



KING'S CROSS
CONSERVATION AREA
Advisory Committee

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WC1H 8AL

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Formal Objection to the Refurbishment and Extension of 14-16 Leeke Street and 1-6 Field Street, WC1X 9HJ

This application lies within the King's Cross Conservation Area. We have no objection to the replacement of the defective, unsafe and inappropriate zinc clad façade. However, the two proposed extensions and associated works will have an unacceptable negative effect on the adjacent listed buildings and the wider King's Cross CA, and we therefore urge the Council to reject this application.

Site and Local Context

The King's Cross Conservation Area *'contains some of the most important historic buildings and structures in the country and has areas of great interest and variety'*. The application site is surrounded by both listed buildings and buildings that make a positive contribution to the CA. The site is situated on both Leeke Street and Field Street forming a considerable portion of the latter. It lies within sub area four of the KX CA which has *'characteristic fine urban grain with broad consistency of building heights and materials'*.

The street environment of this area is particularly noteworthy. The pattern of west-east development combined with the 'cut-and-cover' London Underground lines gives rise to a quite extraordinary street pattern, with small winding alleys crossing the railway and giving glimpses of the train lines. This train line gives rise to a unique *'urban valley,'* where development abruptly stops, giving long views northwards and southwards through King's Cross. Along the train-line, development is often exceptional in character, and very well-preserved. Views into this area can be glimpsed from as far afield as Farringdon Station, while views can also be seen while on the trains themselves.

The North side of Field Street is dominated by the site with the South side featuring an early 20th century single storey building with large metal-framed windows. The remainder of the buildings on the street are architecturally unremarkable but maintain uniformity of scale. Leeke Street contains a number of buildings that enhance the CA, including 11-3, 2-4 and across the railway 40-44 and 46 Wicklow Street. These buildings are constructed of traditional London stock brick are one to three stories.

Importantly, bordering the site on 173-179 King's Cross Road compromises six grade II listed Georgian terraces dating from 1799. The new extensions and associated works on the site must not negatively affect the amenity or setting of these listed buildings.

14-16 Leeke Street and 1-6 Field Street is a three to four storey building that occupies a prominent site within sub area four of the KX CA. The existing building is already an imposing feature on Leeke Street, towering two storeys above the surrounding buildings. The site is located next to the railway, increasing its visual prominence through long views. The zinc cladding on the upper floors is uncharacteristic of the CA, but the dark colour matches the more 'grimy' aesthetic the King's Cross CA is known for.

Massing and Design

The existing building is already unusually large compared to the surrounding area which is somewhat reduced by the existing building 'stepping down' from four floors on Leeke Street to three on Field Street. Filling in this 'step' would cause the building to have unacceptable bulk that would be noticeable from a number of adjacent streets, compromising a significant portion of sub area four of the KX CA. This would upset the *'characteristic fine urban grain with broad consistency of building heights and materials'*. The proposed cladding material of brick slips is an improvement over zinc cladding, which should hopefully have a positive contribution to the CA.

Detrimental effect to Listed Buildings

The most problematic aspect of the proposal is the loss of amenity to the four grade II listed buildings 173-179 King's Cross Road. The two new residential balconies would directly overlook the rear of the listed buildings including their gardens. This would have a strong detrimental effect on their privacy and amenity of the buildings to the existing residents. The proposal does not take notice of UDP policy KC11 that indicates that the Council will grant permission for proposals that: *"preserve listed buildings or structures and their setting"* and *"preserve or enhance buildings, structures and other features of character and historic interest, and their setting, within the conservation areas"*. The increase in scale and two new balconies will clearly negatively affect the listed buildings and on that basis should be removed from the proposals.

Conclusion

The refurbishment, recladding and extension offers an opportunity to turn an aberrant building of the CA into one that makes a positive contribution to its internationally significant historic environment. Many aspects of the proposal help achieve this, however the extensions and new balconies thwart this by causing damage to the CA and the setting of the adjacent listed buildings. Therefore, we urge the Council to reject the proposal for these reasons and we invite the applicant to resubmit the application without the extensions and new balconies.

Kings Cross Conservation Area

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