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24 August 2022

LB Camden
Regeneration and Planning
Town Hall
Judd Street
London
WC1H 9JE

FAO: Angela Ryan

Dear Madam

Mercure Bloomsbury Hotel, 130-134 Southampton Row, London WC1B 5AF
Erection of Condenser Units and Associated Sound Insulation Enclosure

We are pleased to submit a planning application on behalf of our clients Waverley House Hotel Limited, trading as Mercure Hotels, for the retrospective installation of condenser units and for the installation of an associated sound insulation enclosure at the Mercure Bloomsbury Hotel, 130-134 Southampton Row, London.

In addition to this planning covering letter, we submit the following information:

- Application Forms and Certificates;
- CIL Form;
- Site Location Plan;
- Drawings by Sound Planning:
 - Proposed Layout – Drawing No. SR0f1E1;
 - Proposed Elevations – Drawing No. SR0f1E2;
 - Proposed Section A-A – Drawing No. SR0f1E3;
 - Existing Section A-A – Drawing No. SR0f1E4; and
 - Existing Layout and Elevation – Drawing No. SR0f1E5.
- Plant Noise Assessment Acoustic Report, by Sharps Redmore;
- Mitsubishi Electric Air Conditioning Product Information Sheet;
- Air Conditioning Condenser Units Photograph 1; and
- Fire Safety Strategy – Reasonable Exemption Statement (RES).

This retrospective application seeks to regularise the installed condenser units and also proposes a sound insulation enclosure in order to mitigate any potential sound levels to adjoining property.



Site Description

The Mercure Bloomsbury Hotel (use class C1) is situated on the east side of Southampton Road, on its corner with Cosmo Place. It is situated within a terrace of buildings of similar heights, comprising mixed use developments such as retail, hotel and residential uses. The area around the hotel is predominantly commercial in character. The site is located in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area of Camden.

The 114-bedroom hotel is part 7-storey plus mansard roof level, part 6-storey and part single-storey, covering the entire site. At street level there is an independent retail unit and restaurant/bar accessible to both hotel guests and the general public.

The 6-storey element is positioned on its north-east side, adjoining Cosmo Place, and forms a rear lightwell, bounded by Russell Mansions to the north-west. The ground floor of the hotel covers the lightwell which features sky lights, cabling, vents and box air conditioning units and subsequently has the appearance of being a back of house area for the hotel.

The principle elevation of the building fronts onto Southampton Row and a side elevation fronts onto Cosmo Place which is a pedestrianised street along which there are 3-storey height buildings with 2 public houses and two restaurants connecting Southampton Row with Queen's Square to the east.

Proposals

A total of 8 no. Mitsubishi condenser units have been installed to the roof of the rear lightwell described above which are to supersede the historical box air conditioning units. Details of the units accompany this submission.

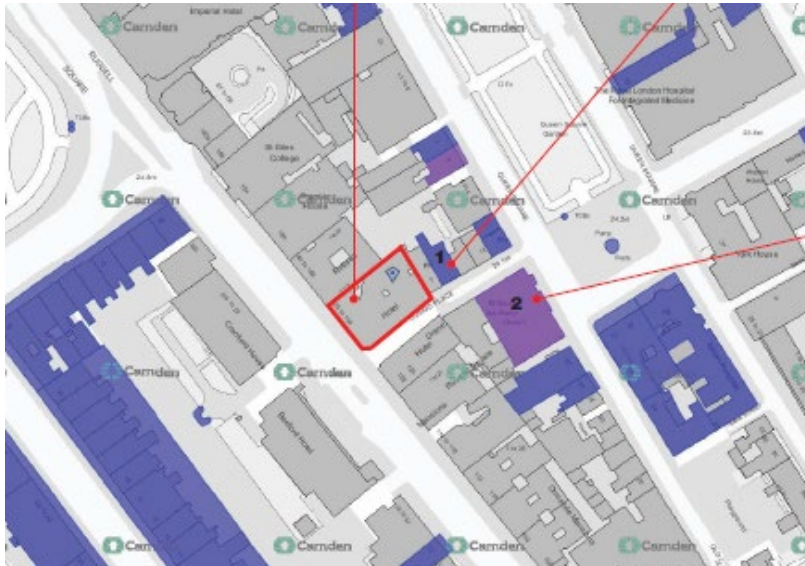
A sound insulation enclosure is proposed to provide mitigating screening from noise levels emitted by the condenser units. The screening enclosure is proposed to be two sided, enclosing the units to the south-west with galvanised steel to polyester powder coat finish louvres and north-west elevation with a solid galvanised steel to polyester powder coat finish acoustic panel, completed with a solid roof of the same material. The condenser units are positioned on a steel support frame. The enclosure would be 2.7m wide x 3.2m x 2.77m high above the roof level including the support frame etc. The condenser units are to a height of 2.22m above the roof level including the support frame.

Heritage Assets

The Bloomsbury Conservation Area was firstly designated in 1968 and it is considered of very high architectural interest.

Even though the existing building is not listed, it is considered to be 'a positive building' within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The nearest listed buildings are no. 9 Cosmo Place (Grade II Listed), numbered 1 below, and the St George The Martyr Church (Grade II* Listed), numbered 2 below, with the application site outlined in red.





Site location and listed building illustrated in purple.

The rear lightwell is screened from view from the public realm by the hotel buildings and adjacent Russell Mansions. Due to the location of the rear lightwell, the location of the proposed works and their size, they cannot be observed from within the surrounding conservation area, nor may they be observed in relation to any listed buildings. There would be no effect on the setting of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area or to any listed buildings. Accordingly, there is no harm caused by the proposed works to any heritage assets.

Justification

The installed condenser units are of a scale and design in keeping with the appearance of the rear lightwell, as would the proposed enclosing screen for the same reasons. As the lightwell cannot be observed from the public realm, the proposed works would not have any adverse impact upon general amenity or to the setting of any heritage assets. The proposed works would be positioned away from any adjoining openings and would not adversely affect the existing outlook or appear overbearing.

Planning permission was granted 28 February 2020 for a number of extensions to the hotel, application reference 2018/3876/P. That permission also included the rationalisation and relocation of air conditioning units within the same rear lightwell. Condition 4 of that permission relating to noise from fixed plant stated:

The total noise from fixed plant associated with the application site, when at a point 1m external to the nearest noise sensitive residential facades shall comply with the Acoustic Design note (ref 18209/ADN002/js) i.e. be at least 45 dB LAeq (daytime hours) and 42 dB LAeq (night time hours), when all plant/equipment (or any part of it) is in operation unless the plant/equipment hereby permitted will have a noise that is distinguishable, discrete continuous note (whine, hiss, screech or hum) and/or if there are distinct impulse (bangs, clicks, clatters, thumps), then the noise levels from the plant/equipment at any noise sensitive façade shall be at least 40 dB LAeq (daytime hours) 37 dB LAeq (night time hours) i.e. 15 dBA below background noise level.



Sharps Redmore has provided a noise survey which accompanies this submission, undertaken in accordance with the guidelines in BS 4142:2014. Sharps Redmore reviewed the operational running of the condenser units and carried out an initial noise survey on 30 May. Subsequently, they made recommendations to the installing engineer who carried out adjustments so as to minimise running times and noise peak levels and they thereafter carried out a repeat noise survey on 4 and 5 July.

Sharps Redmore observed in their second noise survey that the operational adjustments had helped reduce peak and background noise levels. However, a screening enclosure was recommended in order to insulate noise from the condenser units and to meet requisite noise levels of 10 dB below the background noise climate at a point 1m external to the nearest noise sensitive residential facades, in this instance Russell Mansions.

The proposed enclosure is designed in such a way as to protect the openings at Russell Mansions from noise emissions and to ensure sufficient space is achieved to allow for air intake into the units in accordance with the criteria previously specified by condition 4 of application ref. 2018/3876/P. The Sharps Redmore assessment objectively demonstrates that noise arising from the fixed plant, complies with this requirement.

Summary

The installed condenser units and proposed sound insulation enclosure are to be located within a rear lightwell atop an existing roof, which is entirely screened from view from the public realm, the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and any listed buildings. They would have no impact on visual amenity and will not harm the setting of any heritage asset.

The units and proposed enclosure are modest in size, in-keeping with the context of the lightwell and would be positioned away from adjoining openings. Accordingly, the structures would have no direct physical relationship with adjoining property.

A noise assessment by Sharps Redmore has found that with the proposed enclosure noise levels would not exceed those previously prescribed by Camden by condition 4 of planning application reference 2018/3876/P. Accordingly there would be no harm to the residential amenity of adjoining occupiers by reason of noise levels.

Accordingly, the proposed works are considered to be appropriate for the location taking into account the likely cumulative effects and will not cause any undue harm to surrounding property. The proposals are in accordance with all relevant adopted LB Camden policy and of paragraph 185 of the NPPF.

We trust that you have everything you need in order to validate this planning application, but if you have any queries, please don't hesitate to contact me direct.

Yours faithfully



Richard Evans
Director
CarneySweeney

