

Delegated Report		Analysis sheet		Expiry Date:		19/07/2012	
		N/A / attached		Consultation Expiry Date:		05/07/2012	
Officer				Application Number(s)			
Craig Raybould				(1) 2012/2564/P (2) 2012/2651/A			
Application Address				Drawing Numbers			
Imperial Hotel 61 Russell Square London WC1B 5BB				Refer to draft decision			
PO 3/4	Area Team Signature	C&UD	Authorised Officer Signature				
Proposal(s)							
(1) Subdivision of existing retail unit (Class A1) and a change of use to create a new hotel entrance (Class C1); associated shopfront alterations including new glass doors and screens and widening of columns. (2) Display of internally-illuminated fascia box signs to retail units and stainless steel halo-lit lettering affixed to granite fascia backing to new hotel entrance.							
Recommendation(s):		(1) Grant planning permission (2) Grant Express Advertisement Consent					
Application Type:		(1) Full Planning Permission (2) Express Advertisement Consent					
Conditions or Reasons for Refusal:		Refer to Decision Notice					
Informatives:							
Consultations							
Adjoining Occupiers:		No. notified	10	No. of responses	01	No. of objections	00
				No. electronic	00		
Summary of consultation responses:		The application was advertised in the local press – Ham & High 14/06/12 to 05/07/12. Site Notice displayed 01/06/2012. No consultation responses received.					
CAAC/Local groups comments:		Bloomsbury CAAC The CAAC welcome the finer subdivision of the retail units and associated signage but feel the glazed entrance door to the hotel should have frame glazing and detailing more in the spirit of the rest of the building rather than ‘patched-plate’ fittings. Full height doors would help.					

Site Description

The application site comprises of a retail unit (Class A1) located at ground floor level of The Imperial Hotel. The property fronts Russell Square, close to its junction with Guildford Street.

The Imperial Hotel is a part 7, part 10 storey building built in the 1960s. It is of a design typical of its time, being of a predominantly concrete construction, partly clad with brickwork with some granite columns at ground floor level.

The retail unit at ground floor level which forms the subject of this application comprises of three openings, two of which form shopfront display windows and a third which includes an aluminium framed glazed entrance door. The front entrance is flanked by two granite faced columns. An internally illuminated acrylic fascia sign (bearing the legend 'Imperial News & Gifts, souvenirs-perfumes-photographs, Imperial News') spans the length of the shopfront.

The property is located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, the Central London Area, an Archeaological Priority Area and the Holborn Growth Area. This site is not within a designated frontage.

Relevant History

2003/0810/P (02-07-2003) (approved) Change of use of Class A1 (retail unit) to retail floorspace and toilets/storage areas ancillary to the existing hotel use (class C1) and alterations to shopfront including a new canopy.

2004/1166/P (15-04-2004) (approved) The installation of 6 panel mounted antennae and associated equipment on the roof.

2004/1233 (08-04-2004) (refused) Installation of new raised decked area to exterior of restaurant/bar including new canopy and glazed balustrade.

2007/5581/P (10-12-2007) (refused + warning of enforcement action) Retention of decked area with glazed balustrade enclosure under canopy at front ground floor area of hotel, plus elevational alterations to it, and erection of additional canopied enclosure on 2 bays to its left outside entrance.

Relevant policies

LDF Core Strategy and Development Policies

Core Strategy

CS1 (Distribution of growth)

CS2 (Growth Areas)

CS7 (Promoting a successful and inclusive Camden economy)

CS14 (Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage)

Development Policies

DP10 (Helping and promoting small and independent shops)

DP12 (Supporting strong centres)

DP24 (Securing high quality design)

DP25 (Conserving Camden's heritage)

DP26 (Managing the impact of development on occupiers and neighbours)

DP30 (Shopfronts')

Camden Planning Guidance 2011

CPG1 – Design

CPG6 – Amenity

Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal 2011

London Plan 2011

NPPF 2012

Assessment

1. The proposals

The application proposes the subdivision of a single class A1 retail unit of 149.5 sqm into three separate units, two of which will remain as class A1 retail units of approximately 50 sqm each, and one which will be amalgamated with the internal atrium of the hotel forming a new entrance. The alterations will result in a net loss of retail floorspace of 51 sqm. The purpose of the alterations is to provide a new entrance door to the hotel and to facilitate the use of the atrium as a café ancillary to the main hotel.

Modifications are proposed to the shopfront in order to allow for the new internal arrangements. Two pilasters either side of the northernmost opening are to be widened and clad in granite to match in size and appearance those columns either side of the existing shop entrance. A new fully glazed, frameless entrance door is proposed to be installed in the central opening to create a new entrance to the hotel. A new black granite fascia will be installed above the entrance and two light fittings attached to the pilasters either side.

The two new retail units created by the subdivision will include new entrance doors housed within fully glazed shopfronts with black coloured, powder coated, aluminium frames with transom bars and glazed fanlights.

The existing full width internally-illuminated fascia sign is to be removed and replaced with three separate, smaller fascia signs. Above the two retail units there will be internally-illuminated fascia box signs that match the width of the respective shopfronts and above the new hotel entrance stainless steel, halo-lit lettering will be affixed to a granite fascia block.

The principle issues of these proposals are (i) the loss of existing retail floorspace; (ii) amenity; and (iii) the design of the new shopfronts and advertisements.

2. Loss of retail floorspace

Policy DP10 seeks to encourage the provision of small shop premises throughout the Borough. Part (f) of DP10 allows for the loss of shop floorspace within the Central London Area where the development would positively contribute to local character, function, viability and amenity.

The thrust of DP10 is to protect local shops and services against the significant commercial pressures which tend to favour a fewer number of larger shops. Despite the loss of around a third of the overall class A1 retail floorspace, the proposals will create an increased number of retail units (+1 net benefit) and provide two smaller units, as opposed to one large unit. The alterations to create a new hotel entrance would be consistent with the character of the Russell Square Area which is a centre for visitor accommodation and would result in minimal loss of retail floorspace. This accords with policy DP10.

3. Amenity

LDF policies CS5 and DP26 seek to protect the quality of life of occupiers and neighbours. It explains that planning permission will not be granted for proposals which cause harm to amenity.

The subdivision of the retail unit in itself does not give rise to any amenity concerns. However, it is recognised that the introduction of a new hotel entrance has the potential to increase pedestrian flows to and from this part of the building, particularly as the ancillary café use will be open to non-residents. Whilst the use of planning conditions could be considered to limit the numbers of patrons and opening times, the entrance is set within the existing hotel and is not within close proximity to any noise

The proposals therefore accord with policies CS5 and DP26.

4. Design

Policies CS14, DP24 and DP25 require new development to be of the highest standards of design, respect local context and character and preserve and enhance the character and appearance of Camden's heritage assets.

The widening of the pilasters on the northernmost shopfront and their cladding in granite will match the pilaster adjacent to the existing entrance bringing a sense of continuity. The black coloured, powder coated, aluminium frames proposed for the new retail units match those found on the adjacent retail units to the north of the site at

ground floor level. Their design and materials are appropriate for a building of this architectural form and age.

The fully glazed entrance doors to the new hotel, whilst different in appearance to the retail units either side, will provide a focal point and differentiate the entrance in a subtle manner. Its modern design is considered appropriate for the building. The two exterior light fittings proposed either side of the entrance are discreet and will have little impact on the appearance of the building and street.

The rationalisation of the advertisements will be more in keeping with the street scene and allow for a more discreet form of advertising.

Whilst the alterations are modern in nature, they are considered appropriate for the host building. Having regard to the relatively low quality of the existing shopfront and signage, the proposed alterations will preserve and enhance the appearance of this section of Russell Square. The proposals therefore accord with policies CS14, DP24 and DP25.

5. Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The proposals do not generate any additional useable space and are therefore not liable for contributions towards the Mayoral CIL.

6. Recommendations

For the above reasons it is recommended that planning permission and express advertisement consent be granted.

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