



112A GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON WC1B 3NP

CHANGE OF USE OF PART GROUND FLOOR AND BASEMENT LEVELS -4 AND -5 FROM CAR PARK (SUI GENERIS) TO 166 BEDROOM HOTEL (CLASS C1), INCLUDING ALTERATIONS TO GROUND FLOOR ELEVATIONS ON GREAT RUSSELL STREET AND ADELINE PLACE.

Application for planning permission: 2015/3605/P

4 January 2016

The Bloomsbury Association objects to this application and a summary of our concerns was contained in our representation dated 2 August 2015. We indicated that we would be elaborating on these in subsequent submissions, of which this is one.

The applicant has not substantially varied the design proposal but is seeking to address the reasons for refusal given in the previous application (2013/5075/P) - to address a deficiency in the lack of sufficient technical support for the proposal. The current application is based on the submission of professional opinion to demonstrate that all the past reasons for refusal can be met, albeit with significant monitoring by local residents and/or the Council, and that all the objections can be overcome.

We are, as our summary statement indicated, particularly concerned that the proposal represents an intensification or over-development of the site for a single use - hotel - to the extent that its cumulative impacts on and off-site cannot be shown to be manageable without a significant and inappropriate degree of monitoring control. It is difficult to quantify over-development from first principles and the approach we have taken is to seek expert professional reviews of the supplementary information accompanying the application and to assess whether it is sufficiently robust to demonstrate that the proposal can be delivered without unmanageable, harmful impacts. Our own commissioned review of this information concluded that it cannot.

Adeline Place elevation

Drawing DMWR PL-00300 P1, showing a revision of the proposed elevation to Adeline Place, was made available on the Council's planning web page on 11 December 2015. In this respect, it is improper that details of the main public face of the proposal should be revealed only a few days before the application might have been determined although we note that the drawing is not included in the list of approved plans in the Officers' report.

It appears to be something that has been prepared quickly by an architect not previously involved in the project and perhaps unfamiliar with its design evolution. In its palette of materials, it makes no reference to the existing building and scant reference to the streetscape that contains it nor does it bear any resemblance to the CGI provided earlier by the applicant. Like it or not, the original Elsworth Sykes Partnership design is a well composed exercise in brutalism that meets the ground with a podium that does all the ill-mannered things that are associated with that particular style of architectural expression. The podium was a recognisable part of the building; it was articulated, it had solid and void and it had architectural integrity.

When the car park ramps were enclosed for security purposes with the present louvred screens to designs by Keith Horne Architects in 1998, this was done in coloured, powder coated aluminium to match the windows elsewhere in the hotel. They were not attractive but respected the architectural integrity of the building. They did not enhance the Conservation Area but were neutral in their effect.

This proposal is both damaging to the architectural expression of the existing building and to the Conservation Area that it faces. It ignores its context and applies a new, sterile, windowless 'shop front' that is screaming and shouting to make its presence known. As we commented in our letter dated 15 November 2015, the proposed modification to the building's cladding, by reason of its size, siting and method of construction would result in an overly dominant and incongruous addition that would be detrimental to the character and appearance of adjacent listed buildings, the streetscene, and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies CS5 (Managing the impact of growth and development) and CS14 (Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage) of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy; and policies DP24 (Securing high quality design) and DP25 (Conserving Camden's Heritage) of the Local Development Framework Development.

NPPF (paragraphs 64 and 66) states: 'Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.' It goes on to say 'Applicants will be expected to work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community'. There has been no such contact.

Officers' Report

Our previous representations have concluded that the proposal represents an over development of the site for a single use - hotel - to the extent that it is unviable and that its cumulative impacts on and off-site cannot be shown to be manageable without unmanageable harmful environmental impact. Furthermore, we believe that the proposal as described in the submitted drawings is not sufficiently robust to demonstrate that the proposal can be delivered. Indeed, to use this as a basis for testing the environmental impact of the proposal is unsound and, if decided on this basis, may be overturned on judicial review.

The Officers' Report recommends granting conditional planning permission subject to Section 106 agreement. Planning permission should not be granted where the permission cannot be implemented. We will elaborate on this further in due course.

In our Deputation Statement we indicated that the Officers' report is comprehensive, yet in parts misleading. In dealing with the issues, it sidesteps sensitive matters that cannot be reconciled with policy. The report fails to acknowledge the cumulative impact of changes to the character of the area brought about over a period of time, e.g. vehicle servicing, waste management, crime, noise etc. The lack of a restaurant or bar is highlighted, but ignores the presence of Vingt-Quatre, a recently established 120-seat restaurant, cafe and bar, open 24/7 with its licensed hours recently increased from 2am to 4am. This will inevitably become the 'de facto' restaurant and bar to this proposal. Its vehicle servicing and waste management are already points of concern to local residents, but is not reported. Similarly, the report mentions the adjoining Bloomsbury Conservation Area, but fails to acknowledge the potential impact on it or the objections from the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Advisory Committee.

There is no mention that servicing of the building is already restricted by the previous 1975 permission for development - Condition 5 states: "*No loading or unloading of goods, including fuel, by vehicles arriving at or departing from the premises shall be carried out otherwise than within the curtilage of the building.*" The reason - To avoid obstruction of the surrounding streets and to safeguard amenities to adjacent premises. The condition relates to the whole building and is as relevant now as it was then. A similar condition applies to the servicing of the Dominion Theatre from Great Russell Street. The Officers have chosen to set this aside without any discussion.

Conditions

The National Planning Policy Framework highlights that conditions should be practicable and reasonably enforceable. A condition should not be imposed if it cannot be enforced. Given the extent of environmental controls required to make this proposal acceptable in theory, such controls would be impracticable and an unreasonable burden for the Council to enforce over the lifetime of the proposal.

Moreover, we have indicated in our Deputation Statement that the Report recommends a wide range of issues that are unsuitable or impracticable for any legal agreement.

Notwithstanding the above, the draft Officers' Report had 14 numbered conditions on which we

commented in our e-mail dated 13 December 2015 and requested consideration be given to the following amendments to be included as an addendum to the papers put before Committee. These were not reflected in the final Report presented to Committee Members and are repeated here. Suggested modifications are highlighted in red.

Condition 2

The approved plans listed are not the most recent submitted for consideration by the applicant. The list also includes draft, illustrative or supplementary material that is neither binding on the applicant nor enforceable.

Condition 4

Currently states: The deliveries for the use hereby permitted shall not be carried out outside the hours of 0700 to 1800hrs every day including Sundays and bank holidays.

Suggested modification: The deliveries **and collections (including waste)** for the use hereby permitted shall not be carried out outside the hours **of 0900 to 2100hrs** every day including Sundays and bank holidays.

Our reason: to be consistent with conditions imposed at a Licensing Panel hearing held on 6 July 2005 and on subsequent review, when the Council resolved to grant the St Giles Hotel a variation to licensable activities under the Licensing Act 2003. The decision, reference APP\PREMISES-VARY(T)\000086, was agreed subject imposing the condition: "Disposal of rubbish will not take place before 9:00 am and/or after 9:00 pm". The various departments of the Council need to be consistent in conditions imposed to protect residential amenity otherwise they risk being unenforceable.

Condition 5

Currently states: Detailed drawings, or samples of materials as appropriate, in respect of the following, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before the relevant part of the work is begun:

A) Manufacturer's specification and details of all facing materials including colour and samples of those materials.

B) Plan, elevation and section drawings, including fascia, cornice, pilasters and glazing panels of the new hotel entrance at a scale of 1:10;

C) Details including sections at 1:10 of all windows (including jambs, head and cill), ventilation grills and external doors;

The relevant part of the works shall be carried out in accordance with the details thus approved and all approved samples shall be retained on site during the course of the works.

Suggested modification to item (B):

Plan, elevation and section drawings, including fascia, cornice, pilasters and glazing panels of the new hotel entrance at a scale of 1:10 **with plan, elevation and section drawings of the modifications to the ground floor and external paved areas of that part of the new hotel on Adeline Place at scales of 1:50 and 1:20;**

Our reason: To safeguard the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. Arguably, the Adeline Place frontage is more sensitive than the frontage to Great Russell Street, yet it is currently excluded from the condition. This is inconsistent.

Condition 10

Currently states: Prior to first occupation of the development, full details of the plant equipment and mitigation measures as set out in acoustic report hereby approved (ref: H2047/V09 06/11/2015) and providing confirmation that the cumulative external noise levels emitted from all plant/ machinery/ equipment working in tandem (with the exception of the emergency generators) at maximum capacity have met the noise criteria in the approved acoustic report, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

The details as approved shall be implemented prior to first operational use of the plant or occupation of the development and shall thereafter be permanently retained and maintained in accordance with the manufacturers' recommendations.

Suggested modification: begin **'Before development commences,** full details of the plant...'

Our reason: because this has not been done before. It is unproven and there is reason to be cautious. The entire viability of the proposal is dependent on this and adequate information had not yet been provided to demonstrate that the plant equipment and mitigation measures are viable without unmanageable, damaging impact on residential amenity.

Condition 11

Currently states: Prior to use of the development, details shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Council to confirm that noise emitted by standby or emergency generators during power outages or testing does not exceed the lowest daytime LAeq(15min) as measured or calculated according to BS4142:2014.

Suggested modification: referred to an e-mail from Sandy Brown Associates, dated 9 December 2015, concerning noise egress from plant. Two modifications are suggested that do not seem unreasonable mindful of the unusual and untried nature of the development:

- Measurement of the resulting plant noise egress to be conditioned at the end, rather than an updated assessment to be approved.
- A distinction to be made between life-safety power generation (for which a more relaxed criterion is reasonable) and standby power generation, which should be held to the same limits as other plant rather than specifically lumping them both together.

The Bloomsbury Association supports local residents in their objection to this proposal. The grant of planning permission on this basis would be unsafe and inconsistent with the Council's and national planning policies. We therefore urge the Council to refuse the application.

Jim Murray
Chairman
Bloomsbury Association

Copies to:
Keir Starmer, MP
Andrew Dismore, GLA
Colin Wilson, GLA
Councillor Adam Harrison, London Borough of Camden
Councillor Sabrina Francis, London Borough of Camden
Councillor Rishi Madlani, London Borough of Camden
Councillor Sue Vincent, London Borough of Camden
Raymond Yeung, London Borough of Camden
Bloomsbury Conservation Area Advisory Committee
Local residents and businesses