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Listed Building Consent Application for the Melia White House Hotel

Historic Building Report

Introduction

This report accompanies the Listed Building Consent application for the Melia White House Hotel, specifically addressing the proposed refurbishment of the apartment units located within Wing A of the property. It should be read in conjunction with, and as an amendment to, the Historic Building Report submitted for Listed Building Consent reference LBC 2021/0140/L.

Background and Context

The White House building, a Grade II listed structure, has undergone several phases of development and refurbishment since its original construction in 1936. The apartments in Wing A were last refurbished in 1999-2000, during which the original interior layout and detailing were replaced. These changes were documented in Donald Insall Associates' Historic Building Report, submitted with Listed Building Consent reference LBC 2017/2840/L. The current proposals seek to modernize the apartments while respecting the historic fabric and character of the building, addressing the dated design and suboptimal functionality of the early 2000s refurbishment.

Scope of Proposed Works

The refurbishment will include the following key elements:

- **Interior Modernization:** All apartments will be updated with new finishes, fixtures, and fittings, bringing them to the same high standard achieved in the recent hotel room upgrades. Bathrooms will be comprehensively refurbished to enhance both functionality and aesthetic quality. Core building services will remain unaltered.
- **Design Philosophy:** The new interiors, developed by the Melia Hotel Group's design team ASAH, will reflect a streamlined aesthetic that aligns with the 1930s heritage of the building. The design will replace the low-quality traditional-style decorative scheme with a modern approach that harmonizes with the building's original character.
- **Materials and Finishes:** The updated interiors will feature a combination of high-quality materials, including marble and timber flooring, depending on the location. New timber or glass doors will be installed, and walls will be finished with whitewashed timber panelling and light lacquered skirting to complement the historic setting. Selected suspended ceilings and cornices will be replaced where necessary to improve functionality and appearance.

Justification of the Proposals

The proposals align with the statutory duties outlined in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which emphasizes the preservation of listed buildings' special architectural and historic interest. The works will:

- Enhance the aesthetic and functional quality of the apartments, ensuring their long-term viability and appeal.
- Preserve and complement the architectural character of the Grade II listed building.
- Address the need for a consistent and modern interior design scheme across the hotel.

Policy Context

The proposals have been evaluated against the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which emphasizes sustainable development and balanced consideration of harm versus public benefit in heritage applications. While the proposed works involve replacing non-original elements, they are designed to enhance the significance of the building and ensure its optimal viable use. Any perceived harm to the heritage asset is minimal and outweighed by the public benefits of upgrading the apartments to meet contemporary standards.

Heritage Benefits

The refurbishment will provide the following benefits:

- Replacement of dated and unsympathetic interior elements with a design more in keeping with the building's 1930s origins.
- Enhanced functionality and aesthetic quality of the apartments, contributing to the overall prestige of the hotel.
- Preservation of the building's special architectural and historic interest while ensuring its continued viability as a premier accommodation venue.

Conclusion

The proposed works represent a carefully considered approach to modernizing the apartments in Wing A of the Melia White House Hotel. By adhering to the principles of heritage conservation and sustainable development, the proposals ensure that the building's architectural and historic significance is preserved and enhanced. The application is, therefore, compliant with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the NPPF, and it is recommended for approval.