

## **92 Southampton Row London WC1B 4BH**

The proposed development is for the formation of 11 no. guestrooms at ground floor level, 2 of which are duplex. To replace existing meeting rooms, gym & offices

Application number: 2021/2024/P

Application type: Full Planning Permission

### **Objection to the planning application**

The objection is made on four grounds:

1. Plans for plant, equipment and piping for the kitchen and heating and air conditioning for the new rooms cannot be met and do not meet prior agreements.
2. Cumulative effect of repeated planning applications and works.
3. The basement bedrooms will be of an appalling quality which should not be acceptable in central London.
4. Noise, disturbance and intrusion

### **Details of the objection.**

#### **1. Plant and equipment**

A request for planning permission for a similar project was rejected in February 2019, in part due to intrusion into the large lightwell which would have affected both existing hotel rooms and Ormonde Mansions. The revised plans submitted now place the roof of the new structure on the west side of the light well at a lower level, at the lower sills of the hotel windows and the top of the parapet that separates the hotel from Ormonde Mansions.

A quick visual inspection will show that the present roof (floor 01 on the plan) is covered by a network of pipes, ducts and plant. To gain space for the new construction, the document "Planning and Heritage Statement" (section 3, page 5, ¶3.5) says that "the proposal includes the removal of the plant and equipment that is currently located on the eastern part of the ground floor roof in this location. The existing AHU, ducting and ventilation shaft which runs up the full extent of the side of the building to the roof will all be removed from this area."

There are two immediate points to this:

- i. Under various agreements gained in the granting of prior planning permissions, the problems of noise and smells was partly resolved by the agreement of the hotel move all plant to the roof (thus the duct). Air conditioning and other services for the rooms will clearly require plant, and the submitted plans have no provision for this. The new rooms have limited light and very limited air flow. These rooms will require plant for heating and air-conditioning. The plans do not show where this plant will be placed. This new plant will add to the already bothersome noise from plant from the hotel. The cumulative impact of the installation of new plant will have serious impact on Ormonde Mansions. As part of the agreement on the 2019 works on blocks B and C, all plant (which had been subject of continual noise complaints) was 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 plant will be required at room level for these new rooms, which goes against the agreement on the previous works and also would cause noise disturbance. Plant cannot be allowed in the light well. Indeed, as noted in iii. below, the application as posted implies that such plant will be installed.
- ii. The document 001-Proposed plans, in the section 00-Plan. Proposed, just over the number © says, in extremely small letters "Existing kitchen extract retained in this location".

This kitchen extract is currently connected to the duct to the roof. Keeping the extract by removing the duct will send fan noise, smell, and fumes into the lightwell, affecting both Ormonde Mansions and the hotel rooms.

iii. The Planning and Heritage statement carefully says "removal of the plant and equipment that is currently located on the *eastern part* of the ground floor roof." This clearly implies that plant, ducts, equipment, etc on the western part will not be removed. Because the roof of the new building goes up to the maximum possible height, it is clearly intended to place equipment and ducts on top of that roof, thus going above the suggested height and blocking views from Ormonde Mansions and hotel windows. This was exactly the reason the previous application was rejected.

In summary the proposal makes impossible claims to meet the needs of the site without ducting and plant. a) Prior agreement requires all plant to be on the roof of the main building, above 4h or 5th floor and thus above the roof of Ormond Mansions, and the plans do not meet this requirement. b) The kitchen extract cannot be retained without fans and ducts. c) And the proposal makes clear that ducting and plant is intended on the new roof, adjoining Ormonde Mansions.

It is customary that once a planning application is granted, the applicants apply for "minor variations" to plant and ducting, and it is clear this application will have to do so. We ask that this application be rejected on the grounds that it cannot meet the claims and is unclear about how the problem will be resolved.

## **2. Cumulative effect of repeated planning applications and works.**

The cumulative impact of works in the light well between the hotel and Ormonde Mansions 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 in 2019. Block C was expanded in the 1998 and again 2019. A restaurant at ground level with glass roof lights was constructed in the 1980s. The black exhaust duct around the glass roof lights was added subsequently, we believe without any planning permission. The hotel has through the years constantly tried to encroach on the lightwell between the hotel and Ormonde Mansions (and also between the hotel and Bristol house mansions). In 2005, 2006 and 2007 the hotel sought planning permission to create a 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> floor which would have blocked all light out of the lightwell and severely damaged the well being of residents in Ormonde Mansions. These applications were rejected or withdrawn. The steady enclosure of the light well has increased echo and reduced reflected light from the glazed brick. The cumulative effect is also related to noise, disturbance and plant, set out below. Works on blocks labelled B and C on the plans were completed just before the start of the pandemic. These works 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. We argued in January 2020 that it was totally unacceptable for the hotel to return again to take away part of the light. The Application proposal 2021/2024/P says that the plan to build 11 new rooms at basement and ground floor level will not reduce light to Ormonde Mansions but this is one more building proposal on top of a number that have seriously encroached on the light well and will impact on the life and well being of residents of Ormonde Mansions

## **3. The basement bedrooms will be of an appalling quality which should not be acceptable in central London.**

The "Planning and Heritage Statement" (section 5, page 10, ¶5.20) "The extension is of a high architectural quality, meeting the functional requirement of new hotel accommodation

and providing good quality new rooms." We dispute that this plan will provide 'good quality new rooms' for the reasons below.

The drawings for the proposed plan show that there are 8 single story new rooms, of which 4 rooms are at basement level: Light and air to these rooms are provided by a lightwell (between 1.4 and 1.8 metres wide) and facing a parapet wall that rises above the ground floor. Rooms are at the bottom of a narrow lightwell (Imagine standing with your arms stretched out at either side. The width is only the distance between your fingertips). There will be low access to daylight and almost no air flow.

Also proposed are 4 rooms at ground floor level. Light and air to these rooms are provided by a lightwell (between 1.4 and 1.8 metres wide) and facing a parapet wall that rises above the ground floor. Rooms are in a narrow lightwell (Imagine standing with your arms stretched out at either side. The width is only the distance between your fingertips). There will be reduced light and poor air flow.

Also proposed are 3 double story rooms - these duplex rooms are built above the kitchens. The plan gives no information on the level of fire insulation between kitchen and bedrooms which will stop any fire in the kitchen spreading to the bedrooms. Light and air to the rooms will be from a light well that which is 1.84 metres wide (again just about the distance between fingertips of hands open wide to the side) and hence any windows in these new rooms will be less than 2 metres away from windows in the East end of block B. Similarly hotel rooms in east end of block B will be faced with the walls and or windows of the new duplex hotel rooms. This will degrade the value of the affected rooms in Block B.

#### **4. Noise, disturbance and intrusion**

Over nearly two years prior to the pandemic lockdown there was substantial noise and disturbance from the works on blocks B and C. Demolition works, especially the removal of concrete floors, were so noisy that residents had to move out. This application requires the creation of three new lightwells and this inevitably will involve drilling through concrete and other very noisy work. In the previous works there was also substantial visual intrusion with workmen being able to look into bedrooms and kitchens in Ormonde Mansions from a very short distance away. Ormonde Mansions residents should not have to put up with almost continuous (save only for the lockdown period) noise and disturbance from the hotel.

**I ask for the rejection of this plan** because of the cumulative impact of works in the hotel over the past 35 years that have encroached into the lightwell between the hotel and Ormonde Mansions. I also object to the increase of plant to the light well. And I call for a delay in further noisy and disruptive works because except for the pandemic we have continually suffered noise and intrusion from building works in the hotel. Finally, I do not see that 8 new bedrooms that have reduced access to daylight and have very little airflow will add any economic benefits to the area but will cause a serious disturbance in terms of noise and intrusion to the adjoining residents in Ormonde Mansions.

**I also ask for the rejection of the plan on the grounds that the proposed plant is impossible to meet conditions.** An alternative would be to again include in the permission the requirement that all plant and equipment be placed on the roofs of blocks B and C and that no ducts, conduits, plant or other equipment could be placed on the roof subject to the planning application and that this is a fundamental requirement and that applications to add plant, equipment, ducts, etc to the roof cannot be accepted.



Teresa Smart, Chair Ormonde Mansions Residents Association (OMRA)