

PD9586/EK/GA/HB

15 December 2014

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Dear Sir/Madam,

Site: Montagu Hotel, 15 Montagu Street, Camden, WC1B 5BJ.

Application: Installation of a raised deck to the rear of the hotel, new white timber door providing access to the deck, retractable awning, means of enclosure and the relocation of existing air conditioning unit.

Montagu Evans LLP has been instructed by Red Carnation Hotels to prepare a short heritage assessment of their proposals for the installation of a decking area to the rear of the hotel, within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

The application comprises the following:

1. Completed application form for Planning and Listed Building Consent;
2. Covering letter including Design and Access/Heritage Statement;
3. Schedule of documents;
4. Schedule of drawings;
5. Site location plan;
6. Drawings; and
7. Noise Impact Assessment.

Given the nature of the proposals in this instance, we have set out our heritage assessment in this letter. In preparing this assessment we have visited the site; reviewed the application drawings; and had regard to local, regional and national policy, guidance and legislation.

HERITAGE DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

The Application Site

The application site is located on Montagu Street, within the constituency of the London Borough of Camden.



Figure 1 – Montagu Hotel Red Line Plan (Source: Montagu Evans)

Context

The Montague Hotel forms part of an 1800s terrace, developed by the Bedford Estate. The properties are of four storeys in height with a continuous parapet and are built in a yellow stock brick with a continuous band at third-floor sill level and a rusticated stucco ground floor and basement level. Montague Hotel is located on the east side of the street. A rectangular private communal garden to the rear of the hotel separates the buildings on Montague Street from those on Bedford Place.

The east side of Montague Street is characterised by a number of sizeable hotels, whilst many of the remaining properties on both sides of the street remain in residential use.

Montague Hotel is located within the southern portion of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and is Grade II listed, with the description as follows:

"Numbers 12-26 and attached railings including Montague Hotel (Numbers 12-20).

Terrace of 18 houses. C1803-6. By James Burton. Built by WE Allen, altered. Yellow stock bricks with stucco ground floors. Stucco sill band at 3rd floor level. Nos. 15-17 and Nos. 22 and 23 slightly projecting. Gateway to rear gardens (qv) between Nos. 20 and 21. 4 storeys and basements. 3 windows each. Round-arched doorways with reeded door frames or sidelights, mostly 2-leaf doors; Nos. 17, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 27, 28 and 29 with patterned fanlights. No.13, door replaced by window. No.19 with mosaic top doorstep with words "White Hall". Gauged brick flat arches to recessed sash windows, most with original glazing bars. Nos. 18, 19 and 20 with glazing bars forming patterns of octagons, squares and ladders, to sides of panes, on ground and 1st floor. Nos. 21 and 22 with patterned glazing bars to ground floor and No.26 to 1st floor. 1st floor windows with cast-iron balconies. Parapets. Rear elevations of Nos. 25-29 with bowed bays. INTERIORS: not inspected. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings with urn finials to areas".

The rear of the hotel has undergone a series of alterations, with a number of later additions in connection with the hotel use that are of less significance than the original features of the building.

The Application Proposals

The application proposals outlined within this application are for the installation of a raised deck to the rear of the hotel, including the installation of a new white timber door providing a new access point to the deck area, a retractable awning, a means of enclosure and the relocation of existing air conditioning unit.

The Hotel has an existing outside deck area situated to the right of the tea room/conservatory (when viewing the hotel from the rear communal garden area). The proposals in this application seek a similar structure to be constructed to the left of the conservatory, forming a symmetry to the appearance of the hotel at the rear.

At current the proposed site comprises a small decked area with steps down to a small courtyard which currently facilitates three small tables and six chairs. On the other side of the courtyard, another flight of steps provide access over the original brick boundary wall.

A new door is proposed, providing a new access point to the terrace area from the hotel. A later addition single storey extension is situated to the rear of the hotel which currently comprises a store room. It is at this point, adjacent to the conservatory, that the door will be situated. The existing wall at this point is not believed to be an original feature and the new door would be white timber in order to remain in keeping with the general character of the hotel.

Balustrades, measuring at least 1.1m in height, will enclose the raised deck in order to fulfil building regulation standards. These will be located on the inside of the existing railings and boundary wall, protecting the significance of these original features.

A retractable awning is proposed, allowing protection to the raised deck from the weather. The awning would be fixed to the later addition extension, thereby posing little threat to the original fabric of the building.

Proposals also include the relocation of the air conditioning unit, as detailed on the plans. A Noise Impact Assessment has been undertaken to ensure that the relocation of the air conditioning unit does not cause undue harm to the surrounding properties and to confirm that the atmospheric noise emissions from the plant are within the criteria required by the Council.

Relevant Legislation and Policy

Statutory Provisions

Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 says that:

“In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”

Section 72(1) of the same act states, in respect of Conservation Areas, that:

“In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any functions under or by virtue of any of the provisions mentioned in subsection (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.”

“Preserving” has been defined by the Courts to be the avoidance of harm.

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires applications to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by development proposals. The level of detail should be proportionate to an asset’s importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on its significance.

The NPPF goes on to note at **paragraph 137** that:

“Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.”

The NPPF (2012) defines significance 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

In accordance with **Policy 7.8 (Heritage assets and archaeology)** of the Revised Early Minor Alterations London Plan (2013), development should identify, value, conserve, restore, re-use and incorporate heritage assets, where appropriate. It further states that:

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

Camden's Local Development Framework

Strategic **Policy CS14** of the adopted Core Strategy (November 2010) notes that the Council will ensure that Camden's places and buildings are attractive, safe and easy to use by:

"Preserving and enhancing Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens."

In accordance with **Policy DP25** of the adopted Development Policies Document (November 2010), the Council recognises the need to maintain the character of Camden's conservation areas. As such, the Council intend to:

"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."

In respect of the borough's listed buildings the Council will:

"f) Only grant consent for a change of use or alterations and extensions to a listed building where it considers this would not cause harm to the special interest of the building; and

g) Not permit development that it considers would cause harm to the setting of a listed building."

Character of the Conservation Area

English Heritage's 2008 Conservation Principles seeks to provide guidance on the sustainable management of the historic environment, and defines policy on the assessment of significance. This document aims to prompt thought about significance through a consideration of the values that might be ascribed to a place, and proposes four broad groups intended to guide comprehensive assessment of those values.

The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (2011) recognises that Bloomsbury is widely considered to be an internationally significant example of a planned 17th and 18th century urban environment.

The quintessential character of the Conservation Area derives from the grid of streets enclosed by mainly three and four storey buildings and has a distinct urban character of broad streets interspaced by formal squares which provide landscape dominated focal points.

Due to the size and complexity of the Conservation Area, it has been sub-divided into a series of character areas. Montague Hotel falls within sub-area 6 – Bloomsbury Square/Russell Square/Tavistock Square – an area largely characterised by its three and four storey late 18th and 19th century terraces, surrounding a sequence of linked formal spaces. There is a strong consistency in the architectural vocabulary of the original terraced development and the architectural and historical importance is reflected in their listing, mostly at grade II.

Montague Street is identified within the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy as an area of uniform townscape with a high sense of enclosure created by the 1800s terraces on its east and west sides, all of which are listed grade II. A strong visual consistency is derived from the repeated identical frontages.

The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy identifies a general approach to maintaining the special interest of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. As part of this strategy it states that:

"Applications for development will be determined having regard to the special interest of the Conservation Area and the specialist advice of conservation officers".

Assessment of the Proposals

In regard to the above information and policy context, it is of our view that the proposals within this application will preserve the significance of the heritage asset and its setting within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

The proposals represent a low key addition to the property and it is believed that the proposed enclosure, new door and relocation of the air conditioning unit will have a minimal impact upon the existing fabric of the listed building. The development will not interfere with the original fabric of the building and will not cause harm to the special interest of the building.

The balustrades, whilst complying with building regulations, would enclose the raised deck from inside the listed railings and boundary wall. It is envisaged that the railings will still be visible, contributing to the aesthetic value of the original fabric of the building, whilst the balustrades would further provide protection to the railings and boundary wall from general day-to-day activity on the raised deck.

The decking area will be substantively shielded by the existing listed railings and landscaping. This screening will limit the visual impact of the development to the rear gardens and opposite terrace.

In regards to design, the proposed door providing access to the terrace from the hotel will be made of white timber in order to reflect the existing character and design of the building.

The proposals for a retractable awning represent a low key addition to the rear of the building. The fixing would be located on the later addition extension and, therefore, will have a minimal impact on the existing fabric of the listed building.

The development will improve the symmetry of hotel, matching the outdoor deck area on opposite side of the conservatory and will, by its nature, be a largely reversible addition to the property.


Furthermore, it is our view that the proposals represent an improvement to the overall function of the building that will significantly benefit the use of the space, allowing more accessible outdoor seating and amenity.

Conclusions

Having regard to the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of the listed building we are of the view that the proposals will preserve the significance of the heritage assets. This outcome will be achieved through the siting, scale and use of appropriate materials. We therefore also conclude the proposals are compliant with adopted planning policy and fulfil the tests set out in legislation.

We trust that you will find the above a satisfactory assessment of the proposals from a heritage point-of-view, but should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact Graham Allison (graham.allison@montagu-evans.co.uk) or Harriet Barber (harriet.barber@montagu-evans.co.uk) at this office.

Yours faithfully,



Montagu Evans LLP