

Imperial Hotel, Russell Square, London

1289/5/2 Planning Application for Replacement of Existing Windows, Level 02 - 08

Introduction

This document supports a planning application to the London Borough of Camden for the replacement of the existing windows on levels 02 – 08 of the Imperial Hotel, London. This application comprises all elevations of the hotel and provides like for like replacement, and minor amendments to the windows over the entrance area, in line with the masterplan proposals incorporated in the Pre-application submission and Planning Performance Agreement undertaken from October 2018 through to January 2019.

Due to the need to progress with the works to the existing windows, this application has been brought forward and is required on the basis of the following:

1. The existing building fabric is suffering as a result of the single-glazed original steel windows, installed within the building.
2. It is becoming extremely difficult for the hotel to find replacement mechanisms and ironmongery to maintain the existing windows.
3. Environmentally, the hotel is looking at double glazed units with solar control, in anticipation of the potential inclusion of air conditioning being installed to all bedrooms in line with the overall masterplan.
4. The acoustic performance of the existing windows is very poor; and the customer experience requires enhancement, hence the client has commissioned acoustic surveys for the building fabric to establish the principles for the new windows.
5. The energy performance is currently suffering as a result of the 'fit' and performance of the windows.

This was identified as part of the planned maintenance for the hotel.

The Existing Windows

The existing windows are steel framed, single-glazed windows. They are uninsulated and do not have thermal breaks. The drawings of the existing hotel identify the windows, from Level 02 to 08, that we are requesting permission to replace. They have a mill finish with a single pane float glass.

They are the original windows, installed at the Imperial Hotel during the 1960s.

The windows have a variety of cill and head details and it is the intention of this application to retain all of the features, as far as possible.

Impact of the Proposals on Heritage Significance

The Imperial Hotel was built in 1966 to designs by C. Lovett Gill & Partners. It is not listed and not eligible for listing according to current criteria. However, it stands within a sensitive historic context. It forms part of the setting of several neighbouring buildings that are listed. These include the Grade II* listed Russell Hotel (1892–98, Charles Fitzroy Doll, currently named the Kimpton Fitzroy London) on the corner of Russell Square and Guilford Street.

Approximately two-thirds of the remaining Russell Square frontage consist of Grade II listed terraced houses. Around half the frontages overlooking Queen Square, behind the hotel to the east, is occupied by Grade II and Grade II* listed buildings. Several smaller structures within Russell Square, including telephone kiosks and a statue of the fifth Duke of Bedford (1809, Sir Richard Westmacott), are also listed.

Russell Square Garden is listed at Grade II on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

The listed buildings, conservation area and registered garden are designated heritage assets. Most of the buildings on the east side of Southampton Row, immediately south of the site, are non-designated heritage assets, identified in the council's Conservation Area Appraisal (LBC, 2011) as positive contributors to the conservation area.

The wider historic context can be appreciated in views within, through and without the conservation area. The site is also within the Wider Setting Consultation Area of London View Management Framework view 5A (Panorama: Greenwich Park to Central London; Protected Vista from Assessment Point 5A.2 to St Paul's Cathedral).

The Imperial Hotel's architectural style, having been out of fashion and regarded with indifference or dislike at the end of the twentieth century, is now more appreciated. The Conservation Area Appraisal identifies the hotel as a neutral contributor to the character and appearance of the conservation area, and states that it is one of a group of buildings that over time 'have mellowed to the eye and arguably have become an established part of the townscape'.

Impact on Significance

The existing windows on levels 02–8 are arranged in canted pairs on the front elevation, making an interesting zigzag rhythm across the Russell Square frontage. The courtyard elevation of this wing has a mix of canted and conventional flat windows. The windows on both faces of the rear wing are flat. There is a mix of fixed and side-hung casements, with some top-hung lights on the stairs. The windows have slim aluminium-frames. Although in reasonable condition for their age, the single glazing is a poor insulator of heat and sound and the window ironmongery is failing with spare parts not available. The windows are single-glazed with float glass, which gives perfect, flat reflections.

The proposed replacement windows will be of the same designs as the existing windows and will have a powder-coated finish to match the grey colour of the existing. The frames have been chosen to match as closely as possible the profile of the existing while accommodating double-glazing. The reflective quality of the glazing will be slightly different but across the whole frontage will have a consistent appearance, as at present.

As part of a package of proposed improvements to the external elevations of the hotel, the replacement windows will maintain the existing design of the Imperial Hotel but give it a refreshed and well-maintained appearance. This will have a positive impact on the setting of the neighbouring listed buildings and garden, and on the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, and improve views within the conservation area, particularly from north, south and west within Russell Square.

The Proposals

The client and design team have spent a great deal of time assessing the existing sections of the windows and matching this with current day manufacturers.

The existing glazing sections are particularly slim, which is difficult to match with modern day, double glazed systems. We have proposed a glazing system which achieves a 50mm sight line in the same configuration as the existing. Each window bay will be designed to reflect the exact module of the existing window.

Within each bedroom, there will always be one opening light. There will be no trickle vents.

The units will be double-glazed and have an acoustic-criteria, which has been verified by our acoustic consultant, bearing in mind the noise levels on Russell Square and within the courtyard area. A copy of the acoustic report is included as part of the application.

The finish for the window sections will be a polyester powder coating, to provide durability and longevity. The colour selected is 'mouse grey', RAL 7005. This matches as closely as possible to the existing mill finish.

Indicative cill and jamb details have been incorporated as part of the planning application and reflect the existing condition.

Samples of the proposed sections will be available for review on site. We would welcome a site visit to assess the glazing sections.