

**Camden Design Review Panel**

**Report of Chair's Review Meeting: 135-149 Shaftesbury Avenue,  
London WC2H 8AH**

Friday 13 April 2018  
5 Pancras Square, London, N1C 4AC

**Panel**

Catherine Burd (chair)  
Robin Nicholson

**Attendees**

Richard Wilson	London Borough of Camden
Edward Jarvis	London Borough of Camden
Gideon Whittingham	London Borough of Camden
Deborah Denner	Frame Projects
Tom Bolton	Frame Projects

**Apologies / report copied to**

Bethany Cullen	London Borough of Camden
Frances Madders	London Borough of Camden

**Confidentiality**

This is a pre-application review, and therefore confidential. As a public organisation Camden Council is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), and in the case of an FOI request may be obliged to release project information submitted for review.

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## 1. Project name and site address

135-149 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2H 8AH

## 2. Presenting team

James Dilley	Jestico + Whiles
Kieron Hodgson	Iceni Projects

## 3. Planning authority's views

The building at 135-149 Shaftesbury Avenue, now occupied by the Odeon Cinema, was built in 1931 as the Saville Theatre. It is Grade II listed, but currently in a state of disrepair. The interior has been remodelled over the course of several previous refurbishments, leaving virtually no original features. The building's exterior includes distinctive features with a frieze depicting the history of dramatic art, and an asymmetrical entrance with an arch above. The application is to refurbish the building as a hotel, with a two-storey roof extension and a new basement containing a spa and cinema. The panel conducted a full review of the proposals in February 2018. Camden asked for feedback on whether the revised application overcomes the panel's concerns, in particular on materiality and form. Officers also asked for the panel's thoughts on whether the proposed alterations would detract from its appearance as a cinema.

## 4. Design Review Panel's views

### Summary

The panel sees much to admire in the proposals, but feels more work is needed before it can offer its support for the application. More detail is required on the design of the additional upper storeys, to demonstrate how the external glass envelope for roof extension will appear and function - including the extent to which floorplates, curtains and people inside the building will be visible, both during the day and at night. The detail of the way the glass box sits on or behind the brick parapet of the existing building also needs refinement. The energy performance of the extension should be considered, and an energy analysis carried out. The panel continues to have concerns about the ground floor layout, and whether the kitchen space is sufficient for an operational restaurant. The panel also feels the dedicated cinema entrance on Stacey Street may undermine the primary function of the building. It is important that the main building entrance reads as the entrance to a cinema, as well as to the hotel. Night views of the building would be helpful to demonstrate how it will relate to public spaces on all sides.



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## *Architecture*

- The panel thanks the applicants for the clear and detailed drawings, CGIs, and diagrams. It feels the design team has responded well to its comments, and that the scheme is significantly improved.
- It particularly supports the revised treatment of the arched window above the entrance, the use of poster boxes on the exterior, and the projection of the original auditorium outline on the inside of the front wall.
- Internally, it suggests that the front wall could be propped horizontally from each floor, as an alternative to using piers as currently proposed. This could both add to the three-dimensional interest of the foyer space, and help support lighting and signage.
- The panel asks for night views of the building to be provided, so show how the lit interiors will appear in views of surrounding public spaces.
- It also asks that uplighting of the external frieze be avoided, as this will undermine the original intent of the design.

## *Ground floor plan*

- While the ground floor plan is improved by the permeability that has been introduced to its edges, the panel is still not convinced that the kitchen is big enough in relation to the size of restaurant and number of covers proposed. There is a risk that if the kitchen is too small it could be moved to the basement, compromising the cinema. Diagrams should be provided to show the actual size of the kitchen facilities, with input from a restaurant operator, to show the designs are viable.
- The panel also suggests that the size of the rear ground floor picture window should be reduced a little if more kitchen space is needed. While a window giving a glimpse of the interior from inside is a good approach, a full width window is not necessary.

## *Upper storeys*

- The panel feels the simplified design of the extension is an improvement on the previous submission, but that more detail of construction and materials is needed to demonstrate the quality and viability of the amended design. The glass structure will be much more visible than the representations suggest. The panel would like to know how the glass boxes will appear at the corners; whether the floorplates will be visible behind the glass; whether any framing will be used; how the glass wraps round on top; whether floor-to-ceiling curtains will be visible; and how rainwater will be managed. This level of detail is needed at planning stage to assure Camden that the designs can work. The quality of detail design of this element is critical to the successful execution of the extension, and as such that the panel feel it should be



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integral to the application and should not be conditioned.

- The panel suggests New Court, the Rothschild Bank headquarters in the City of London, as a comparator that shows how well glass boxes can be designed.
- The glass panels are likely to cause problematic glare at their edges. Spandrel panels could be introduced, with windows as layers above, to prevent this.
- Solid areas may also need to be reintroduced to the glass box to address privacy issues, particularly at night, and to create a comfortable interior environment for hotel guests.
- Adjustments should be considered to the way the glass box meets the parapet below. Currently, it sits on top of the parapet walls at the sides, which undermines the concept of a glass box sitting within the existing structure. The design team should consider pulling it back from the edge.

## *Sustainability*

- There is a risk that the glass box will suffer from solar gain. The panel suggests that further thinking is needed on how to address this and reduce energy costs through its design. Technical solutions should be considered as part of the glazing design, including insulation and ventilation.

## *Cinema entrance*

- The separate, dedicated cinema entrance proposed for Stacey Street risks undermining the concept of the building as a cinema, as well as a hotel. The panel feels that the cinema entrance must be the main, front entrance and any side entrance should be for the hotel. The main entrance should have cinema signage, clearly demonstrating the function of the building.

## *Post meeting note*

Further information on the development proposals for 139-145 Shaftesbury Avenue have been provided following the meeting on 13 April. The panel is confident that Camden officers will be able to assess whether its comments have been successfully addressed.

