

Design and Access Statement including Heritage Statement

Job No: **GNH** [Great northern Hotel]
Job: Great Northern Hotel, Pancras Road
Date: March 2018

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This design and access statement supports the Listed Building Consent application for the refurbishment and change of use of one first floor bedroom to provide public toilet facilities for the previously approved hotel lounge and bar at the Great Northern Hotel, Kings Cross (2015/3114/L).

2.0 Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The site comprises a Grade II Listed building designed by Lewis Cubitt. Italianate in design, with classical detailing, the building expresses itself as more elaborate than its neighbour; King's Cross Station. It is characterised by its yellow stock brick, stucco detailing, pilasters and window mouldings as well as its curved plan form.
- 2.2 The hotel lies within the heart of King's Cross area and is located at the southern end of Pancras Road close to its junction with Euston Road.
- 2.3 The site is located adjacent to King's Cross Station's Western Concourse to the North. Euston Road binds it to the north and west, and beyond this, the recently redeveloped King's Cross Central mixed use development consisting of predominantly commercial floor space to the North. In close proximity to the site is St Pancras Chambers to the West beyond St Pancras Road, which now comprises a 5 star luxury hotel. To the south of the site lies the main King's Cross Square, Euston Road (A501) and commercial and residential development beyond this to the south.
- 2.4 The Great Northern Hotel (opened in 1854) is located between King's Cross station (opened 1852) and St Pancras station (opened 1865-69), two of the finest examples of British railway architecture. The heritage of the area is of great importance and gives the site a distinct sense of place. The hotel makes an importance contribution to the area.
- 2.5 The site is located within the King's Cross Conservation Area and the hotel itself is Grade II listed. The site does not have any other designations or allocations.
- 2.6 The Great Northern Hotel forms part of the wider King's Cross Central regeneration area that was granted outline planning permission on 22 December 2006 (LPA ref. 2004/2037/P). Detailed planning and listed building consent for the comprehensive refurbishment of the hotel together with the additional arcade proposals (to compliment the new Western Concourse to King's Cross station) was granted through a series of applications between 2007 and 2011, with the refurbishment work undertaken between 2009– 2011 and the hotel opening in 2013.

An application was submitted to Camden Council in 2015 for the consent to refurbish part of the first floor to provide a communal lounge/bar. Application 2015/3114/L) was granted including the loss of one hotel room and minor intrusions to existing walls.

3.0 Proposed Development

- 3.1 The proposal further develops the martini lounge as approved in the previous application to provide improved toilet facilities for patron use.
- 3.2 The toilets will be situated in place of an existing bedroom. Relocating the double doors will further lengthen the corridor to provide access. This will deliver 3 x unisex cubicles and one disabled WC.
- 3.3 Whilst the proposals result in the loss of two further bedrooms, the benefits of the improved facilities will ensure the hotel maintains its competitiveness and is crucial to ensure the ongoing success of the adjacent restaurant 'Plum and Spilt Milk'.
- 3.4 The management strategy for the hotel, subject to the additional works, will not be affected.
- 3.5 The proposed alterations retain the building's historic curved corridor and cellular layout, and this is therefore considered to be an appropriate approach in this location and that the proposals are acceptable from a conservation perspective.
- 3.6 All cornices, skirtings, doors and architraves will be retained or replaced to match existing
- 3.7 Traditional sanitaryware will be used throughout, following the current design of the hotel. Wherever possible existing sanitaryware will be reused to aid sustainability
- 3.8 Flooring in the WCs will be a herringbone slate tile with a square slate border as in bathrooms throughout the hotel. Within corridor areas the floor will be timber to match existing.
- 3.9 Secondary glazing will be removed in order to match the existing public area windows such as the adjacent Plum and Spilt Milk restaurant
- 3.10 WCs will be serviced via existing risers
- 3.11 There are no structural works proposed

4.0 Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 Section 38(6) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 states that any determination to be made under the Planning Acts must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 The Development Plan for the site comprises the following documents:
 - The London Plan (2011) as amended 2015;
 - Camden Local Plan 2017
- 4.3 Other policy documents that are material to the consideration of proposals at the site are the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and LB Camden's Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance.
- 4.4 On 28 March 2012 the Department for Communities and Local Government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
- 4.5 Paragraph 14 of the NPPF states that: "*At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running*

through both plan-making and decision-taking."

- 4.6 For decision taking the NPPF explains that this means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan, without delay. Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, this means granting permission unless the adverse impacts of doing so would 'significantly and demonstrably' outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies of the NPPF as a whole.
- 4.7 Essentially, the message from the Government, via the NPPF, is that the first instinct of local planning authorities should be to support new development. Only if there are very strong reasons should permission be refused.
- 4.8 At paragraph 17 the NPPF sets out 12 core planning principles which planning should achieve. These include the following which are of relevance to this application:
- Not simply being about scrutiny, but instead being a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives;
 - Proactively driving and supporting sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, businesses and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs;
 - Always seeking to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
 - Taking account of the different roles and character of different areas, including promoting the viability of our main urban areas;
 - Encouraging the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value;
 - Conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations; and
 - Actively managing patterns of growth to make fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focusing development in locations which are or can be made sustainable.
- 4.9 Paragraph 63 confirms that in determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs that help raise the standard of design more generally in the area.
- 4.10 Local planning authorities (LPAs) are directed to approach decision-taking in a positive way (Paragraph 186) and the NPPF advises in doing so, decision-takers at every level should look for solutions rather than problems (Paragraph 187).
- 4.11 Section 12 of the NPPF sets out the approach to be taken in conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraph 126 sets out the overriding themes to be considered, which are as follows:
- Desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
 - Wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that the conservation of the historic environment can bring;
 - The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
 - Opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the

- historic environment to the character of a place.
- 4.12 Paragraph 128 and 129 set out the approach to be taken to which should be taken into account when assessing development relating to the historic environment. This includes the following:
- LPAs should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting;
 - The level of detail provided in describing the significance of any heritage assets and contribution made by their setting must be proportionate to the assets importance, and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance;
 - Heritage assets should be assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary; and
 - In assessing development proposals, LPAs must take any heritage assessment and expertise into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimize conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.
- 4.13 Paragraph 131 sets out matters that LPAs should take into account, including the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 4.14 Crucially, paragraph 134 sets out that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposals, including securing its optimum viable
- 4.15 Indeed, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (Paragraph 132). Furthermore, proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably (Paragraph 137).
- 4.16 The Government has published the final version of the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). It is also a material consideration in determining planning applications.
- 4.17 Existing technical guidance including the Practice Guidance has now been cancelled. The NPPG provides an explanation of the government's interpretation of policy in the Framework. Relevant to this application is the guidance relating to conserving and enhancing the historic environment.
- 4.18 Guidance contained within the NPPG supports policy contained within the NPPF and sets out guiding principles for plan taking and decision making relevant to the historic environment. Crucially, it notes that to prevent the risk of neglect and decay of heritage buildings, applicants should seek to ensure that buildings remain in an active use consistent with their conservation. This is likely to require sympathetic changes to be made from time to time.
- 4.19 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that planning decisions must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.20 The current Development Plan for the site includes the consolidated London Plan with Alterations since 2011 (March 2015) and the Camden Local Plan 2017. The relevant policies from each of these documents are identified below.
- 4.21 The London Plan provides the overall strategic plan for London with the aim of promoting sustainable development. The key relevant policies for consideration of the proposed development are

summarized as follows:

- Policy 4.5 'London's Visitor Infrastructure' supports visitor economy and stimulates its growth, taking into account the needs of business as well as leisure visitors and seeking to improve the range and quality of provision;
- Policy 7.2 'An Inclusive Environment' promotes accessible and inclusive design to ensure that developments can be used safely, easily and with dignity by all with no disabling barriers;
- Policy 7.4 'Local Character' provides that development should respect local character, having regard to the form, function and structure of an area, place or street and the scale, mass and orientation of surrounding buildings;
- Policy 7.6 'Architecture' provides that development should conserve, restore, re-use and incorporate heritage assessment where appropriate. Development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail;
- Policy 7.8 'Heritage Assets and Archaeology' states that development should conserve, restore, re-use and incorporate heritage assessment where appropriate. Development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail; and
- Policy 7.9 'Heritage-led regeneration' states that developments should identify value, conserve, restore, re-use and incorporate heritage assets, where appropriate.

4.22 London Borough of Camden Local Plan. The key relevant policies for consideration of the proposed development are summarized as follows:

- E3- Tourism recognizes the importance of visitor economy in Camden and will support tourism development and visitor accommodation.
- G1- Managing the impact of growth and development seeks to provide the facilities needed to support visitors to the borough;
- C2 Supporting community facilities and services seeks to make appropriate contributions towards providing new facilities or improving existing facilities; and
- D2 preserve Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets.

4.23 The hotel falls within the King's Cross Conservation Area, for which a Conservation Area Statement has been prepared. This sets out the background and historical development of the area and its significance.

4.24 The site falls within sub area 2: King's Cross/St. Pancras, which forms the heart of the King's Cross Conservation Area, including both railway stations. In particular, it is noted that, the Great Northern Hotel along with the two stations form a part of our architectural and historical heritage of national importance, being a national set piece of Victorian railway architecture, and signifying the power of the Railway age. Indeed, the Statement notes at paragraph 4.2.58: "The hotel is an important component in a group with the stations. It also has its own strong, but not overbearing, presence. When viewed from areas south east of King's Cross station, including west from Gray's Inn Road, the south east elevation can be seen directly. Views of it are also framed between the two stations, forming a strong ensemble. It is also visible in

views from streets perpendicular from Euston Road, where this view is framed."

- 5.0 Planning Analysis (*Principle, Heritage, Design/Scale, Amenity, Sustainability and Access*)
- 5.1 This section examines the key planning considerations that are relevant to the determination of the application. It demonstrates that the proposed scheme complies with relevant planning policy, and details how the proposals have evolved through pre-application discussions with officers of LB Camden.
- 5.2 The site is located within the main King's Cross area, in close proximity to King's Cross station which is a major transport interchange and gateway to London from the rest of the UK and beyond.
- 5.3 Since the hotel opened in 2013, the building remains in good condition; however, now the client has settled in to the building and has been utilizing the various spaces, it has become apparent where the current hotel offer can be enhanced.
- 5.4 The proposals to include increased public toilet facilities for the martini lounge at first floor level will further enhance the hotel's existing operations and ensure the long term future of the building's use remains as a hotel.
- 5.5 No external changes are proposed. The proposals result in no additional floor space being created and no change of use is required. Whilst the martini lounge will result in the loss of one hotel room, the proposals will improve the overall usability and access for all guests of the hotel and can be seen as advantageous.
- 5.6 The proposed development is appropriate in this location and as such is satisfies the requirements of policy relating to tourism and visitor accommodation and relating to conserving heritage assets.
- 5.7 Indeed, within the NPPG it is noted that from time to time small changes will be required to heritage buildings, to ensure that they are maintained in a use that is consistent with their conservation, which is exactly what is proposed within this application.
- 5.8 Heritage is the key consideration for this application. National policy requires development to protect, sustain and enhance heritage assets, putting them to viable use consistent with their conservation. The site is Grade II listed and falls within the King's Cross Conservation Area.
- 5.9 A number of new hotels have opened in the King's Cross area recently, providing additional competition for the Great Northern Hotel. These proposals are therefore vital in ensuring that the hotel remains competitive, and in maintaining the building in a viable use consistent with its conservation, which is the overarching thrust of planning policy at all levels.
- 5.10 The proposals being sought through this application represent sympathetic changes to the interior of the listed building where the new toilets will be located. In short, they are acceptable on the basis that little removal of historic fabric is proposed and the proposed development presents an opportunity to improve the functionality of the hotel and provide a new communal area for guests. The proposals have been carefully designed to preserve the historic building and require only minor alterations to facilitate these changes.
- 5.11 Details of the proposed development are set out within this report and in the accompanying Heritage Statement and are shown on the accompanying planning drawings. In accordance with paragraph

126 of the NPPF the proposals will:

- Sustain and enhance the significance of this Grade II listed building, ensuring that the building remains in a viable use consistent with its conservation;
- Sustain and enhance the wider Conservation Area and other heritage assets surrounding the site, making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
- Ensure wider cultural, economic and environmental benefits, through conserving this designated heritage asset for future generations.

- 5.12 The Heritage Statement provided in support of this application concludes that:
- The proposed works will not adversely impact on the historic fabric of the listed building; and
 - The martini bar/toilet facilities will not adversely affect the building's special character
- 5.13 The proposals therefore fully comply with the policies relating to heritage assets, and the vision of the King's Cross Conservation Area Statement.
- 5.14 The proposals, which form the basis of this application, fully comply with local planning policy, which requires new development, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings, to be of a high quality design and to respect the character, setting, context and the form and scale of neighbouring buildings. Archer Humphryes Architects (AHA) have carefully and considerately designed the martini bar and toilets to a high quality standard, whilst simultaneously preserving the historic building and enhancing access.
- 5.15 The proposals are largely contained within the existing hotel and there will therefore be no impact on surrounding neighbours
- 5.16 Similarly, the addition of toilet facilities will aid the management of the martini lounge and other restaurants/public areas of the hotel.
- 5.17 The key principle at the heart of the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The site is in a sustainable and accessible central location close to public transport links, and the development will provide improved and enhanced communal space within the hotel.
- 5.18 The approved Reserved Matters for the refurbishment of the Great Northern Hotel (Ref. 2011/0049/P) included a separate Access and Inclusivity Statement. This fulfilled the requirements of Condition 19 of the main King's Cross Central Outline Planning Permission (Ref. 2004/2307/P), including how the principles set out in the site-wide Access and Inclusivity Strategy have been applied in the refurbishment of the Great Northern Hotel.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 In summary, these proposals are acceptable in principle from both a planning perspective and in taking into considerations the heritage of the building and the surrounding area.
- 6.2 Indeed, planning policy at all levels supports minor alterations and sympathetic amendments to listed buildings where they are consistent with the buildings conservation and ensure that the building remains in a viable use. As has been noted within this Statement, the Great Northern Hotel must remain competitive in order to remain in a viable use, and these alterations are therefore required to ensure that.
- 6.3 The proposed martini bar toilets will provide much needed communal

facilities for guests, which at present the hotel is lacking. The proposal will result in the loss of one hotel room, but will retain the majority of the historic fabric and crucially, maintains the curve of the building, which is read through the corridor space, which is one of the most significant aspects of the building.

- 6.4 The proposed alterations will not result in any harm to the amenity of hotel guests or surrounding occupiers
- 6.5 Overall the proposals represent sustainable development in line with the core principles of the NPPF, proactively driving and supporting sustainable economic development in the heart of King's Cross. As such, we politely request that the proposals are approved without delay.