

CHANCERY COURT HOTEL

Listed Building Statement

Lighting Application

July 2014

Introduction

This Listed Building Statement has been prepared by CBRE Limited, on behalf of New World Hospitality (“the applicant”), in support of the (retrospective) planning and listed building consent applications for the (installed) lighting strategy at Chancery Court Hotel, 247-252 High Holborn, London Borough (LB) of Camden.

Context

Chancery Court Hotel is the former London Head Office of Pearl Assurance PLC and is Grade II Listed.

Planning Permission and Listed Building consent were granted in August 2012, for works in respect to the overall refurbishment of the Grade II Listed Hotel (Refs: 2012/1547/P and 2012/1548/L) (“the original consents”).

Whilst it was considered at that point in time that the Grade II building was of sufficient architectural landmark quality to warrant some form of external illumination, the amount shown as part of the original consents proposals was considered by LB Camden Officers to be excessive.

Consequently, the lighting scheme was removed from the application proposals prior to determination and it was proposed that the lighting strategy would come forward as a separate application, once an illumination study demonstrating the impact on the building had been undertaken.

The consented refurbished scheme, as amended, has now been implemented and the refurbished Hotel has been formally re-opened (Winter 2013).

The applications which form the subject of this Listed Building Statement relate solely to the lighting strategy, which has been discussed with LB Camden Officers, including:

- Package of information on the proposed lighting strategy (Visualisation Study) was submitted to the Council (March 2013);
- A mock-up was attended by LB Camden;
- Following feedback at that point in time, the proposed lighting was further amended and a revised version of the Visualisation Study was submitted to the Council (April 2013);
- In a verbal follow-up conversation, it was agreed that given daylight hours the Officer would visit the site independently to assess the revised scheme.

The Hotel has been also been jointly inspected by heritage specialists, Giles Quarme Associates, and Alan Wito of LB Camden on previous occasions (7th December 2012).

Structure

Paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework (“NPPF”) states that local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by a development proposal. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset’s importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

Accordingly, this Statement sets out:

- Heritage Significance – regard should also be to the detailed Heritage Statement submitted to accompany the original consents:

Introduction

- Significance of Chancery Court Hotel;
- Significance of this part of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area;
- Contribution of the Hotel to this part of the Conservation Area
- Overview of proposals;
- Relevant planning heritage policy framework:
 - National guidance;
 - London Plan policy and guidance; and
 - LB Camden’s Local Development Framework.
- The compliance of the proposed works with heritage policy, and other material considerations.

Heritage Significance

SITE AND SURROUNDING CONTEXT

Chancery Court Hotel is located on the southern side of High Holborn, approximately 120 metres to the east of its junction with Kingsway and to the north of Lincoln Inn Fields.

The building is Grade II listed and comprises a central block and three subsequent wings / extensions focused around a central quadrangle courtyard. The building is the former London Head Office of Pearl Assurance PLC. It was converted into a luxury five star hotel, with restaurant and bar in 1999 - 2000.

The building's main facades rise to five storeys with attics and two storeys of dormers. The front and courtyard facades have a heavy Baroque style with engaged iconic columns and pilasters rising through the second to fourth floors.

The central courtyard is also in Baroque style and provides the main entrance to the Hotel, which is located on its eastern side. Pedestrian and vehicle access to the courtyard is via a passage, marked by a central archway, through the middle of the High Holborn frontage. Existing entrances to the current bar and restaurant, which are located at ground floor in the northern elements of the building along High Holborn, are accessed from the passage.

Chancery Court Hotel's Heritage Significance

The Building was built in four stages between 1912 and 1962. The Central Block, which includes the High Holborn frontage, comprised the first stage and was built between 1912 – 1919. The east block was added between 1929 – 1930, and the south-east extension and west block were constructed in the 1950s. The full extent of the frontage was completed in 1962.

It was Grade II Listed in 1974.

The building is within Bloomsbury Conservation Area and is noted in Camden's Conservation Area Appraisal as:

"The largest and most elaborate building in this stretch of High Holborn is the grade II listed former Pearl Assurance Building, at no's 247-261 (consec), a grand Edwardian Baroque composition by C Newman dating from 1910-12. These office headquarters were extended at various times: in similar style on the east side by P Moncton in the 1920s with later 1950s extensions at the rear. Of note is the Western House, Nos 245-246 a 1960 extension on the street frontage, designed by TP Bennett and Son in a contrasting modern style with a stone façade articulated by continuous ribbon windows (not listed). Vacated by Pearl Assurance in the 1990s, the building was converted by T P Bennett to the Chancery Court Hotel in 1998-2000. The near symmetrical front of the main building is faced in Portland Stone, and has a channelled grey granite ground floor, a giant Ionic order to the three upper floors, and two attic floors in steep pitched roof above a large cornice. A landmark feature of the building is the tall Baroque dome over the central arched entrance, which is visible in views along High Holborn to the east and west. The entire building is set back from the established building line on the south side of the street, allowing for wider pavements, a row of street trees, and an increased sense of openness in the streetscape. From the east, this set-back also allows for long views of No240, a lively, freestyle classical corner building dating from the late 19th Century, which is clad in stone and topped by a dome with an ornamental lantern."

The Heritage Statement which accompanied the original Listed Building Statement provides full details of the heritage features of the building.

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Existing Lighting

The Listed Building was lit by an existing lighting scheme.

On the High Holborn Façade this comprises:

- Metal halide uplights on the first floor ledge to accent columns and provide a soft highlight to the entablature;
- Tower ends are accentuated at a low-level with surface mounted sconces and with uplighting at high level;
- Central projecting tower is defined by oversized lanterns on either side of the archway entrance, metal halide uplights to the façade columns and at a high-level metal halide illuminating the arch above the entablature with higher level spotlights accenting the tower form;
 - Additional metal halide uplights accent to the tower is provided by high wattage metal halide projectors mounted atop the roof platforms on east and west ends of the building;
- Metal halide uplights at raised ground level to uplift the base of the building;
- Lanterns at balustrade.

Lighting on the walkway through to the courtyard comprises an oversized suspended lantern.

The Courtyard lighting mimics the High Holborn façade treatments, although a more subtle approach is taken.

The existing lighting strategy is considered in need of replacement; to provide a more balanced and nuanced design, to ease maintenance and update the technology for a more sustainable and energy-efficient installation.

Further details of the existing installation and its mounting and fixings are provided in the Visualisation Study.

Surrounding Context – Heritage Context

The historic importance of High Holborn began with the 17th and 18th century street pattern, which was developed during the 19th and 20th century as London expanded its commercial development east.

The site falls within Sub Area 9 of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The buildings within the sub-area are made from traditional red brick of the 17th and 18th century, and where they still survive are interspersed with stone buildings and others from the mid-20th Century which use glass and concrete.

The Bloomsbury Conservation Area includes a number of heritage buildings of varying, age, style and character. To the east along High Holborn and Kingsway a number of Grade II listed buildings are located, including:

- 114 & 115 High Holborn;
- 233 High Holborn;
- Africa House – 64 – 78 Kingsway;
- Roman Catholic Church of St Auselm & St Cecilia on Kingsway; and

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- Kingsway Chambers – 44 – 46 Kingsway
- To the south a number of Grade II listed buildings are located along Lincoln’s Inn Fields including Lincoln’s Inn New Hall and Library.

The majority of the listed buildings are of a smaller scale and proportion in comparison to Chancery Court Hotel. However, along High Holborn, to the east of the site, a number of larger surrounding buildings for example the Telephone Exchange and Mid City Place are located.

Overview of Proposals

Lighting Proposals

The application seeks (retrospective) permission for the (installed) lighting strategy.

The exterior lighting scheme aims to provide articulation of the building by structuring the exterior building facades and features to enhance the appreciation of the key heritage features of the Grade II Listed building and its presence on High Holborn.

In order to respect and minimise impact on the original heritage fabric, the lighting strategy approach has been informed by advice from Heritage Specialists Giles Quarme Associates.

The design is largely based on the existing exterior lighting infrastructure; existing power infrastructure and fixture locations have been retained and reused where feasible.

The mainly incandescent halogen and metal halide based fixtures will be replaced by predominately dimmable LED based fixtures to allow for more nuanced lighting effects and to reduce maintenance and undesired visibility of lighting equipment.

The Visualisation Study provides full details of the lighting scheme, proposed luminaires and assesses the obtrusive light resulting from the proposals.

Legislative and Policy Context

Legislative Context

The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides the legislation that is used to assess the impact of proposals on listed buildings and conservation areas.

The Act deals with the listing of buildings of special architectural historic interest, the authorisation of works affecting Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas and other supplemental matters affecting the historic environment.

Of particular relevance are Sections 16 and 66 of the Act regarding the setting of Listed Buildings and Section 69 that deals with Conservation Areas. Section 72 of the Act requires that, in the exercise of their planning functions, local planning authorities shall pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

National Planning Policy Framework (“NPPF”) 2012

Section 12 sets out policy guidance in respect to conserving and enhancing the historic environment. In determining applications, LPAs should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting (Para 128).

Para 131 sets out that in determining applications, LPAs should take into account:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities, including their economic viability; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Proposals that preserve elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of Heritage Assets (including Conservation Areas) should be treated favourable (Para 137).

When consider the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (Para 132).

Not all elements of a Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area should be treated either as substantial harm (and policies of paragraph 133 applied) or less than substantial harm (and policies of paragraph 134 applied), as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area as a whole (Para 138).

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use (Para 134).

London Plan (as Revised by Early Minor Alterations) 2013

The London Plan is the adopted spatial development strategy for London.

In relation to the determination of applications for planning permission/listed building consent, Policy 7.8 ‘Heritage Assets and Archaeology’ states:

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“c) Development should identify, value, conserve, restore, re-use and incorporate heritage assets, where appropriate.

d) Development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.

e) New development should make provision for the protection of archaeological resources, landscapes and significant memorials. The physical assets should, where possible, be made available to the public on-site. Where the archaeological asset or memorial cannot be preserved or managed on-site, provision must be made for the investigation, understanding, recording, dissemination and archiving of that asset”.

Camden Development Framework

The relevant policies from LB Camden Core Strategy (November 2010) in respect to heritage comprise:

- Policy CS14 Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage;
- Policy DP24 Securing High Quality Design; and
- Policy DP25 Conserving Camden’s Heritage.

Development should be of the highest standard of design that respects local character and context (Policy CS14).

In order to maintain the character of Camden’s conservation areas (Policy DP25), LB Camden will:

- Take account of conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans when assessing applications with conservation areas;
- Only permit development within conservation areas that preserve and enhances the character and appearance of the area;
- 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; and
- Preserve trees and green spaces which contribute to the character of a conservation area and which provide a setting for Camden’s architectural heritage.

As described above, the site falls within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area where it is described as the largest and most elaborate building in this stretch of High Holborn.

Assessment of Application Proposals

The previous detailed analysis of the site and buildings referred to within this Report (and detailed in full in the Heritage Statement which accompanied the original Listed Building Statement) has been used to inform the lighting strategy proposals. Further advice has also been sought from Heritage Specialists, Giles Quarme Associates, to ensure impact on the original heritage fabric is minimised.

The exterior lighting scheme aims to provide articulation to the Grade II listed building by structuring the exterior building facades and features to enhance the appreciation of the key heritage features of the listed building and its presence on High Holborn in accordance with Para 131 of the NPPF and Camden Policy DP25.

Through improving the ability to appreciate the building's heritage, the lighting proposals are considered to better reveal the significance of the Listed Building and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area (Paras 131 and 137 of the NPPF).

Moreover, the lighting provides part of the wider refurbishment strategy which aims to ensure the continued viable use of the Listed Building as a Hotel in accordance with NPPF objectives (Para 131).

The existing lighting does not form part of the original heritage fabric (Pearl Assurance Building). It was installed in 2000/01 as part of the refurbishment works when the building was converted to a Hotel. This lighting is considered in need of replacement: to provide a more balanced and nuanced design; to ease maintenance; and update the technology for a more sustainable and energy-efficient installation. Where the existing lighting will be removed, it is not considered to lead to any harm to the heritage asset.

The design of the proposed lighting is largely based on the existing lighting infrastructure to avoid intervention in the heritage fabric. Existing power infrastructure and fixture locations have been retained and re-used where feasible. Any new fixtures or mounts will be carefully installed to minimise impact on the heritage fabric.

Any harm is therefore considered to be less than substantial (Para 134 of the NPPF). In accordance with Para 134 of the NPPF, the public benefits of the lighting proposals would exceed any minimal harm caused. These benefits include, inter alia:

- Enhancing the appreciation of the key heritage features of the Listed Building within Bloomsbury Conservation Area;
- Final stage of the refurbishment measures which will ensure the Grade II building remains in viable economic use; and
- A more sustainable and energy-efficient lighting design.

Following the revisions since March 2013, the proposed lighting is now considered to be entirely appropriate and sympathetic to the character of the Grade II Listed Building and has responded to the previous concerns of Officers. It will strike an appropriate balance between highlighting the important Grade II listed building within this part of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and protecting the amenity of guests and residents through an appropriate level of lighting provision.