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Date: 25/06/2021
Our ref: 2021/2523/PRE
Contact: Laura Hazelton
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Jesus Ciller
Mackay and Partners Ltd.
50 Farringdon Road
London
EC1M 3HE

By email

Dear Mr Ciller,

Re: Melia White House, Albany Street, NW1 3UT

Thank you for submitting a pre-planning application enquiry for the above property which was received on 20/05/2021 together with the required fee of £1,312.00.

1. Drawings and documents

Design and Access Statement dated May 2021.

2. Proposal

New canopy to Albany Street terrace.

3. Site description

The application site comprises a Grade II listed 9 storey building. It was constructed in 1936 by Robert Atkinson, originally as serviced flats but now in use as a hotel. The elevations are clad in pale cream faience tiles which are slightly darker to the ground floor and to the banding at each floor. The main entrance is on Osnaburgh Terrace with a separate subsidiary entrance on Albany Street.

The site is not located within a conservation area but is adjacent to the Regents Park Conservation Area.

4. Relevant planning history

LSX0104071 - Retrospective application for the installation of secondary glazing to first and second floors of "A" wing (north-east block). Granted 10/07/2001.

PSX0105001 - Retrospective permission for temporary canopy on Longford Street entrance; and one new air plant enclosure on flat roof over ground floor on D-E wing. Granted 24/10/2001.

LSX0105119 & PSX0105118 - Installation of new screen and revolving doors to main entrance of hotel. Granted 13/11/2001.

LSX0204286 - The installation of secondary glazing to windows on the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th floors of 'A' wing. LBC Granted 16/04/2002.

LSX0204485 - Internal alterations at basement area to refurbish an existing bar area into a fitness centre. Works include insertion of partitions, reconfiguration of a staircase and insertion of air conditioning and other related services. Granted 13/09/2002.

2006/4057/P - Installation of external electrical transformer and associated equipment and enclosures at ground floor level on Osnaburgh frontage, and relocation of blue plaque at the hotel (Class C1). Granted 15/11/2006.

2006/4058/L - Internal alterations at basement level and installation of external electrical transformer and associated equipment and enclosures at ground floor level on Osnaburgh frontage, and relocation of blue plaque at the hotel (Class C1). Granted 15/11/2006.

2008/2887/P & 2008/3293/L - Installation of safety railings at roof level. Granted 15/09/2008.

2011/4612/P & 2011/4621/L - Alterations including the replacement of the existing external doors and access and the addition of a new canopy structure on Osnaburgh Street elevation to existing hotel (Use Class C1). Granted 12/03/2012.

2017/0841/P & 2017/0874/L - Replacement of all Crittall and uPVC windows with steel framed windows to match existing fenestration pattern. Granted 11/03/2017.

2017/2750/P & 2017/2840/L - Creation of external ground floor terrace on Osnaburgh Street for the use of the existing bar/restaurant; removal of existing and installation of replacement plant at roof level; creation of a new external door opening to provide access to terrace; and ground floor interior refurbishment, including bar restaurant, meeting rooms, installation of new mechanical services. Granted 29/06/2017.

2018/0665/L - Amendments to 2017/2840/L granted on the 29 June 2017 regarding interior refurbishment of restaurant and meeting rooms on ground floor. Granted 22/03/2018.

2018/3877/L - Interior refurbishment of bar, restaurant and offices on ground floor. New air extraction, heating and cooling system and new bathrooms and meeting rooms. Granted 14/09/2018.

2018/6043/P & 2018/6363/L - Creation of new louvred openings to existing plant room. Granted 26/02/2019.

2018/5858/P & 2018/6345/L - Extension of existing ground floor plant room on Albany Street elevation by 28.3sqm and alterations to front forecourt, entrance doors and canopy. Granted 11/06/2019

2019/2487/L - Room Refurbishment of the Hotel. Granted 19/06/2019.

2020/1832/P & 2020/2401/L - Installation of new air handling unit at roof level. Granted 22/07/2021.

2020/5366/P & 2020/0140/L - Internal alterations at basement level to provide new swimming pool, changing facilities and spa (no excavations), and installation of 2 external vents at ground floor level to the north west corner. Granted 27/05/2021.

5. Relevant policies and guidance

[National Planning Policy Framework 2019](#)

[The London Plan 2021](#)

[Camden Local Plan 2017](#)

Policy A1 Managing the impact of development

Policy A4 Noise and vibration

Policy D1 Design

Policy D2 Heritage

[Camden Planning Guidance](#)

CPG Amenity 2021

CPG Design 2021

6. Assessment

The principle planning considerations are considered to be the following:

- Design and Heritage
- Amenity

7. Design and Heritage

The Council's design policies are aimed at achieving the highest standard of design in all developments, including where alterations and extensions are proposed. Policy D1 of the Local Plan requires development to be of the highest architectural and urban design quality which improves the function, appearance and character of the area; and Policy D2 states that the Council will preserve, and where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas and listed buildings. Camden's Local Plan is supported by CPG (Design)

Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (“the Listed Buildings Act”) is relevant given the listed status of the building. Section 16(2) provides that in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works to a Listed Building special regard must be had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

The effect of this section of the Listed Buildings Act is that there is a statutory presumption in favour of the preservation of Listed Buildings and their settings. Considerable importance and weight should be attached to their preservation. A proposal which would cause harm should only be permitted where there are strong countervailing planning considerations which are sufficiently powerful to outweigh the presumption.

Significance

The site is a block of serviced flats, now a hotel, of 1936, designed by noted inter-war architect Robert Atkinson, using a cross-shaped plan to maximise views and light and obviate the need for lightwells. It is faced in cream faience in a Moderne idiom. On each long side a carefully proportioned stepped side block rises towards the central X, each end of which is penetrated by a prominent prow-like projection atop a full-height stairwell. The height of the X-block is uniform. Externally the building is unaltered apart from replica replacement windows and encroaching infill at ground-floor level. It is considered that the original overall proportions and form of the building should be retained.

Description of works

At ground level, the proposals involve the the installation of a new fixed canopy structure to the existing terrace area fronting Albany Street. It was noted on site that the whole area has had decking installed without consent, and as such, is liable to enforcement action.

Assessment

The council issued the following advice in response to a previous scheme which involved the installation of a new larger canopy in the same location.

The open areas around the base of the building have been encroached upon over the years with infill building. Matters have now exceeded the point where additional infill is harmful to one's ability to understand the plan form of the building as built. The roofing-over of the terrace, while intended to appear lightweight and impermanent, will nonetheless be experienced as an opaque obstruction, cluttering the façade and making it difficult to read. Despite being drawn to resemble a cross between a tent and an umbrella, it is extremely unlikely that such a substantial construction will be dismantled nightly like, say, a pub's parasols, so it should be considered as an infill extension. Furthermore, the structure is unsympathetic in design and is an impediment to viewing the building.

After further review of the Council's planning records, the existing canopy structure (which was installed in 2014 and has recently been removed) does not appear to benefit from planning permission or listed building consent. As such, it would not form a consideration in

the assessment of the acceptability of future proposals for a similar canopy structure in this location.

Notwithstanding this, officers do consider that some form of canopy in this location would be acceptable, but the current proposals are not considered to overcome the concerns raised in response to the previous pre-application proposal. The proposed canopy would again, cover almost the entirety of the terrace area and result in excessive enclosure of this space. It is also noted that permission was recently granted for the extension of the existing plant enclosure in this location, and although it was considered to cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the listed building, approval was granted due to the public benefits secured elsewhere at the site, and on the proviso that no further enclosure of the ground floor spaces exterior would occur.

Any canopy in this location should be smaller and lighter and appear less structurally solid than what is shown in the pre-application proposals, especially options 1 and 2. It should be reduced in size (in terms of footprint) to leave a greater proportion of the space open, and it should be set further away from the road and building – it certainly should not extend past the building line all the way to the site curtilage as currently proposed. Of the three proposals, option 2 is considered most likely to receive support, but it covers too large an area as currently proposed.

It is acknowledged that due to the Covid 19 pandemic, the government has encouraged Local Planning Authorities to relax restrictions relating to outdoor dining and street furniture, and although the Council would be supportive of temporary measures such as these, this would not be a consideration in the assessment of a permanent canopy structure.

A green wall is proposed to the edges of the plant room enclosure. Provided this was freestanding and not fixed into the stonework, and it could be demonstrated that maintenance and irrigation of the green wall did not cause damage to the building, officers would not object to these works.

The proposals also include the installation of a green wall to the external boundary which would extend to the height of the canopy structure. Although the introduction of an element of greenery would be supported, similar to what can be seen to the Osnaburgh Street / Longford Street corner of the building, or as proposed in 'option 2', this should not be at the height proposed which introduces unacceptable bulk and fully encloses the terrace.

8. Amenity

There are a number of residential properties surrounding the site on Albany Street. The development would not raise concerns in terms of impact on sunlight/daylight, overlooking or outlook, but the use of the terrace as a shisha lounge would need to be carefully managed to ensure there was no harmful impact on neighbouring residents. Key considerations would be noise disturbance and hours of operation, and details of how the use would be managed to avoid disturbance to neighbours should be provided with any future application.

9. Conclusion

Although officers are not opposed to the principle of a canopy in this location, the proposals presented are considered excessively large and to enclose too great of an area of one of the last unenclosed external spaces at the site. Of the three options, option 2 is considered preferable, although it is recommended that the number of parasols are reduced and that they do not project forward of the existing building line.

10. Planning application information

If you submit a planning application which addresses the outstanding issue detailed in this report satisfactorily, I would advise you to submit the following for a valid planning application:

- Completed form – full planning and listed building consent
- An ordnance survey based location plan at 1:1250 scale denoting the application site in red
- Floor plans labelled ‘existing’ and ‘proposed’
- Roof plans labelled ‘existing’ and ‘proposed’
- Elevation drawings labelled ‘existing’ and ‘proposed’
- Section drawings ‘existing’ and ‘proposed’
- Design and access statement
- Heritage assessment
- Noise impact assessment
- Green wall details including maintenance plan
- Sample photographs/manufacturer details of proposed materials
- The appropriate fee
- Please see [supporting information for planning applications](#) for more information.

We are legally required to consult on applications with individuals who may be affected by the proposals. We would put up a site notice on or near the site and, advertise in a local newspaper. The Council must allow 21 days from the consultation start date for responses to be received.

A proposal of this size would likely be determined under delegated powers. For more details click [here](#).

This document represents an initial informal officer view of your proposals based on the information available to us at this stage and would not be binding upon the Council, nor prejudice any future planning application decisions made by the Council.

If you have any queries about the above letter or the attached document please do not hesitate to contact Laura Hazelton on the number above.

Thank you for using Camden’s pre-application advice service.

Yours sincerely,

Laura Hazelton

Principal Planning Officer
Planning Solutions Team