

38 Mount Pleasant, Panther House 38 Mount Pleasant, The Brain Yard and 156-164 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X

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1591.6.1 Panther House heritage appraisal S73 February 2021.docx

Introduction

- 1 KMHeritage prepared a Heritage and Townscape Appraisal¹ to support an application for planning permission (ref 2015/6955/P) for the redevelopment of the site at 38 Mount Pleasant, 156-158 Gray's Inn Road and 160-164 Gray's Inn Road. Full planning permission was granted subject to a Section 106 Legal Agreement on 1 November 2017. In the course of the determination process, KMHeritage submitted a further addendum report, addressing changes made following comments by Historic England and the London Borough of Camden on the submitted application².
- 2 This addendum report deals with amendments to the permitted scheme to be submitted as a S.73 Application, as described in the submission document prepared by Allford Hall Monaghan Morris.
- 3 Our original Heritage and Townscape Appraisal describes in detail the evolution of the site and its surroundings; sets out relevant legislation, policy and guidance; analyses heritage and townscape significance; assesses the proposed development in detail and considers its effect on heritage and townscape significance; draws conclusions regarding the effect of the proposed development on that significance and demonstrates how that effect is consistent with legislation, policy and

¹ 38 Mount Pleasant, 156-158 Gray's Inn Road and 160-164 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8EU: Heritage and townscape appraisal, KMHeritage, December 2015

² 38 Mount Pleasant, 156-158 Gray's Inn Road and 160-164 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8EU: Heritage and townscape appraisal Addendum, KMHeritage, May 2016

guidance. This work is not repeated here. This note should be read with that document and our May 2016 addendum document.

- 4 We have assessed the site and its context to establish whether any significant change to the baseline condition has occurred since planning permission was granted, and we conclude that this is not the case. Similarly, we have considered changes to policy and guidance in the intervening period and while change has occurred to policy and guidance, we do not believe that it materially affects judgments made regarding heritage and townscape effects.

The amendments

- 5 The following are the amendments considered in this addendum. Note that the amendments mentioned are those principal external changes relating to the design and appearance of the proposed scheme only.
 - Relocation of the office reception;
 - Improved entrances and public realm;
 - Increased affordable office provision and bike parking;
 - Plant consolidated and moved from Brain Yard roof to Panther House roof;
 - Improved layout to the upper office levels;
 - Building above Brain Yard – relocated plant and a more solid appearance;
 - Alterations in materiality.

The effect of the revisions to the permitted scheme

- 6 When what is proposed by way of the S.73 application is considered against the 2017 permitted scheme, the proposed changes make a discernible difference to the scheme without fundamentally altering its overall characteristics. The architectural changes work within and refine the permitted scheme, and, considered individually and cumulatively, represent the positive evolution of the scheme.
- 7 Each of the changes is positive. The relocation of the office reception area results in a reduction in the amount and distribution of original building fabric altered. It creates a more generous reception space and gives equal prominence to the entrance for the main office and the affordable workspace. Changes in the entrances and the treatment of the public realm, along with a change in materiality (the use of a weathered/Cor-Ten style metal appearance, the use of brick instead of pigmented concrete) and the greater solidity of the proposal above Brain Yard help the proposals to be closer in character to that of Panther House and to ground the

proposals better in their context. The changes to the upper office levels of Panther House result in a more nuanced roofscape to Mount Pleasant and an improved visual effect on the eastern context of the site.

Analysis

- 8 Our Heritage and Townscape Appraisal (December 2015) concluded that:

The scheme will create useful, well-designed and attractive buildings between which will occur equally attractive and useful new and regenerated urban space. It will transform a largely hidden and under-appreciated urban block, refreshing the existing work space for 21st century use, and providing more up-to-date work space in addition to a range of new homes. The scheme creates permeability and reinforces the urban grain by means of a high-quality new public realm. It will create jobs and homes, and help to secure the contribution of the site to the borough and London over the long term.

The scheme will alter the site and its surroundings, but do so in a highly positive manner. The scheme, designed by the Stirling Award-winning practice of Allford Hall Monaghan Morris, is an excellent example of how to regenerate our cities by means of contemporary architecture that is nonetheless highly contextual, and which is visually pleasing and imaginative while delivering commercially viable development.

The proposed scheme will preserve and enhance heritage assets and townscape, and will deliver clear and substantial public benefits for Camden and its residents. The scheme will enhance the character and appearance of the Hatton Garden Conservation Area, the setting of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and the setting of listed buildings. For these reasons the proposed scheme will therefore comply with the law, and national and local policies and guidance for urban design and the historic built environment.

- 9 Our May 2016 Addendum assessed that that the amendments made during the application process did not alter the conclusions made in our original report
- 10 Having assessed the most recent amendments discussed above, we conclude the proposed development, as further amended, will preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Hatton Garden Conservation Area and the setting of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area by virtue of the positive effect that the development will have on these conservation areas, as well as preserving and enhancing the setting of the Grade II listed buildings on the western side of Gray's Inn Road.

- 11 Because we maintain our opinion regarding heritage and townscape effects, and for the purposes of a formal assessment, we therefore repeat the following in order to address compliance with legislation, policy and guidance.
- 12 Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires decision makers with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area to pay ‘special attention... to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area’. It is important to note that the legal requirement regarding satisfying Section 72(1) of the Act, established by *South Lakeland District Council v Secretary of State for the Environment and another* [1992] 1 ALL ER 573, is met if the proposed development leaves the conservation area unharmed. The amended proposal clearly does this.
- 13 However, the proposed development, as amended, goes much further than simply leaving the Hatton Garden Conservation Area ‘unharmed’. In very many ways, as set out in the application documents and discussed above, the development will very substantially enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 14 The NPPF identifies two levels of potential ‘harm’ that might be caused to a heritage asset by a development: ‘substantial harm...or total loss of significance’ or ‘less than substantial’. Both levels of harm must be caused to a *designated* heritage asset – in this case, the Hatton Garden Conservation Area, the Bloomsbury Conservation Area or the listed buildings on the western side of Gray's Inn Road.
- 15 The proposed scheme, as amended, does not lead to ‘substantial’ harm or any level of ‘less than substantial’ harm to any designated heritage asset. As has been explained earlier, the proposal does very evidently not result in the ‘total loss of significance’ of the conservation area or any listed building.
- 16 The proposed scheme complies with Paragraph 195 of the NPPF - it certainly does not lead to ‘substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset’. It also complies with Paragraph 196. It is our view that the proposals cannot reasonably be considered to cause any harm to any of the designated or undesignated heritage assets affected by the scheme.
- 17 However, if the Council believes that ‘less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset’ (Paragraph 134) is caused the scheme, then two things are clear. Firstly a sensible measure of that harm must be that it is very low, and secondly, that very low level of harm is outweighed by the benefits of the scheme that are set out here, in the Design & Access Statement and in the Planning Statement.
- 18 The proposed scheme will provide public benefits and heritage and townscape benefits. These have been set out in detail in the planning submission for the

permitted scheme. These benefits continue to be provided and – with the increase in the amount of affordable office space – are enhanced in the amended scheme.

Conclusion

- 19 We believe that the series of amendments described above will improve the already exemplary permitted scheme for the Panther House site. They have the effect of refining and augmenting the evident quality of the scheme that received planning permission.
- 20 We therefore consider that our conclusions set out at in our Heritage and Townscape Appraisal for the permitted scheme, and repeated above, remain valid. The proposed development, as amended, will preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Hatton Garden Conservation Area and the setting of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, as well as preserving and enhancing the setting of the Grade II listed buildings on the western side of Gray's Inn Road. The scheme fully satisfies the law, national policy and local policy regarding heritage assets.

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