

**Raag (St. Pancras) Ltd**  
**Proposed Hotel & Residential Development**  
**Britannia Street, Kings Cross**

**Heritage Statement**

Prepared by Morrison Design Limited  
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References:  
Camden Conservation Area Statement 22  
Kings Cross

Camden Local Development Framework  
Adoption Version (2010)

5<sup>th</sup> March 2013 Rev B

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## **Character Appraisal**

### **1. The Purpose and Scope of this Statement**

- 1.1. This Heritage Statement has been prepared on behalf of Raag St Pancras Ltd in support of its planning application to develop the 13 Britannia Street site for a mixed use residential and hotel scheme. The site is located within the Kings Cross conservation area and adjoins a grade II listed Derby Lodge. This statement appraises the surrounding historic environment to the application site assessing the heritage significance of the Kings Cross Conservation Area and the setting of Derby Lodge. It sets out an assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the heritage significance of these assets and the policy context against which the application should be determined.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1. The site is located within sub-area 4 of the King's Cross conservation area, "Grays Inn Road". This sub-area comprises the area bounded by Pentonville Road and Kings Cross Road to the north and east, Swinton Street to the south and the Birkenhead Street Estate to the west. Kings Cross Road and Grays Inn Road are principal roads linking Kings Cross to the City of London. These roads are lined with a mix of early 19<sup>th</sup> century terraces and larger scale institutional buildings.
- 2.2. The area between the main roads contains narrow streets paved in granite setts, predominantly lined with later 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings of former light-industrial and commercial uses, as well as housing, and several vacant sites currently used for car parking.
- 2.3. These streets are bisected by the London Underground Metropolitan Line and Thameslink railway cutting, and, despite piecemeal re-development, have a characteristic fine urban grain with broad consistency of building heights and materials. The blocks of the 1950s Birkenhead Street Estate are located against the west boundary of the Conservation Area.

### **3. The Application Site**

- 3.1. The site is located to the southern side of Britannia Street comprising a small empty plot used as a car park, the area being immediately to the east of the railway cutting with Wicklow Street to the south of the site. This is adjoined to the east by nos. 7 to 11 Britannia Street, a 3 storey building of early 20<sup>th</sup> century date which is constructed of red brick and has red painted steel framed windows.
- 3.2. Adjoining the site is Derby Lodge, a grade II listed apartment building erected by the Improved Industrial Dwellings Company in 1865. The 6 storey building is constructed of grey/buff brick with rusticated stucco at ground floor level. The building's recessed open stairwells and ornate cast iron balconies give the frontage depth and interest, which is enhanced by stucco pediments over the windows and decorative iron ventilation grilles between the windows on each floor. The statutory description is as follows:
  - 3.2.1 "Derby Lodge, formerly Derby Buildings, flats Nos.1-36 Group Value II Flatted philanthropic accommodation. 1865. By the Improved Industrial Dwellings Company founded by Sydney Waterlow; builder Matthew Allen. Painted stucco cement treated as banded rustication to the ground floor; the same material used on balcony-stair recesses (treated as Tuscan pilastrade) and to window aedicules. Cast-iron railings to balconies of authentic lattice pattern; metal filigree spandrels to brick pier supporting balcony; metal railings to roof over recess; infill to ground floor for security purposes; late C20 wall treated as banded rustication to match original.

EXTERIOR: 5 storeys. Nos 1-10 with one-window, brick range to either side of full-height balcony recess which is divided into two broad bays by a brick pier with stylised capital from which spring filigree spandrels to lintels. Nos 11-36 entered off similar balcony-stair recess; the flanking ranges to either side, however, have two windows each, suggesting a different plan form. Another notable difference is the small round-arched lancet with screen-like inset found between each pair of windows to this section. The ground-floor windows to block containing units 1-10 are tripartite.

INTERIORS: not inspected. forms a group with Derby Lodge (formerly Buildings), flats 37-102, to the south in Wicklow Street (qv). Among the earliest surviving examples of the work of Waterlow's influential and prolific IIDC"

- 3.3. Derby Lodge is adjoined to the east by nos. 1 to 5 Britannia Street, which comprise a terrace of 3 storey buildings with commercial units at ground floor level and residential accommodation above, of mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century date. No.1 is of red brick with rusticated stucco at ground floor and a vehicle entrance. Nos. 2 and 3 are of yellow stock brick with large modern shopfronts at ground floor and simple projecting cornices. All have timber sliding sash windows.
- 3.4. Wicklow Street runs from Kings Cross Road at its southern end and crosses the railway cutting to the south of Britannia Street before turning north to intersect Britannia Street and Leeke Street and terminates at its northern end where it meets St. Chads Place.
- 3.5. Britannia Street is wider than the adjacent roads and connects Kings Cross and Grays Inn Roads. Accordingly it forms the main east/west thoroughfare through sub-area 4. Unlike the adjacent streets, which mostly contain former industrial buildings of mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century date, the buildings lining Britannia Street are of varying ages, uses and architectural form.

#### **4. Pre-application Consultation**

- 4.1. Two pre-application consultations have taken place between 'The Applicant', Gerald Eve (the planning consultants), Morrison Design Ltd. (the architect) and the Camden Planning Team. On the first occasion, which took place on 30-06-11, the scheme considered a development comprising of a single hotel incorporating 173 en-suite guestrooms alone. The conclusion at this meeting required further consideration of the massing and aesthetic of the development as Camden reported:

*"The initial proposal is not considered to be specific in design to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area."*

- 4.2. At the subsequent pre-application meeting on 24-11-11, a revised development proposal comprising a hotel of 143 guestrooms and an attached social housing block of 8 residential units was considered. Camden's response to this latest proposal criticised the 18% residential content being significantly lower than that sought within policy DP1 and officers recommended this:

*"be increased as far as possible to the Council's 50% figure stipulated in DP1."*

- 4.3. Officers recommended that this scheme be reconfigured to introduce further residential content facing Wicklow Street whilst retaining services access for the hotel at this point. However, the Urban Design Officer at the meeting commented with regard to design/conservation and noted the following:

*"It is considered that the design has been significantly advanced since the initial pre-application meeting with the Architect responding positively to the matters previously raised by the Council. It is considered that all primary matters have been addressed and whilst acknowledged by the Architects themselves at the meeting that further modifications would be required prior to a full planning application, officers are satisfied in large with the alterations made to date and the*

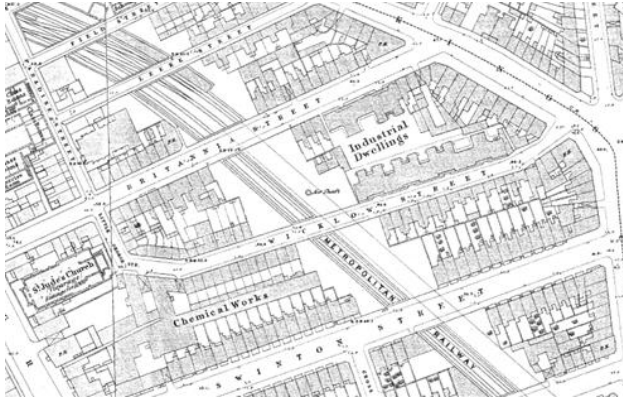
*general approach taken in respect of both the proposed buildings on the site and the relationship with nearby buildings/the Conservation Area as a whole.”*

## **5. Heritage Significance**

- 5.1. Kings Cross Conservation Area was first designated by Camden Council in 1986 and was extended in 1991 (to include the application site), 1994 and 2003. A character appraisal was completed in 2004 and forms the basis of an understanding of the area and its architectural and historic interest. The appraisal forms part of the Council's supplementary planning guidance
- 5.2. The main part of the area is based around the railway stations of Kings Cross and St. Pancras. It has undergone, and is still undergoing, regeneration following the creation of High Speed 1 and the extensions to both station buildings and new development to the north.
- 5.3. Development of this area began in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century with the construction of town houses and new roads. However, it was the building of the major new stations in the 1850s that influenced the majority of the Victorian development now evident throughout the area.
- 5.4. The application site between Wicklow Street and Britannia Street forms part of sub-area 4 of the Kings Cross Conservation Area as described in the character appraisal. This area covers Grays Inn Road, the remaining area of the Conservation Area south of the Euston Road bounded by Pentonville Road, Kings Cross Road, Swinton Street and Argyle Street. The area in which the development site is located is described as:

*The area between Kings Cross Road and Grays Inn Road is characterised by narrow streets generally paved with granite setts, lined with former light industrial and commercial buildings. The buildings front directly onto the back of pavement and therefore create a strong sense of enclosure. The area is divided by the Metropolitan and Thameslink railway cutting, which is flanked to the east and west by narrow corridors of vacant land.*

- 5.5. This Conservation Area has very high architectural interest derived from the significant gothic architecture of the Midland Grand Hotel at St. Pancras, as well as the station buildings at St. Pancras and Kings Cross which is the most significant building in the area. Within sub-area 4, Derby Lodge has high architectural interest and reflects the over-riding, semi-industrial character of the buildings in the area.
- 5.6. This is an area rich in historical interest, again focused around the main infrastructure of the area at Kings Cross Station and St. Pancras. Historical interest is derived from the development of the buildings in the area. The survival, adaptation and replacement of these buildings contributes to a sense of heritage interest in this urban environment. This is combined with historical associations with well known historical figures who lived in and around the area.
- 5.7. Part of the Conservation Area is designated as an archaeological priority area centred on the medieval settlement of Battle Bridge. It is located at the junction of Grays Inn Road and Kings Cross Bridge.
- 5.8. The application site is an open plot poorly surfaced and used as a car park. The 1874 Ordnance Survey map show limited development on the site:



OS 1874

By 1922 the plot had been filled by built development, which has subsequently been demolished:



OS 1920

- 5.9. The Site forms an unsightly gap in the area incorporating poorly constructed fences which has a negative impact on the conservation area and the setting of Derby Lodge.

## 6. National Policy Framework

### Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

- 6.1. The relevant legislation relating to listed buildings and conservation areas is contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 72 places a duty on the decision maker to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. A similar duty exists with regard to the special interest of a listed building and its setting (Section 62).

### National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

- 6.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) constitutes Government guidance for local planning authorities and decision makers. Applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Framework is a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 6.3. The Framework places much emphasis on the desirability of sustaining and enhancing heritage assets. Significance is a common thread that occurs throughout section 12 of 'The Framework' and is defined as:

*"The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting."*

### **The London Plan 2011**

- 6.4. The London Plan sets out that development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance by being sympathetic to their form, scale and materials.

### **Camden Local Development Framework Camden Development Policies** (Adoption version 2010)

- 6.5. The Camden Local Development Framework Local Planning Framework Camden Development Policies(Adoption version 2010)provides the local context for decision making in respect of development which affects Conservation Areas: Policy DP25 is most relevant:

- *Policy DP25 - Conserving Camden's heritage*
- *Conservation areas*
- *In order to maintain the character of Camden's conservation areas, the Council will:*
  - *a) take account of conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans when assessing applications within conservation areas;*
  - *b) only permit development within conservation areas that preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the area;*
  - *c) prevent the total or substantial demolition of an unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area where this harms the character or appearance of the conservation area, unless exceptional circumstances are shown that outweigh the case for retention;*
  - *d) not permit development outside of a conservation area that causes harm to the character and appearance of that conservation area; and*
  - *e) preserve trees and garden spaces which contribute to the character of a conservation area and which provide a setting for Camden's architectural heritage.*

## **7. Proposed Development**

- 7.1. The development comprises a 2/3 and 5 storey development fronting hard onto the Britannia Street and Wicklow Street pavements. The building will be constructed incorporating a cladding of stock brick and render with predominantly flat roofs behind raised parapets and elements of pitched roof which will be finished in slate. A significant area of the lower level flat roof will incorporate a light-weight green roof system, the higher level roof will be provided with a selection of solar panels to provide renewable energy provisions. All new windows will be multi-pane within polyester powder coated extruded aluminium frames generally in proportion and character to those within adjacent properties.
- 7.2. The proposals will require limited demolition works in connection with the redevelopment of the site. This involves the demolition of the existing vent shaft to the tunnel which is now redundant and partial demolition and reconstruction of the boundary wall to the eastern elevation which is in a very poor condition. The existing boundary wall to the railway cutting is to be retained with the existing steel palisade and mesh fence. However, a 'green wall' treatment facing the new housing is proposed. Conservation Area Consent has been applied for in this respect. These functional brick built structures themselves have a limited but negative impact on the character or significance of the conservation area. Their removal will be a benefit in heritage asset terms.

- 7.3. Modern details are to be used for roof parapets, eaves, window reveals and entrance doors generating a contemporary industrial robustness to the facades.
- 7.4. It is considered that the proposed development for this site is an inherent improvement to the Conservation Area which will be achieved by removing the unsightly gap between Britannia Street and Wicklow Street and thus generating a sense of enclosure along both street frontages.
- 7.5. The replacement development is intended to pay regard to the prevailing character of the area through the use of appropriate materials although the use of aluminium windows and modern details will mark the building out as a modern development of its time.
- 7.6. In designing this development, the height and bulk has been carefully considered and it is believed that the 2/3 and 5 storey elements correlate with the rest of the Conservation Area and sits comfortably with the adjacent listed buildings.
- 7.7. It is believed that the proposal is in compliance with policy DP25 through the use of appropriate detailing, bulk, massing, mix of use, etc. and will correspond well to the context of the site and the adjacent street scenes.

## **8. Conclusions**

- 8.1. The Site is an open plot located within the King's Cross Conservation Area adjoining a listed building.
- 8.2. The Site as existing has a negative impact on the Heritage Assets which it affects. The proposed development would have a beneficial impact on these Heritage assets and in particular will enhance the setting of the listed building and enhance the character of the conservation area.