



7 February 2020

Objection to the Full Planning Permission Application number: 2019/6435/P for the Hilton Doubletree Hotel, 92 Southampton Row, London WC1B 4BH

I am the resident owner of ■ Ormonde Mansions, ■ Southampton Row, which faces onto the light well in which the new construction is proposed.

The proposal is to replace a former ground floor restaurant in the light well between 92 and 100 Southampton Row with a series of duplex rooms at ground and first floor level, with substantial construction of the new upper floor in front of bedroom windows of both Ormonde Mansions and the hotel. The photograph shows the current view from the bedroom window of flat 1.



The plan is that the upper floors of the duplex will have windows only on the hotel side, and that the current mesh fence will be replaced with a wall of zinc roofing sheets. This is clearly highly detrimental, and the planning application must be rejected in its current form.

I also note the cumulative impact of a series of changes made in the light well in recent years, including works not yet completed. These works have already encroached on the light well and for that reason were significantly restricted before approval. Those works caused significant noise and continued violations such as Sunday working, which also point to a need to defer further works next

to a residential building. Finally, a condition of the recent works involved the moving of plant to a higher roof further away from residential buildings; this plan is unclear on plant, but would probably return plant to locations next to bedroom windows. Details of my objections are set out below.

The light well and its use

The buildings date from the first years of the 20th century when the east side of Southampton Row was demolished for road widening. The sites are relatively deep and therefore all buildings were built with substantial light wells. As the photo above shows, both the hotel and Ormonde Mansions were built with white glazed brick in the light well, recognising the need to preserve not just directly light but also reflected light. The main argument against the full planning application is that this light well must be protected. It is an essential amenity for Ormonde Mansions and further encroachment cannot be permitted.

A large brick wall was constructed at basement and ground level and remains intact. Its top is below the level of first floor bedroom windows of both flats and hotel rooms. Behind the wall in the light well a restaurant was constructed in the 1980s, with glass roof lights which reaches above the height of the wall.

The planning application is for duplex hotel rooms with an upper duplex floor replacing and substantially increasing the area now occupied by the low roof lights. Vertical zinc siding would face Ormonde Mansions directly above the brick wall, cutting off the visual access and airflows to first floor bedrooms. In effect, at first floor level a low roof light is being replaced by an entire new story of hotel rooms having an unacceptable impact on the first floor flats of Ormonde Mansions.

I do not object to changes to the former restaurant area which is below the wall. However, building above the level of the dividing wall is totally unacceptable, and the application must be rejected.

Cumulative effect

Works on blocks labelled B and C on the plans are still being completed and were carefully negotiated between the hotel and residents of Ormonde Mansions to protect the light well. In this negotiation, the hotel was forced to substantially reduce the size of new construction, especially on the block labelled C, precisely to limit encroachment on the light well. It is totally unacceptable that not even having completed those works the hotel returns to again try to take away part of the light well.

The cumulative impact is important. The light wells of Ormonde Mansions and the then Bonnington Hotel were clad with white glazed brick to maximize the light. Block B was enlarged in the 1980s and again last year (2019), along with expansion of Block C. A restaurant at ground level with glass roof lights was constructed in the 1980s. The black exhaust duct which is clear in the photo (behind the lower half of the mesh fence) was added subsequently, we believe without any planning permission. The proposal to replace the roof light and duct with a much larger solid metal roof structure within almost touching distance of residential bedrooms will have immense impact.

The work nearing completion now was carefully negotiated with neighbouring residential blocks, including Ormonde Mansions. There were limits to the height of new construction and all plant was moved to a high roof away from Ormonde Mansions, reducing noise disturbance. But the steady enclosure of the light well increases echo and reduces reflected light from the glazed brick. The cumulative effect also related to noise, disturbance and plant, set out below.

Plant

As part of the agreement on the continuing works on blocks B and C, all plant (which had been subject of continual noise complaints) was supposed to be moved to the roof of the new 4th floor of block B with sound insulation. However there is already a regular hum audible in quiet parts of the night from ducts passing over the current roof. We are advised by architects that some plant will be required at room level, which goes against the agreement on the previous works and also would cause noise disturbance. Plant cannot be allowed in the light well. The application as posted is not

clear about plant.

Noise, disturbance and intrusion

Over nearly two years there was substantial noise and disturbance from the works on blocks B and C, which have not yet been completed. Demolition works, especially the removal of concrete floors, were so noisy that residents had to move out. The application specifically calls for the demolition of a floor, which will be equally noisy. There was also substantial visual intrusion with workmen able to look into flats from a very short distance away - an important reminder of just how close to Ormonde Mansions the new structure will be. We have also been forced to make complaints about illegal Sunday works, most recently on Sunday 26 January 2020.

I ask for the rejection of this plan because of the way that the upper floors of the duplex bedrooms intrude into light well and reduce the amenities of adjoining residents of Ormonde Mansions. I also object to the return of plant to the light well. And I call for a delay in further noisy and disruptive works.

