

Imperial Hotel, Russell Square, London

1289/5/2 Planning Application for the Relocation of New Flues and UKPN Substation

Introduction

This document supports a planning application to the London Borough of Camden for the relocation and replacement of flues from the Imperial Hotel on to the President Hotel façade and the installation of the UKPN substation. This application comprises the elevations to the President Hotel for the flues: the rear elevation into the courtyard and identifies the erection and construction of a flue housing adjacent to the staircase enclosure to the President.

The flues will be a composite material, supported on a gantry, which will be fixed to the wall of the President Hotel. There will be six flues in total and these will take extract from the basement area of the Imperial and President Hotel and affords rationalisation of the proposals on the site. It is aimed to colour code the flues to RAL7042 to minimise the aesthetic impact accordingly.

The height of the flues is 1.2 metres above the height of the parapet of the President Hotel. Assessments will be undertaken to explore the proposals and confirm the requirements; and to minimise the noise impact or emissions from the flues themselves.

The details of the flues and relocation includes the following:

1. Plans as existing for the service area and elevations;
2. Photograph sheet, which identifies the proposals for the President façade and existing service area;
3. Proposals for the relocation of the flues to the walls of the President. This includes colour elevations; and
4. A 3D visualisation of the proposals has been considered; however, it is noted that there is no impact or visual intrusion to the external appearance to Queen Square.

This application is supported by a Heritage Statement from Spurstone Heritage regarding the impact. As you will see, there is negligible impact with regards to the installation.

It is noted that these works are relatively minor and considered as refurbishment works. As such, the works will not involve any major highways impact or adjustment. As a result, a Construction Management Plan is not proposed.

The UKPN substation involves the replacement of the existing substation, which is housed in the basement of the car park. This substation not only supports the hotel but a number of properties along Southampton Row. It is the intention and requirement of UKPN to replace the substation and provide an enhancement to the proposals, not only for the hotel in its existing position but also future proofing. The proposals are totally in line with the Statutory Guidelines set down by UKPN for the installation of the substation. Negotiations and development of plans have taken place over the last 12 months and a scheme proposal agreed.

As part of our application, we enclose the UKPN signed-off drawings and the detailed drawings identifying the installation of the substation. The substation will be located below the pavement level but will require ventilation. On this basis, it is proposed to remove a section of the high-level gantry that exists at the frontage of the Imperial Hotel.

A section will be removed to allow for the installation of the substation and ventilation areas. The main façade of the building will remain in place as this will be subject to the main application: the masterplan, which involves the adjustment of the shopfronts and internal arrangements on the ground floor.

As part of the UKPN proposals, it is aimed to install grilles / ventilation above the substation area and this will be integrated into the hard landscape proposals. A temporary proposal has been identified.

Below ground, various cable enhancements will take place between the existing substation area and proposed. This will enable a switch on / switch off scenario. There will be no noise implications with regards to the substation. A Heritage Statement has been covered as part of the main masterplan for the UKPN proposal. It is not considered that these are major works.

This application includes the following:

- Existing pavement level plans and elevations at ground floor level;
- Proposed UKPN plans including the substation, sections, cross sections and plan detail;
- Proposed hard landscaping proposals, on a temporary nature for the installation of the grilles to the substation and removal of a section of the gantry; and
- The proposed elevations for the façade of the main hotel. A full elevation of the façade has been incorporated, which illustrates the masterplan proposal. It is hoped that the timescales will match for the removal of the shopfronts and creation of the enhanced elevation at ground level.

These works will be accessed from the pavement and therefore, there will be no major construction impact. Also, servicing can be undertaken from the basement level. As a result, a Construction Management Plan is not required as part of the application.

Impact of the Proposals on Heritage Significance

The Imperial Hotel was built in 1966 to designs by C. Lovett Gill & Partners. Immediately adjoining it to the north is the President Hotel. The hotels are not listed and not eligible for listing according to current criteria. However, they stand within a sensitive historic context. They form 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 buildings in Queen Square are 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 Russell Square frontage of the Imperial Hotel has a disjointed appearance at street level, largely due to the intrusive presence of the ground-floor extension, which projects from the front of the hotel, disrupting the building line and reducing the space available to pedestrians. Its temporary character, utilitarian design and poor-quality materials are alien to the host building and have no relationship to the historic context. The extension detracts from the setting of the listed buildings and garden, and from the appearance of the conservation area.

The proposal is part of a package of measures that will improve the Russell Square frontage and the adjoining pavement. It will remove nearly half the width of the gantry extension to the right of the entrance to the Night and Day bar. The shopfronts will be re-glazed and the paving in this area will be replaced with a steel grille with a black finish, set into York stone paving.

This proposal will reinstate the historic building line on this part of the hotel frontage and increase the space available to pedestrians within the public realm, affording more opportunity to pause and appreciate the neighbouring listed buildings and garden. As part of a package of proposed improvements to the external elevations of the hotel, it will have a positive impact on the appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, and improve views within the conservation area, particularly from north, south and west within Russell Square.

It is also proposed to add six flues to the rear elevation of the President Hotel, tucked into the north-east corner of the service yard. This is on a secondary elevation, overlooking the canopy that screens the service yard from above. The flues will not be visible from any of the streets surrounding the Imperial and President Hotels. They will have no impact on the setting of the listed buildings and garden, or on the character or appearance of the conservation area. They will have no impact on views within, through or without the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.