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CONSERVATION - REGENERATION

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No.1 Birkenhead Street

Kings Cross

1 Purpose of the Report

1.01 No. 1 Birkenhead Street recently received Listed Building Consent and Planning Permission to convert the existing building in hotel use into offices.

1.02 The current office permission retains the existing air conditioning plant at roof level which is visually very apparent from some views. This plant is detrimental to the character and appearance of the Kings Cross Conservation Area as well as the listed building and its setting.

1.03 This short report describes the proposed alteration and relocation of the air conditioning plant and the degree to which the proposal represents an improvement on the existing installation.

2 The Proposal

2.01 It is proposed to reposition the new air conditioning plant to the rear of the roof. The replacement plant is smaller than the existing and is clad in zinc sheet. New internal air conditioning outlets would be located in the rear rooms of the building.

3 Commentary

3.01 There would be little change to the internal ceilings or arrangements shown on the consented scheme. The main content of this proposal concerns the external roof top alteration.

3.02 The new smaller plant would be positioned adjacent to a taller neighbouring building, which will further assist in reducing the impact of this more compact new plant.

3.03 The simple grey zinc cladding of the new installation would be a visual improvement, making the a more reticent impact on the roofscape.

3.04 Given that the building already has air conditioning plant which is shown on the consented scheme in the form of the existing roof plant, this proposal represents an enhancement of the setting of the listed building and the of the appearance of the conservation area. It is smaller, more appropriately clad and in a more discreet location representing an environmental improvement, which would be further enhanced by the improved acoustic performance of the new plant enclosure, to the benefit of the surrounding area.

3.05 The installation of the internal air conditioning equipment within the rear rooms would be concealed behind new ceilings. The recently approved listed building consent scheme included new ceilings incorporating sound proofing and fire resistance measures. The currently proposed ceilings are only marginally different in form and character. No historic fabric or features would be lost or disturbed by the new proposals. The simple rear rooms, with their modern finishes would retain a similar character to the proportions envisaged in the previously approved scheme.

3.06 It is considered that the current proposals would deliver a number of environmental benefits without compromising or harming the character of the listed building.