

## 38 Mount Pleasant, 156-158 Gray's Inn Road and 160-164 Gray's Inn Road: Initial heritage appraisal

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1591.6.1 Panther House heritage appraisal ADDENDUM May 2016 R1.docx

### Introduction

- 1 KMHeritage prepared Heritage Appraisal<sup>1</sup> to support an application for planning permission for the redevelopment of the site at 38 Mount Pleasant, 156-158 Gray's Inn Road and 160-164 Gray's Inn Road. Application ref 2015/6955/P remains to be determined.
- 2 This addendum deals with amendments to the proposed scheme, as described below. These amendments have been made following comments by Historic England and the London Borough of Camden on the submitted application.
- 3 The proposed amendments are illustrated in the document entitled *156-164 Gray's Inn Road/Panther House Planning Application Addendum* (AHMM, May 2016).
- 4 Our original Heritage and Townscape Appraisal sets out the history and heritage significance of the site, and this is not repeated here. This note should be read with that document.

### The amendments

- 5 The following are the amendments considered in this addendum. Note that the amendments mentioned are those principal external changes relating to the design and appearance of the proposed scheme only.

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<sup>1</sup> *38 Mount Pleasant, 156-158 Gray's Inn Road and 160-164 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8EU: Heritage and townscape appraisal*, KMHeritage, December 2015

- The rooftop of Panther House is to be angled at 5<sup>th</sup> floor, and at 3<sup>rd</sup> floor fronting Mount Pleasant, resulting in a reduced massing
- Loading bay doors at Mount Pleasant elevation to be reinstated with thermally performing timber doors, glazing and 'spandrel' to match existing, and more Crittall windows are to be retained
- Original iron hoppers to be moved from where they will be made redundant by rooftop additions, and placed on the Mount Pleasant façade.
- Two chimneys to be retained, repaired and extended to align with the new parapet where setbacks to the building envelope allows.
- Proposed meeting room space at roof level (6<sup>th</sup> floor) now omitted from the proposals.
- The flank wall of 160-164 Gray's Inn Road is to be constructed in brick instead of concrete panels.
- The shop front of 160 Gray's Inn Road is to be retained, and new shop fronts to 162 to 164 Gray's Inn Road will match the shop front design of No. 160 Gray's Inn Road.
- The roof top massing (at 6<sup>th</sup> floor) is to be set back further to reduce the view from Gray's Inn Road. The 6<sup>th</sup> floor façade treatment is to be of a lighter colour and materiality than previously proposed.
- The rear façade of Gray's Inn Road has been amended to suit new residential layouts.
- Reduction of bin store/service area at GF and giving the space back to an active frontage facing the courtyard.
- An external bridge is provided across the opening to Gray's Inn Road.
- Introduction of voids GF BY and moving of void at 5F PH
- The Brain Yard ground floor frontage to the route through the site is to be translucent

### **The effect of the revisions to the permitted scheme**

- 6 The changes, when considered against the totality of the submitted scheme, are relatively minor but are undoubtedly positive. They combine to cause a moderately lesser effect on the heritage significance of the listed building than the submitted scheme. In all instances they help to ensure that the permitted scheme is a realistic and implementable one - a scheme that will actually allow the proposed

regeneration of the site to succeed and thrive, thus providing the site with a long term future and allowing the scheme to make the contribution to Camden's economy and local character a that it promises. Both heritage significance and practicality are well served by this carefully considered and balanced range of amendments.

## Analysis

7 Our Heritage and Townscape Appraisal (December 2015) concluded that:

*The scheme will create useful, well-designed and attractive buildings between which will occur equally attractive and useful new and regenerated urban space. It will transform a largely hidden and under-appreciated urban block, refreshing the existing work space for 21<sup>st</sup> century use, and providing more up-to-date work space in addition to a range of new homes. The scheme creates permeability and reinforces the urban grain by means of a high-quality new public realm. It will create jobs and homes, and help to secure the contribution of the site to the borough and London over the long term.*

*The scheme will alter the site and its surroundings, but do so in a highly positive manner. The scheme, designed by the Stirling Award-winning practice of Allford Hall Monaghan Morris, is an excellent example of how to regenerate our cities by means of contemporary architecture that is nonetheless highly contextual, and which is visually pleasing and imaginative while delivering commercially viable development.*

*The proposed scheme will preserve and enhance heritage assets and townscape, and will deliver clear and substantial public benefits for Camden and its residents. The scheme will enhance the character and appearance of the Hatton Garden Conservation Area, the setting of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and the setting of listed buildings. For these reasons the proposed scheme will therefore comply with the law, and national and local policies and guidance for urban design and the historic built environment.*

8 It is clearly the case that the proposed development, as amended, will preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Hatton Garden Conservation Area and the setting of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area by virtue of the positive effect that the development will have on the setting of the conservation area, as well as preserving and enhancing the setting of the Grade II listed buildings on the western side of Gray's Inn Road.

9 Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires decision makers with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area to pay 'special attention... to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area'. It is important to note that the

legal requirement regarding satisfying Section 72(1) of the Act, established by *South Lakeland District Council v Secretary of State for the Environment and another* [1992] 1 ALL ER 573, is met if the proposed development leaves the conservation area unharmed.

- 10 It would be extremely difficult to portray the proposed scheme for 38 Mount Pleasant, 156-158 Gray's Inn Road and 160-164 Gray's Inn Road as doing anything less than maintaining the 'status quo' in heritage and townscape terms, given the evident shortcomings of what exists on the site and the quality of architectural design that is present in the proposal.
- 11 However, the proposed development, as amended, goes much further than simply leaving the Hatton Garden Conservation Area 'unharmed'. In very many ways, set out in the Design & Access Statement and in our Heritage and Townscape Appraisal, the proposed development will very substantially enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 12 The NPPF identifies two levels of potential 'harm' that might be caused to a heritage asset by a development: 'substantial harm...or total loss of significance' or 'less than substantial'. Both levels of harm must be caused to a *designated* heritage asset – in this case, the Hatton Garden Conservation Area, the Bloomsbury Conservation Area or the listed buildings on the western side of Gray's Inn Road.
- 13 The proposed scheme, as amended, does not lead to 'substantial' harm or any level of 'less than substantial' harm to any designated heritage asset. As has been explained earlier, the proposal does very evidently not result in the 'total loss of significance' of the conservation area or any listed building.
- 14 The only potential for 'less than substantial' harm would be if the proposed scheme for the site caused the loss of something central to the special interest of the Hatton Garden Conservation Area, the Bloomsbury Conservation Area or the setting of nearby listed buildings. We firmly believe that there is very clearly nothing about the proposal that would give rise to this level of harm.
- 15 The proposed scheme complies with Paragraph 133 of the NPPF - it certainly does not lead to 'substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset'. It also complies with Paragraph 134. It is our view that the proposals cannot reasonably be considered to cause any harm to any of the designated or undesignated heritage assets affected by the scheme.
- 16 However, if the Council believes that 'less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset' (Paragraph 134) is caused the scheme, then two things are clear. Firstly a sensible measure of that harm must be that it is very low, and secondly, that very low level of harm is outweighed by the benefits of the

scheme that are set out here, in the Design & Access Statement and in the Planning Statement.

- 17 It should be noted that the proposed scheme will provide not just public benefits, but heritage and townscape benefits. These have been set out in detail in the planning submission. These benefits continue to be provided in the amended scheme.

## **Conclusion**

- 18 We believe that the series of amendments described above will improve the already exemplary proposals for the site of 38 Mount Pleasant, 156-158 Gray's Inn Road and 160-164 Gray's Inn Road. They have the effect of refining and augmenting the evident quality of the scheme submitted for planning permission.

- 19 We therefore consider that our conclusions set out at in our Heritage and Townscape Appraisal, and repeated above, remain valid. The proposed development, as amended, will preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Hatton Garden Conservation Area and the setting of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, as well as preserving and enhancing the setting of the Grade II listed buildings on the western side of Gray's Inn Road. The scheme fully satisfies the law, national policy and local policy regarding heritage assets.

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