

Delegated Report		Analysis sheet		Expiry Date:		06/07/2017	
		N/A / attached		Consultation Expiry Date:		-	
Officer				Application Number(s)			
Charles Thuaire				2017/3189/A			
Application Address				Drawing Numbers			
Centro Building 39 Plender Street London NW1 0DX				See draft decision notice			
PO 3/4	Area Team Signature	C&UD	Authorised Officer Signature				
Proposal(s)							
<p>a) Display of backlit lettering at entrance on Plender Street</p> <p>b) Display of internally illuminated lettering at 2nd floor of corner block on both elevations.</p>							
Recommendation(s):		Part grant part refuse consent					
Application Type:		Advertisement Consent					
Conditions or Reasons for Refusal:		Refer to Draft Decision Notice					
Informatives:							
Consultations							
Adjoining Occupiers:	No. notified	00	No. of responses	00	No. of objections	00	
			No. electronic	00			
Summary of consultation responses:		-					
CAAC/Local groups* comments: *Please Specify		-					

Site Description

This is a commercial block used as offices and studios by a number of small fashion firms that has 3 frontages including a main block facing Plender St wrapping around the junctions with Royal College St and Mandela St, and a subsidiary mews-type block along Mandela St. The main entrance block on Plender St is 5 storeys high, the corner block to its west is 6 storeys high; both have an elegant red brick façade and stone dressings; the subsidiary block to the east is 4-5 storeys high and plainer in stock brick.

The buildings are not listed nor in a conservation area but the Plender St block is locally listed. Further north along Royal College St, separated by terraced houses, is another high block (64 Pratt Street) which is very similar to the latter block in design and form and also locally listed.

Relevant History

Associated planning permission ref 2017/2694/P granted 12/07/2017 for- Various facade and entrance alterations on all elevations, including installation of canopy over Plender St entrance, and enlargement to rear of fifth floor roof terrace.

Relevant policies

Camden Local Plan 2017 Policies

D1 Design
D2 Heritage
D4 Advertisements

Camden Planning Guidance 2013/2015

CPG1 (Design) section 8

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

The London Plan 2016

Assessment

1. Proposal-

1.1 Advert consent is sought for the following-

- removal of existing 4 metal projecting metal signs at 1st floor on all 3 elevations of site;
 - installation of 2 sets of internally illuminated lettering 'The Centro Building' on brick panel between 2nd and 3rd floors on the corner block facing Plender St and Royal College St;
 - new signage on either side of entrance door of Plender St, comprising 2 sets of lettering for name of building (to be backlit) and address; one unlit panel to side of door for tenant company names.
- All signs involve individual dark grey metal letters.

1.2 The submitted statement says that the proposals are aimed at 'enhancing and clearly marking the main accessible entrance and enhancing the overall presence of this building in the street'.

2. Assessment-

2.1 Issues to be assessed are- impact on visual amenity and public safety.

2.2 No objection is raised to the removal of the existing unattractive projecting metal signs.

2.3 No objection is raised to the proposed entrance lettering- it is small and discreet and entirely appropriate around a ground floor entrance door.

2.4 However the upper floor lettering is considered unacceptable, especially in an illuminated form.

2.5 Local Plan policy D4 on Advertisements states that the Council will require advertisements to respect the form, fabric, design and scale of their host building, preserve the character and amenity of the area, and preserve or enhance heritage assets and conservation areas.

2.6 Further guidance about adverts is given in CPG1 on Design in paras 8.5-8.9. In particular para 8.7 says that 'Generally advertisements will only be acceptable at fascia level or below. Advertisements above fascia level can appear visually obtrusive and unattractive and, where illuminated, they can cause light pollution to neighbouring residential properties. If an advertisement is required at high level for a specific business use then this will usually be restricted to non-illuminated images on windows.'

2.7 It is generally accepted that a fascia for adverts, as defined in para 7.87 of the Local Plan policy D4, is "the signboard on the upper part of a shopfront showing the name of the shop". The upper part of a shopfront is defined as the zone above ground floor doorways and windows and below first floor level, traditionally separated by a heavy cornice. In the case of this building, there is no shopfront as such and therefore no real fascia level, although it could be said that the heavy cornice between ground and 1st floors on the corner block here represents a fascia level to act as a location of signage. If there has to be any signage here, it should be placed discreetly above the doorways at ground floor between the stone string detail and heavy cornice that separates ground and first floors. Para 7.87 further states that 'Advertisements above fascia level can appear visually obtrusive and unattractive'.

2.8 The building is locally listed and thus a non-designated heritage asset; its description says it is a 19th C industrial building 'of grand appearance with stone dressings used to decorative effect at windows, strong courses and cornices', and 'provides a strong presence on the north side of Plender Street'; it is matched by the similar 64 Pratt Street block to the north.

2.9 The building has a very strong presence in the streetscene, being very prominent and indeed dominant at this junction due to its height and elaborate distinct architectural style in contrast to its surroundings.

2.10 It is considered that the lettering at this very high level and on both sides of the corner is not only unnecessary in defining and emphasising this already prominent building but also it will be very dominant and visually obtrusive in itself in such a prominent location. It is noted that there are no other

buildings in the neighbourhood that have such high level signage; the area is characterised by generally plain buildings with either no or discreet low level commercial advertising. The design and materials, using individual metal letters, is acceptable in itself. However it is considered that the placement of the lettering between third and fourth floor looks rather arbitrary. Any signage needs to support the architecture and be informed by a classical understanding of order and hierarchy, as demonstrated here (as quoted from the listing description) by the “stone dressings used to decorative effect at windows, strong courses and cornices”. Para 2.7 above indicates as a suggestion where any necessary signage could be located further down at ‘fascia’ level. No similar signage exists at high level on the matching building further north at 64 Pratt St, which is also home to many businesses, thus no precedent has been set for this type of advertising here.

2.11 It is considered that the proposed high level signage does not respect the form, design and scale of the host building and its setting; it is unduly obtrusive and inappropriate on an attractive corner landmark building that does not need to benefit from its presence being further advertised or enhanced.

2.12 Furthermore it will harm the character, appearance and setting of this grand corner block and its surroundings; it does not preserve or enhance this locally listed building as a non-designated heritage asset. Policy D2 on Heritage states that ‘The effect of a proposal on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, balancing the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset’. It is considered in this case that there are no mitigating factors or public benefits in the proposed signage that outweigh the harm caused to this heritage asset.

2.13 It is accepted that the internal illumination will be low level and discreet, as evidenced in the CGI image submitted. Nevertheless it is unacceptable in principle to have such high level signs internally illuminated here on a locally listed landmark building and making the signage even more prominent at all hours. The illumination is not sympathetic to the design of the building nor is it unobtrusively sized and sited, as recommended by CPG1 paras 8.12-13.

2.14 It is noted from the submission (see 1.2 above) that the scheme is aimed at clearly marking the main accessible entrance and enhancing the overall presence of this building in the street’. However the high level lettering does not mark the entrance, as the low level signage does, and as discussed above, it is considered that the building’s prominence does not need any further enhancement. Although the design statement refers to the high level signage rationale to enhance the building’s identity, it is considered that this building does not require signage for wayfinding; the proposed lettering is to define the building, not businesses or occupiers which are advertised in an acceptable manner by the lettering at the entrance. CPG advice as noted above only allows business advertising within upper level windows, not signage for buildings on their facades as proposed here. Indeed the name ‘Centro building’ is similar to the neighbouring blocks’ names as there are a group of 4 Centro buildings, so the proposed signage is confusing.

2.15 The lettering at both ground and upper floors will not cause any harm to neighbouring residential amenities in terms of light pollution or outlook nor will they pose a road safety hazard by distracting drivers and pedestrians.

3. Recommendations- part approve/part refuse-

3.1. Approve the ground floor signage on Plender St;

3.2. Refuse the upper level internally illuminated lettering on the corner block facing Plender St and Royal College St.