

## **Waterhouse Square - Building 2** **Application for a Certificate of Lawfulness: heritage and townscape** **commentary**

### **Heritage and townscape context**

- 1 The 'Prudential Assurance Building, 142, Holborn Bars' - Waterhouse Square - is listed Grade II\*. The list description is contained in Appendix B. The site is located in the south western corner of the Hatton Garden Conservation Area. The Chancery Lane Conservation Area in the City of London lies to the south of Holborn. The nearest listed buildings are the Grade II St Alban's Clergy House and the Grade II\* St Alban's Church), and the character and appearance of the Hatton Garden Conservation Area. The Royal Fusiliers War Memorial on Holborn is listed Grade: II\*. Staple Inn and adjacent buildings are listed Grade I and II\*. The site has the potential to affect three London View Management Framework Protected Vistas (all London Panoramas): 4A.1 Primrose Hill (Viewing Corridor plus Wider Setting Consultation Area), 5A.2 Greenwich Park (Wider Setting Consultation Area only), and 6A.1 Blackheath Park (Wider Setting Consultation Area only).

### **Heritage and townscape significance**

- 2 The heritage and townscape significance of the Waterhouse Square complex derives principally from its association with the Waterhouse family and the architectural legacy that the site now contains. The alterations and redevelopment at the site made in the 1980s and 1990s are a useful illustration of how development involving the loss of historic buildings and urban grain that was considered acceptable then seems inappropriate now, notwithstanding the views of Camden and English Heritage (as was) at the time. Also, while the restoration and retention of some of the Waterhouse/Joseph work was commendable, the design of the new development, to the north and west of the site, is remarkably clumsy. While significant interest in and designation of post-Modern buildings from the period has occurred in recent years, the new work of the 80s and 90s at Waterhouse merely represents a plodding and unintelligent copying of a style that was better implemented elsewhere. These recent parts of the site now look dated and awkward, and sit uncomfortably alongside the older buildings of high heritage significance.

## **The proposal**

- 3      It is proposed to insert floors in three areas of Building 2 - the central circular Main Atrium (partially over its full height), the north facing conservatory on Waterhouse Street (at second and third floor) and Atrium 2 (ground floor only). The infill areas do not relate to fabric, features, fixtures or fittings that form a main part of or contribute significantly to the special architectural or historic interest of the Grade II\* Prudential Assurance Building. The infilling at ground level of Atrium 2, which is formed by a courtyard between Building 2, the rear elevation of the 1895 Greville Street/Leather Lane block and the slightly earlier elevation to the south side of the atrium, would affect some historic fabric that is secondary in nature given its position and relationship to the more important buildings to the south of the overall site.

## **The effect of the proposal on heritage and townscape significance**

- 4      Subject to an appropriate detailed design for the ground floor insertion, the eastern and southern elevations of Atrium 2 would be preserved by an infill floor proposals. Otherwise the creation of new floors in the Main Atrium and north facing conservatory would have no meaningful or significance heritage and townscape effects.

## **Conclusion**

- 5      It is clear that the floor infill proposals for Building 2 would preserve the special architectural or historic interest of the Grade II\* Waterhouse buildings, the setting of nearby listed buildings (notably the Grade II St Alban's Clergy House and the Grade II\* St Alban's Church), and the character and appearance of the Hatton Garden Conservation Area. The townscape impact would be confined to the altered appearance of the north-facing conservatory and this is not considered a significant effect.

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