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Via email:



**Great Hall and Library at Lincoln's Inn
Alterations and Extensions
App references: 2015/4408/P; 2015/4541/L**

I am an architect, a long standing member of the Royal Institute of British Architects and with a track record building both public and private buildings in the capital.

I write in response to the above application solely from a context and design point of view.

I attended the public exhibition, which was staged for a few hours one day recently. I considered the plans that were on display and engaged in discussion with the project representatives at the exhibition.

My views therefore are formed with the exhibition plans very much in mind.

Context and existing building

Whilst the present Under-Treasurers house cannot be held as an exemplar of high quality architecture, indeed it is indisputably a poor replacement for the building that originally stood on this site. Its poor modelling and utilitarian detailing is redolent of a period of architecture where the charm and character of the buildings that define the public realm in the capital city were all but ignored. This present development proposal is therefore an opportunity to redress this issue and re-gain a small but nevertheless consequential change that might bear testimony to our present sensitivity to the value of conservation, not for narrow preservationist reasons, but as testament to our improved understanding of the value of the past and our confident ability to re-construct and add to the past in a way that displays the more complex pluralism that we strive to achieve not just in our communities and politics but in our building designs and public realm solutions which have the power to enhance the architecture of London. The question for the council is whether this is such a building.

It is my judgement that the proposed replacement Under-Treasurers house is not such a proposal that would enhance its context. There are a number of primary observations that justify this view:

Proposed architecture

From an external perspective the proposed building transparently reflects its construction: a half-brick outer skin of brickwork supported by an inner construction system and therefore not self-supporting or structural. This results in a stretcher-bond brickwork pattern, typical of 1930's domestic buildings or poor quality modern non load-bearing infill panel work. This therefore will neither weather in the same way as the adjacent Great Hall, nor will it look visually compatible. This is such an intrinsic component of the new proposals and one that has significant ramifications for the appearance and contextual harmony with the adjacent Great Hall. In short, the non-conservation approach to the construction of the replacement Under-Treasurers house will detract from its setting.

The proposed construction technique precludes the use of lime mortar, a fundamental aspect of the construction and appearance of the entire architectural ensemble of Lincoln's Inn. The introduction of inappropriate cement mortar is therefore inevitable. Such a choice would be unthinkable in terms of a conservation approach to the Great hall. Why, therefore should it be acceptable at such a prominent and adjacent site?

The radically different appearances of both buildings will have a significantly detrimental impact on the overall architectural composition of Lincoln's Inn.

The horizontally proportioned window openings of the proposed building are in direct contradiction to the harmonious and vertical openings elsewhere at Lincoln's Inn and in particular in the facades of the Great Hall. The random location of punched window openings with no resonance in the definition of the structural openings is not a modern design device that causes a pleasing juxtaposition with the adjacent Great Hall, it is merely utilitarian and is therefore a non-contextual design gesture.

The junction with wall and roof is again, so ruthlessly minimal, as to convey only a utilitarian design sensibility. This cannot be considered harmonious and therefore detracts from the appearance of the context.

Similarly the roof angles themselves express a compressed horizontality that is in direct contrast with the vertical exuberance of the Great Hall.

In summary, the handling of the building volume in composition, detailing and material terms is so utilitarian in nature as to be a clear case of potentially causing irreparable harm to an otherwise fine architectural context.

It is therefore my view that the presently proposed replacement for the Under Treasurers house should be rejected by the council.

Yours Faithfully,

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