Proposal to install Bee Hives on the western tower of St Pancras Station

Heritage, Design and Access Statement

10th September 2014

Introduction

This joint Design and Access Statement and Heritage Statement accompanies a listed building consent application for the installation of bee hives on the roof of St Pancras Station (Planning Portal ref: PP-03646592). St Pancras Station was opened in 1868, designed by Henry Barlow and George Gilbert Scott. The Station is Grade I listed. The Statement sets out the design rationale for the proposal, explains how access issues have been considered, and provides an assessment of the impacts on the building's historic significance, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework.

Proposal

The proposal is to locate 4 beehives on the west tower to the north end of St Pancras Station 19th century trainshed. The hives will be managed and maintained by The London Honey Company and the honey that is produced by the bees will be sold in Fortnum & Mason's shops including the new store at St Pancras International.

The hives will be constructed from cedar wood and painted with an exterior quality acrylic or urethane paint to match Fortnum & Mason's corporate 'Eau de Nil' colour. They will have a metal clad roof (matt silver finish) for weatherproofing. The hives will be on stands, ensuring that the load is spread and that air can circulate beneath them. Extra honey boxes, 'supers', will be added on top of the hives from the spring onwards as the bees need more space to lay down honey in combs. With supers in place, each hive can weigh up to a maximum of 70-80 kg, although this is exceptional. Over the winter and early spring when the bees are less active, the hives are unlikely to weigh more than 50 kg at the most.

Generally, the height of the hives from floor level to top of the roof will be 1130mm. Above this there is a decorative finial 180mm tall. The absolute maximum number of honey box levels on the hives that we would expect towards the end of an exceptional summer is four on top of the brood box, where the queen lays. However, we are easily able to take honey boxes off over the summer, if necessary, to keep the height of the hive below an acceptable 1.2m.

If necessary the hives will be tethered to the steel fall restraint safety lines existing on the roof of the west tower for extra safety to mitigate any freak strong winds.

The bees will be moved into place through access via the Midland Road delivery point up through the trade lift, along the public concourse and through to the stair access to the west tower, up which they can be carried. The honey will be harvested once a year and be taken out along this same route. Any live bees being taken through the building will be securely inside hives and enclosed in mesh bags for extra public safety. The bees will be inspected at least once a week in the spring, summer and autumn and at least once a month in the winter.

Design and location rationale

The hives are located on the station roof to allow the bees open access to the surrounding forage and avoid any disturbance from or harm to station users. The western tower provides easiest access for inspection, via a door and spiral stair located at the south end of platforms 1-4

The hives will face out west to maximise solar gain to the hives and direct the bees' exit flight path away from the building and the access stairs to the roof. The Hives are of a traditional design, built in high quality materials, worthy of those found at St Pancras Station.

Access
Access to the hives will only permitted to beekeepers and relevant members of station staff in view of the safety risks the bees pose, and as required by St Pancras Stations' safety procedures.

Heritage Assessment

Statutory and Policy background

Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires Local Authorities to have special regard for the desirability of preserving listed buildings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012) establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which includes protecting the historic environment. Under the NPPF St Pancras Station is considered a designated heritage asset. The NPPF requires that applicants to describe the significance of heritage assets affected by proposals in a level of detail sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal (paragraph 128). In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets (paragraph 131). Significance 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.

The London Borough of Camden's development plan, consisting of the London Plan and the Local Plan, seeks conservation of listed buildings and heritage assets (London Plan policy 7.8 and Local Plan Core Policy CS14, policy DP25)

Statement of Significance

St Pancras Station was opened in 1868 by the Midland Railway. It is one of the most important examples of Victorian design and engineering, fusing gothic aesthetics with industrial functionality. The station has historic significance for its contribution to the evolution of railway station design and railway operations under the Midland Railway. The station and hotel which fronts it have architectural and artistic value for their design, construction, materials and aesthetic.

The western tower supports the northwest gable end of the station and is approximately three storeys and decorated with blind arcading and a corbelled parapet. The transition roof to the 2007 extension abuts the tower to the north, and to the southwest the energy centre and associated air intake and extract is located in the west side buildings, hidden from public view by the side wall parapet.

Assessment of the proposal

The hives will be hidden from views on three sides by the historic and transition roofs. Set back on the roof behind the existing parapet, and due to their agreed height limit, the hives will not be visible from the west from publicly accessible areas, including at ground level. If visible from private views, for example, from surrounding office buildings, they will be viewed against a backdrop comprised of a varied roofscape and existing services. In the proposed location they will therefore not affect significant silhouettes or views of important roof details.

The Hives do not require any physical alterations to the building – they will be set on pads to avoid any harm to the roof, and tethered to extant modern steel security lines to the roof. The combined weight of the hives when full has been calculated and will not pose a risk to the roof structure of the west tower.

No alterations are required to the building in relation to access issues.

For these reasons the hives will have a neutral impact on the building's historic, architectural and aesthetic values.