

<b>Members Briefing Report</b>		<b>Expiry Date:</b>	19/08/2014	<b>Officer:</b>	Obote Hope
<b>Application Address</b>		<b>Application Number(s)</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Signature</b>		<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Signature</b>
County Hotel Upper Woburn Place London WC1H 0JW		1) 2014/4201/P 2) 2014/4202/A			
<b>Proposal(s)</b>					
Installation of new shopfront to the rear section of the building to Woburn Walk elevation with associated entrance, external decking, access stair and railings for use by the ancillary restaurant following the conversion of the existing conference room in association with the existing hotel use and the display of 3 x non-illuminated advertisement to the front and side elevations.					
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>		1) Grant conditional planning permission 2) Grant conditional advertisement consent			
<b>Application Type:</b>		1) Full planning permission 2) Advertisement consent			
<b>Consultations</b>	<b>Date advertised</b>	<b>21 days elapsed</b>		<b>Date posted</b>	<b>21 days elapsed</b>
Press notice	17/07/2014	07/08/2014	Site notice	14/07/2014 and 30/07/2014	04/08/2014 20/08/2014
	<b>Date sent</b>	<b>21 days elapsed</b>	<b># Notified</b>	<b># Responses</b>	<b># Objections</b>
<b>Adjoining Occupier letters</b>	08/07/2014	29/07/14	54	7	6
<b>Summary of consultation responses:</b>	<p><b>Objections were received from 6 &amp; 6A Woburn Walk, 9A Woburn Walk, Woburn Walk Residents and Traders Association, 18A Woburn Walk are follows:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposed new entrance and terrace area would result in increased noise.</li> <li>The Ambassadors Hotel, which lies on the opposite side of the Walk, has incorporated the bar and restaurant within the building (no external open space onto the Walk) with access via Upper Woburn Place. Demonstrating it is possible for a hotel abutting the Walk to have both eating and drinking facilities without an unacceptable impact on the quality of life of residents on the Walk.</li> <li>Woburn Walk is a small pedestrian walkway. Residents and traders co-exist harmoniously on the Walk by virtue of a reasonable balance of the needs of each group that has been reached over the years and through the forum of the Woburn Walk Resident and Traders Association.</li> <li>Proposal will add to the traffic and noise on the street during the evening. As Residents we are already woken by regular sound pollution from early morning and</li> </ul>				

late night deliveries to the hotels at the end of the Walk.

- Woburn Walk is a narrow walkway. As a consequence street noise is readily transmitted along the Walk and into the residential properties. The buildings were constructed such that both the living room and main bedroom are at the front of the property directly overlooking the Walk. These properties are Grade II\* listed. As a result, noise abatement using double glazing and other means is prohibited.
- Commercial premises with tables and chairs on Woburn Walk currently operate from 8am to 6pm on Monday to Saturday which means that the evenings, and Sundays are quieter for those of us who live here;
- The partial demolition of the razor wire topped brick wall to Woburn Walk and its replacement with decorative wrought iron balustrade is welcome.
- It's recommended that the design of the balustrade echoes the existing decorative metal work on the hotel forecourt.
- Unsure about the opening hours and clarification if alcohol would be served or music would be played. The proposed opening hours would be stipulated.

**Officer response:**

- The proposed "L" shape timber screening for the external decking area would be erected towards north-east elevation towards residential flats. However, the raised terrace would be set back 6.7m, there are no windows and door to the flank elevation and it is not considered that the proposed raised ground terrace would have a detrimental impact to the neighbouring flats due to its setting.
- The use of the redundant spaces both internal and external would benefit the existing area by providing vitality and viability to the area. Whilst, bringing the side elevation back into use that is currently in disrepair as the side elevation consists of a number of storage facilities, intimidating façade, temporary structures. Whilst, providing a visual improvement along Woburn Walk and introduce a façade that compliments the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.
- The existing flank elevation of the Hotel is of no merit and the proposed shopfront would improve the existing flank elevation by bring vibrancy and better cohesion in design between the existing hotel frontage at Upper Woburn place and to Woburn Walk.
- The proposed new Bistro would follow the internal changes to the existing bar and conference room being changed into a restaurant. The applicant/agent stipulates that the recent change of the existing hotel pub to a café has now removed all traditional pub activities from the premises. Whilst, maintaining that it is not a proposal for a sports bar with TV screens. A time restriction on the external seating area would ensure that the Bistro use would be acceptable.
- The decking area proposed is for a restaurant with external seating area that would include noise preventative measures such as the timber screening.
- The proposed application is assessed on its own merit and it is considered that proposed external seating would be used between 11:00AM and 21:00 (last orders at

**Consultation responses (including CAACs):**

20:30) only on Monday to Fridays. No weekend or Public Bank holidays)

- The decking area proposed is for an ancillary restaurant the external seating area and the proposed decking area would close at 21:00, notwithstanding, the proposed decking area would be a minimum of 6.7m from no 4 boundary wall.
- The use of the redundant spaces both internal and external would bring the side elevation back into use that is currently in disrepair as the side elevation consists of a number of storage facilities, intimidating façade, and temporary structures. Whilst, providing a visual improvement along Woburn Walk and introduce a façade that compliments the Bloomsbury Conservation Area
- The proposed balustrade for the proposed gate and the decking area would be subject to separate condition)

(The proposed balustrade for the proposed gate and the decking area would be subject to separate condition)

- No music is proposed to be transmitted outside; the use of terrace would be conditioned to be used between 11:00AM and closes at 21:00 (last orders at 20:30) only on Monday to Fridays and 11:00AM to 18:00 Saturdays, There will be no opening on Sundays or Public Bank Holidays

**Bloomsbury CAAC** object on the following grounds:

- The proposed large external raised deck/terrace and associated illuminated signs and activity would have a detrimental impact to the character appearance and amenities of this outstanding Regency Grade II\* listed Street and should be rejected as harmful to the CA and LB's.

**Officers comment**

- The proposed application was revised the proposed design of the balustrade and the proposed internally illuminated signs were considered to be unacceptable. Therefore, those elements are now revised)

## Site Description

The County Hotel by C Lovett Gill (opened in 1940's), immediately to the south and adjacent to the British Medical Association and steps up to eight storeys. The County Hotel is situated on the corner with Upper Woburn Place and the pedestrianised Woburn Walk. The building exhibits mix of semi neo-classical façade with art deco references in its detailing and is of some architectural merit. The facade to Upper Woburn Place is a combination of traditional red brick and banded render. The Hotel provides 175 guest rooms. The basement and ground floors accommodates ancillary bar, reception area, conference rooms, guest restaurant including office facilities and guest toilets at lower ground floor level.

The hotel is in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The property is not listed. However, the property is identified as making a positive contribution to the Bloomsbury conservation area. The property is located within the Central London Area for land use purposes.

Upper Woburn Place is a busy north south through road with high traffic volumes and equally high pedestrian footfall. Woburn Walk in contrast is a quiet pedestrian street running east from Upper Woburn Place through to Duke's Road. At its west end Woburn Walk is bounded by tall buildings. The County Hotel and The Ambassadors Hotel which face Upper Woburn Place and present a tunnel like effect to Woburn Walk. Towards its east end the scale of Woburn Walk is much more 'user friendly' with small local shops opening on to a pleasant pedestrian mews type environment with trees and benches.

## **Relevant History**

No relevant planning history

## **Relevant policies**

### **NPPF 2012**

### **London Plan 2011**

### **LDF Core Strategy**

CS1 (Distribution of Growth)  
CS5 (Managing the Impact of Growth and Development)  
CS3 ( Other highly accessible areas)  
CS7 (Promoting Camden's centres and shops)  
CS8 (Promoting a successful and inclusive Camden economy)  
CS9 (Achieving a successful Central London)  
CS14 (Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage)  
CS18 ( Dealing with our waste and encouraging recycling)

### **Development Policies**

DP12 (Supporting strong centres and managing the impact of food, drink, entertainment and other town centre uses)  
DP14 Tourism development and visitor accommodation  
DP15 (Community and leisure uses)  
DP24 (Securing high quality design)  
DP 25 (Conserving Camden's Heritage)  
DP26 (Managing the impact of development on occupiers and neighbours)  
DP28 (Noise and vibration)  
DP30 (Shopfronts)

### **Camden Planning Guidance (2013)**

CPG1 Design  
CPG 6 Amenities

Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy 2011

**Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007**

## Assessment

### 1. Consultation Process / background information:

1.1 The application was re-advertised following concerns that the site notice was removed (concerns received from the neighbouring properties, the Bloomsbury CAACs and the local resident association).

1.2 The objections were discussed with the agent for the application and it was advised that the proposed scheme should be discussed with a representative from Bloomsbury CAAC and the chair/spokesperson of the Bloomsbury Residence association. The Bloomsbury CAAC responded and their points were addressed on a separate consultation page this is published online. However, no further contact was forthcoming from the Residents Association.

### 1.3 Revisions

- Removed illumination to all signage
- Detailed design of balustrade and the fencing

### 1.4 Proposal

1.5 Advertisement consent is sought for:

- The display of 2 x non- illuminated fascia signs and 1 x non-illuminated hanging sign to the front and side elevations.

1.6 Planning permission is sought for:

- The partial demolition of the existing wire topped brick wall to Woburn Walk elevation for the formation of a new entrance with disabled access and decorative wrought iron balustrades.
- There is a current raised upper ground floor area which is currently used as an external storage area that would be removed and enlarged for the proposed raised decking area. The proposed decking area would be used as an external seating.
- The proposed new bistro would include changes to the entrance and installation of a new shopfront to the Woburn Walk elevation. The existing conference room at raised ground floor level extends the width of the rear/flank elevation of the hotel that overlooks the hotel service yard, that predominantly, consist of lean-to, temporary structures that would facilitate the proposed outdoor seating area and the tables would consist of acoustically treated timber screen to the Woburn Walk elevation.
- The applicant also proposes a new external staircase and retractable awning to the Woburn Walk elevation.

1.7 The key considerations are:

- Land use
- waste
- Design impact on character and appearance of the host building and conservation area;
- Amenity;
- Adverts – Public safety and Visual amenity

## 2 Land use

2.1 Policies CS10 and DP15 aim to protect and provide community facilities that meet the needs of Camden's growing population. The site is within the King's Cross growth area where the Council encourages a concentration of mixed-use development that makes full use of land and buildings. The site also lies within the Central London Area where policy DP14 seeks to concentrate large scale tourism development and

accommodation. The hotel consists of 175 guest room with shared bathroom facilities, the rooms are shared at ground floor level by a reception, public bar, hotel kitchen, back of house, guest dining and according to the agent an underutilized conference room, shared toilets are provided at lower ground floor level. Therefore the functionality of the hotel use would remain the same. Therefore, the increased in ancillary floorspace would be a comparison between existing and proposed following the proposed new Bistro would allow the internal changes to the existing bar and conference room being changed into restaurant.

2.2 The development would not constitute a change of use due to the definition of a C1 use, as the use of a hotel would generally have an ancillary bar and restaurant facilities, The applicant indicated that the purpose of the change is to create a viable and usable space for the main guests. Whilst, allowing the local community to access the use of restaurant during set times on Woburn Place.

2.3 At least 50% of the properties at ground floor level along Woburn Walk are in commercial use, reflecting the traditional commercial activities along Upper Woburn Place. This includes cafés, shops, restaurants and hotel facilities within close proximity. The existing hotel use appropriately contributes to the general atmosphere and mix-use of the walk. The open terrace will not be directly opposite the residential component situated at the east end of Woburn Walk, the site is opposite the Ambassador Hotel located at the west end of the walk. The agent has indicated that the intention of the applicant is to make use of the under-utilised internal conference area and attract more patrons to the hotel due to the lack of en-suite bathroom facilities. Which gives the hotel a “low-budget feel”, would make better use of the redundant spaces both internal and external would benefit the existing area by providing vitality and viability to the area. The external area currently consist of a number of storage facilities an intimidating façade, temporary structures and lean-to-roofs. The proposed provides improvement along Woburn Walk and introduces a façade that compliments the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

### **3. Design**

3.1 The property in question is not listed. However, The Tavistock House North to the rear and number 4 Woburn Walk to the flank elevation are listed as grade II and grade II\*. There are no windows to the flank elevation and the proposed works is for the creation of a new shopfront, the proposed works would involve partial demolition to the eight foot painted brickwork boundary. That would give way to a conventional boundary treatment and bring into use the existing raised ground floor. The enlarged outdoor and external seating area would provide more internal and external commercial floor space created at lower-ground floor level for the use of washroom facilities and ground floor for the enlarged outdoor decking area. The internal floor space at ground floor level would be transformed from the existing conference room into a more functional ancillary Bistro. Therefore, the existing bar and restaurant would be turned into a café.

3.2 Planning permission is sought to remove the existing boundary wall with barbed wire and replace with new fence, gate and external stairs arrangement at ground floor. At raised ground floor it's proposed to create a decking area that would result in additional floor space being created at lower-ground floor level. The proposed fence and gate would be arranged so as to essentially appear as a commercial frontage and to provide an external seating area with additional storage area (including toilet facilities) for the Hotel use.

3.3 The existing 3.2m high fence with barbed wire would be replaced with new wrought iron railings painted black on a partial section of retained boundary wall approximately 2.1m in height. The existing emergency service gate would be replaced with new timber door to service/fire escape area to match the design of the existing gate.

3.4 The proposed black wrought iron decorative balustrade towards the end of the terrace, located towards the west elevation towards Upper Woburn Place, currently matches the design of the balustrade at the front elevation at Woburn Place. However, the proposed balustrade for the terrace and wrought Iron fencing would not be of an appropriately design, the conservation officer felt the proposed balustrade is currently overly fussy due and a more simplified approach would be in keeping with the Woburn Walk Frontage. And as such, would be conditioned subject to the granting of this application.

3.5 The existing service area at upper ground floor level would be used as a terraced area. The area at present is an underused flat roof at raised ground floor level, the proposed roof would measure approximately 10sqm but would be enlarged to 12.3sqm. Notwithstanding, there would only be a small increase in floor area of the terrace area. It is considered that the proposed alterations would be acceptable in terms of its impact from a design perspective.

3.6 The existing flank elevation of the Hotel is of no merit and the proposed shopfront would improve the existing flank elevation by bringing vibrancy and an improved cohesion in design terms between the existing hotel frontage at Upper Woburn Place and to Woburn Walk. The wall on the flank elevation would be repainted and the existing Crittall windows would be replaced with double glazed Crittall windows that would match the aesthetics of the host building. The existing external staircase would be relocated and would provide access for the existing fire escape at ground floor level. Therefore, the proposed works would broadly meet DP24, DP25 and CS14 of the LDF.

#### **4. Residential Amenity**

4.1 The proposed timber screening for the external decking area would be erected towards the north-east elevation towards the residential flats, there are no windows or doors to the flank elevation and it is not considered that the proposed raised ground terrace would have a detrimental impact to the neighbouring flats due to its setting. The potential increased use of the side entrance on Woburn Walk is considered appropriate for the use of the decking area just before midday and closed at 21:00 on Monday to Fridays and as such, would not have a detrimental impact with the existing residential amenities.

4.2 It is proposed to install a 1.6m (high) timber clad acoustic screen from the finished floor level of the decking between the terrace and flanking windowless elevation of No.4 Woburn Place (the closest residential property), that is approximately 6.7m away from the proposed terrace area in distance. The proposal is designed to shield noise impact and offer some privacy to customers at the Bistro adjacent to the site the area would be predominantly used as a seating area and therefore, will limit the transmission of noise along the south elevation. The proposed acoustic screens would be conditioned.

4.3 Notwithstanding, the terrace area would have acoustic screening to limit the associated noise impact, the use of the hotel as a whole in particular to the proposed terrace area would see a slight increase of the current underutilised floor space. The use of the restaurant would be advertised on Upper Woburn Place Elevation which currently has two entrances with a dedicated entrance. Therefore, the proposal would meet planning policy DP 26, DP 28 and CS 5 of the LDF.

#### **5. Adverts**

5.1 The display of a non-illuminated "The Leaping Squirrel" fascia sign would be located on Woburn Walk at ground floor level, measuring 7.5m (width) x 0.5m (height) x 0.01m (depth). The sign is located approximately 3.5m from ground to base at ground floor level, attached to the face of the building. The maximum height of the individual letters and symbol would be 0.01m. The sign would be constructed using spray painted weather resistant board with profile 'picture frame' board with profile 'picture frame' with cream off-white brown/gold letters.

5.2 The display of a non-illuminated "The leaping squirrel" projecting sign would be located on the corner of Woburn Walk and Upper Woburn Place, measuring 1.0m (width) x 0.8m (height) x 0.07m (depth). The sign is located 2.8m from ground to base and would project 1.1m from the face of the building. The maximum height of the individual letters and symbol would be 0.10m. The sign would be constructed using spray painted weather resistant board with profile 'picture frame' board with profile 'picture frame' with cream off-white brown/gold letters.

5.3 The display of a non-illuminated "three bags full" fascia sign would be located on Upper Woburn Place, measuring approximately 0.5m (width) x 0.1m (height) and 0.05m (depth). The sign is located 2.8m from

ground to base and would project 1.1m from the face of the building. The maximum height of the individual letters and symbol and would 0.01m. The sign would be constructed using spray painted weather resistant board with profile 'picture frame' with cream off-white brown/gold letters.

5.4 The proposed awning to east elevation would be 2.7m from ground to base and would be fully retractable, meeting the minimum height requirement of 2.3m in CPG 1.

#### Visual Amenity

5.5 The proposed signs would not obscure any architectural features of the building and are considered acceptable in terms of proportions and design. The signs would not represent an unduly obtrusive element in the street scene or disturb residents or occupiers. This element of the proposal would not therefore harm the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation area.

#### Public Safety

5.6 The proposed signage, by virtue of their position, height and location would not represent harm to either pedestrian or vehicle traffic. The proposal therefore raises no public safety concerns.

### **6 Waste**

6.1 Imperial London Hotels operate seven hotels in Camden and therefore operate their own in-house refuse collection system. Currently refuse is collected daily in the early morning. There is an open service lift platform up to street level on the left hand side of the hotel forecourt. Refuse is brought up on the lift from the refuse storage facility below street level at the front of the hotel every day and loaded directly onto the refuse truck. There are no changes proposed to the current refuse collection arrangement

### **7 Other matters**

7.1 As discussed above, the residents association thoughts are very much welcome, and as such, it was agreed with the agent to open a discussion of the proposed scheme and try to alleviate the concerns in regards to the terrace design (namely, the balustrade, the design of the proposed fence, and use of the site). The applicant provided a supporting statement that addressed all the concerns from all interested parties was published online.

7.2. The proposed delivery times would be in accordance with the existing hotel time table and as such, is not considered that the proposed Bistro would have a significant detrimental impact in regards to pollution, increased the potential impact of traffic movement nor have a negative impact of the quality of life to the neighbouring residential flats.

### **8 Conclusion**

8.1 The proposed signs would be non-illuminated and would protect the character and appearance of the building. The proposed external seating area and ancillary restaurant use are acceptable. The proposed reconfiguration of the hotel at ground and lower ground floor level would result in a welcomed change to the flank elevation at Upper Woburn Place There are already commercial uses established on Upper Woburn Place, Therefore, the proposed restaurant use would not have a detrimental impact to the host building or the wider conservation area.

8.2 The proposed terrace due to the positioning would not have a detrimental impact to the neighbouring properties. Furthermore, the proposed terrace use would be conditioned in terms of its opening and closing hours.

### **9. Recommendation:**

1) Grant conditional planning permission

2) Grant conditional advertisement consent.

**DISCLAIMER**

**Decision route to be decided by nominated members on Monday 1st December 2014. For further information please go to [www.camden.gov.uk](http://www.camden.gov.uk) and search for 'members briefing'.**