

# Conservation Comments and Observations

HSBC Bank, 176 Camden High Street, NW1 8QL

2022/3810/P

Dear Josh,

Following are my formal Conservation comments and observations on the application for works to the HSBC Bank building at 176 Camden High Street, NW1 8QL (2022/3810/P).

## BACKGROUND

The subject building is located in the Camden Town Conservation Area and is identified as a Positive Contributor and a Focal building at norther corner of Britannia Junction. The post-war Art Deco style building and has a distinctive bullnosed principal elevation that conforms to its triangular site. It has a stone façade and a tiled base, delineated with a marble ledge/belt course below windowsill level.

There are two existing ATM machines on the southwest Camden High Street elevation and a single ATM on the southeast Kentish Town Road elevation. The southeast ATM has been set down into the line of the tiled base with an integrated marble lintel to facilitate disabled access.

A site visit was conducted on 23 November 2022.

## PROPOSAL

The works concerned include the removal of the three existing external ATM machines and associated signage and the installation of two new external ATM machines on the southwest Camden High Street elevation with replacement signs, including:

*Section of external plinth & marble tiled ledge to be cut back & removed to accommodate installation of new MFD machine – x2 southwest ATMs*

*Wall with the aperture of the third machine will be infilled with blockwork and finish with stainless steel cover plate – southeast ATM*

Internal modifications are also proposed which are not addressed as part of the assessment.

## IMPACT ON THE POSITIVITY CONTRIBUTING BUILDING AND CONSERVATION AREA

Located in a prominent position at Britannia Junction on the corner of Camden High Street and Kentish Town Road, the subject building makes a distinctive contribution to the townscape and setting of the Camden Town Conservation Area. The Camden Town Conservation Area Appraisal specifically mentions the contribution of the subject building to the Area, stating:

*North of Britannia Junction at the southern corner of the triangular site between Camden High Street and Kentish Town Road, stands No. 176, the HSBC Bank, a good example of post-war architecture dating from c. 1950. Despite being only of two storeys, it is a strong focal building visible in long views from the south; it has a curved stone façade, incorporating high quality friezes depicting scientific and medical themes.*

To install the bulk of the two new larger scaled ATMs, part of the external wall, including the marble lintel and tiled base detail, will be cut into and demolished. The DAS does not address the loss of this significant historic fabric or the implications on the building or setting. It is also not addressed what

implications the new ATMs will have on the joinery – where a glazing pane will also have to be removed.

The Camden Local Plan highlights that any remedial works should be undertaken in a material of a similar appearance to the original and traditional features should be retained (7.54). Where the northeast ATM is proposed for removal concrete blockwork and a stainless-steel cover plate will be installed which are modern materials that contrast with the character of the building and do not align with the historic values of the Area.

The character of Conservation Areas derives from the combination of factors, including materials and architectural detailing, and is eroded through the cumulative loss of these features. The proposed works will be harmful to the appearance and character of the host building and the Conservation Area through the loss and modification of significant heritage features and fabric (marble and tiled base), and the introduction of unsympathetic and inappropriate modern materials (stainless-steel cover).

The proposal does not include works that will better enhance or further reveal the significance of the Positively Contributing Focal building or its contribution to the setting. The scheme pays no attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area and the public benefits will be limited as there are three functioning machines, one of which has disabled access, already exist on the site.

## CONCLUSION

The proposed modifications to the principal façade of the HSBC Bank will pose less than substantial harm to the historic character, detailing and fabric of the building and use inappropriate materials, that will cumulatively contribute to eroding the setting of the Camden Town Conservation Area. The works are therefore inappropriate and cannot be supported from a Conservation perspective.

Do not hesitate to be in contact if you require any further clarification or discussion.

Jessica McDonnell-Buwalda

24 November 2022