

The development plan applicable to the application site consists of the Camden Local Plan, adopted 2017, the Camden Site Allocations document adopted 2013 along with the accompanying Policies Map and the London Plan 2021. The National Planning Policy Framework is also a material consideration.

Camden Local Plan

Policy D4 is concerned with advertisements and states that proposals for new advertisements should preserve or enhance the character of their setting and host buildings. In relation to conservation areas, this policy states that the Council will support proposals that preserve or enhance these areas.

Heritage issues are dealt with under **Policy D2**. This policy states that when determining applications, within conservation areas the Council will require that proposals preserve, or where possible, enhance the appearance of the area.

London Plan

Policy D8 of the London Plan is concerned with public realm and states at point B that lighting, including advertisement lighting, should be designed to minimise intrusive lighting and reduce light pollution.

Policy HCI states that development proposals affecting heritage assets should be sympathetic to the assets significance. It further states that development proposals should avoid harm and identify enhancement opportunities by integrating heritage considerations early in the design process.

NPPF

Paragraph 141 provides guidance regarding signage and states “*advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts*”.



Section 16 of the NPPF is concerned with the conservation of the historic environment, it sets out at **Paragraph 200** that applicants are required to describe the significance of any heritage asset affected by proposals and that the level of detail should be appropriate to understand the importance of the asset and sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposals on the significance of the asset.

Paragraph 208 states that where a proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset that harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

Planning Assessment

The principle of signage of this kind at this hotel is long established and is acceptable in planning terms. The proposed scheme seeks to improve and simplify signage and provide a solution that is in keeping with the host building and the surrounding conservation area, whilst promoting the branding principles of the hotel.

This scheme has been designed to bring the hotel up to date by utilising modern signage engineering and good design. The Guilford Street elevation will see a significant improvement in visual amenity in that the existing fascia will be improved and the large vertical signs will be removed, thus reducing visual clutter.

Those determining applications for advertisement consent should only seek to control proposals in the interests of amenity, safety, and cumulative impacts. This proposal has a positive impact on amenity, poses no safety risk and seeks to reduce visual clutter; as such it is fully policy compliant.

Heritage Assessment

The application building falls within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. To comply with government guidance contained in the NPPF, the application must be supported by a Heritage Assessment that considers and assesses the impact of the proposed development on the Conservation Area.

Bloomsbury Conservation Area

The Bloomsbury Conservation Area is a large, busy and highly developed area of London. This Conservation Area envelops several districts, including Fitzrovia, Finsbury and Clerkenwell, and is home to many hospitals and university buildings as well as the British Museum.

The significance of this Conservation Area is derived from its streetscape, including the street pattern as well as its evolving use over time. The appraisal notes that much of the significance of the area comes from its regular grid pattern of streets established in Georgian times as well as the Georgian architecture and its associated scale.

The proposal site falls within Sub Area 11: Queen Square/Red Lion Square. The appraisal notes that this area is made up of secondary thoroughfares with a mix of commercial and residential uses. At paragraph 5.204 the appraisal notes that *'A number of buildings are deemed to make a neutral contribution*



to the area, but occupy significant sites, for instance, the postwar Hotel President and the Imperial Hotel on the east side of Russell Square.

Of the relationship with Russell Square and the Russell Hotel, the following is noted regarding the President Hotel:

'On the east side, facing the square but forming the northern section of Southampton Row, are two hotels, which were built in the 1960s (they are situated in Sub Area 11 and are considered to be neutral in terms of the character and appearance of the square). They are Hotel President, situated on the southern corner of Guilford Street, and the Imperial Hotel, which features highly modelled faceted concrete panels on its frontage and mosaic decoration in its courtyard. Both are redevelopments of the former late 19th Imperial Hotel, which was demolished in the 1960s.

The appraisal has a section regarding the control of advertisements and notes that illuminated signage can have a major impact on conservation areas and that the proliferation of signage, even that of good design, could harm the character of Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

The Grade II* Russell Hotel is located directly opposite to the Guilford Street entrance to the hotel. Noting the requirements of paragraph 208 of the NPPF, we consider that the replacement of existing signage will not inflict harm on the significance of this designated heritage asset and therefore this paragraph is not engaged.

We consider that the installation of the proposed signage, taking account of the removal of the vertical signage and the neutral contribution of the President Hotel to the Conservation Area will not inflict harm on the significance of the Conservation Area or any nearby Listed Building. Therefore, the proposal is fully compliant with the tests set out within Chapter 16 of the NPPF, specifically paragraph 208.

Specifically, the proposal will not increase the levels of illuminated signage in the area and will therefore not increase its proliferation and as such the proposal accords with the points made within the Conservation Area Appraisal.

Conclusion

The proposed signs are of an appropriate scale and are proportionate in size and scale to the hotel. The current signage has been in place since for some time and is therefore tired and in need of replacement.

The above assessment demonstrates that the proposed signage is not detrimental to either local amenity or public safety and as such it accords with both local and national planning policy. Furthermore, the scheme is acceptable from a heritage perspective as it has been demonstrated that it will not cause harm to the significance of the Conservation Area.



The planning fee for this application is £165 plus £70 service charge for the use of the Planning Portal, in this regard the sum of £235 has been paid directly to the Planning Portal.

The applicant wishes to work closely with the Council on this proposal and as such, if you have any queries regarding the submission or require any additional information, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours faithfully



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