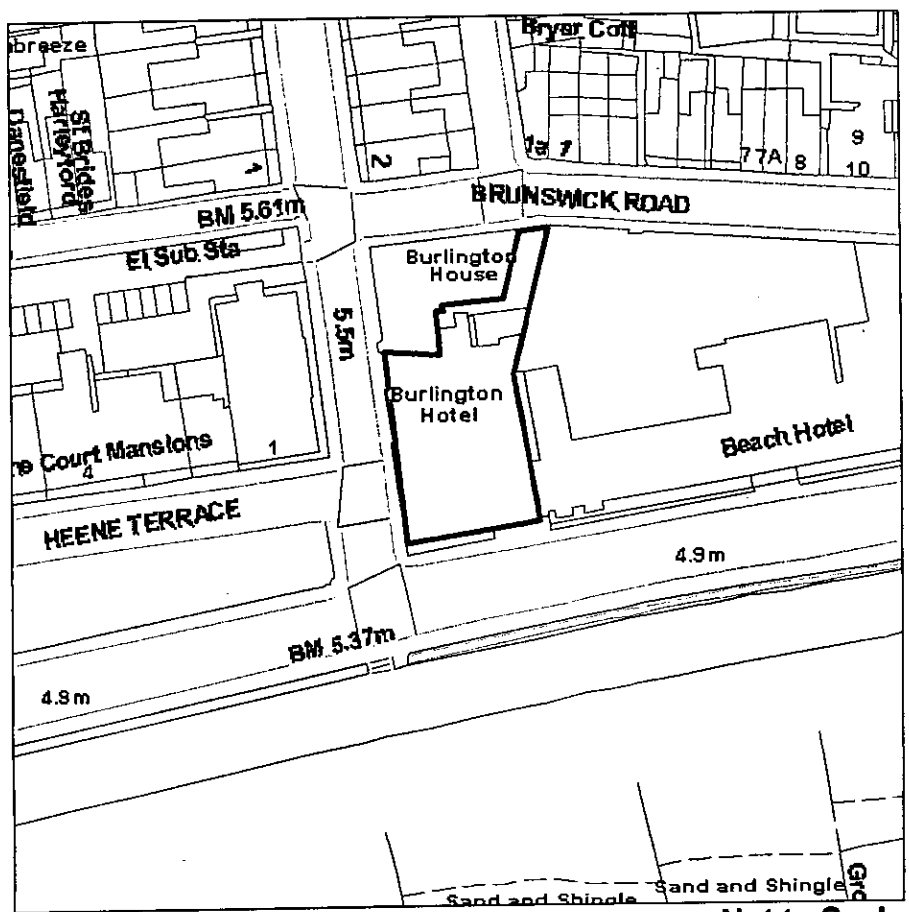
Collins Planning Services Ltd
Mrs Alina Rizzoni

WB/11/0249/FULL and
WB/11/0250/LBC
HEE
JMO

Location : The Burlington Hotel Marine Parade

Proposal: Resubmission of WB/10/0596/FULL and WB/10/0564/LBC for retention of signage and re-positioning of some existing external lighting.



Not to Scale

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1. THE PROPOSAL AND THE SITE

The application site comprises the Burlington Hotel, a Grade II listed building in an Italianate style by G A Dean, dating from 1865 (originally 'The Heene'). The listed building occupies a prominent seafront corner site at the junction of Marine Parade and Wordsworth Road. Together with the adjacent listed Heene Terrace, it forms part of a cohesive urban set piece within the surrounding townscape. Attached to the rear (northern) part of the Hotel, fronting Wordsworth Road, is the Imperial China Restaurant. This building originally formed part of the Hotel until planning permission was granted for a change of use to a restaurant in 2000.

The site lies within the Marine Parade and Hinterland Conservation Area. The character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area is largely derived from the 19th Century form of development in a grand Victorian interpretation of Regency architecture, including balconies, canopies, columnated entrance porticos and stucco decoration.

Planning and Listed Building Consent is sought for the retention of the vinyl signs applied to the ground floor glazing and retention of 11 external floodlights (involving some re-positioning of the existing lamps and wiring).

2. PLANNING HISTORY

The existing 11 no. floodlights and remaining vinyl signs are unauthorised. The current application results from discussions between the applicant and Council's Officers, including the Council's Conservation and Design Architect, following the refusal of earlier planning and listed building consent applications in September 2010 (WB/10/0564/LBC and WB/10/0596/FULL) on the following grounds:-

WB/10/0596/FULL

1. *The floodlights as installed constitute an unsympathetic and prominent alteration, which by reason of their utilitarian design, manner of their fitting and siting on the building, insensitive to its architectural features, are harmful to the visual integrity and historic character of this grade II listed building and fail to either enhance or preserve the character or appearance of the Marine Parade and Hinterland Conservation Area. The development is therefore contrary to saved Local Plan policy BE1, Submission Core Strategy policy 16 and national planning policy contained in PPS:5 .'Planning for the Historic Environment'.*

WB/10/564/LBC

1. *The floodlights as installed constitute an unsympathetic and prominent alteration, which by reason of their utilitarian design, manner of their fitting and siting on the building, insensitive to its architectural features, are harmful to the visual integrity and historic character of this grade II listed building. The development is therefore contrary to saved Local Plan policy BE1, Submission Core Strategy policy 16 and national planning policy contained in PPS:5 'Planning and the Historic Environment'.*

2. *The red vinyl lettering applied to the upper sashes of the narrow, arched windows on the west elevation, and the squared-headed window adjoining to the north, appear unduly dominant owing the manner of their display and unsympathetic design which fails to respect the proportions of the individual windows and their sub-divisions and together with the overall number of signs on windows in this elevation is considered to detract from the visual integrity and historic character of this grade II listed building. The development is therefore contrary to*

saved Local Plan policy BE1, Submission Core Strategy policy 16 and national planning policy contained in PPS:5 'Planning and the Historic Environment'.

The above retrospective applications (WB/10/0596/FULL and WB/10/0564/LBC) were submitted as a result of an enforcement investigation following a complaint about the external lighting initially received in 2009.

3. A SUMMARY OF THE APPLICANT'S DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

"The works the subject of this application have a minimal impact on the appearance of the listed building comprising the installation of external light fittings to highlight the features of the listed building and increase its visibility. The external lighting emphasises the prominent location of the building within the conservation area.

The submission involves moving some of the existing light fittings and re-routing the external wiring to conceal this wherever possible. The works are an important part of moves to increase the viability of this listed building. In this day and age it is essential for a hotel to be highly visible in order to attract customers and therefore safeguard the future of the building. The installations have been carried out in a sensitive manner that highlights the features of the listed building, marking it more prominent in the townscape and encouraging more people to use the building.

It is important that this listed building continues to be used in the way that it was originally proposed and that the hotel is allowed to update aspects of the building in a sensitive manner that respects the context and historic value of the building."

4. CONSULTATIONS

None.

5. REPRESENTATIONS

A strong objection has been received on behalf of the proprietor of the Imperial China Restaurant (adjoining to the north) commenting that the external coloured lighting is not acceptable (in blue or any other colour), on a listed building. It is argued that the application(s) should be refused and if necessary enforcement action taken to remedy the breaches of planning control and listed building consent. When the extension above the restaurant was built some years ago serious consideration was given to the work and every effort was made to ensure that the work was in keeping with the main Listed Building.

No comments have been received from the Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) in respect of the current applications, but CAAC

previously expressed concerns over the number of vinyl signs and reserved judgement on the lights.

The current applications have been referred to Committee for decision by Councillor Joan Bradley.

6. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

The display of the vinyl signs and installation of external lighting constitute alterations for which listed building consent is required. The installation of the external lighting materially alters the appearance of the building and therefore constitutes development requiring planning permission. Although it is apparent that the external lights have been in existence on this building since c.2002, immunity from enforcement action has not been assumed through the passage of time owing to the listed status of the building.

The relevant consideration is whether the current proposals address the grounds for refusing the earlier applications with regard to their effect on the historic character of the listed building and its features of special architectural importance, and on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

All advertisements are intended to draw the attention of passers-by and are essential to commercial activity. It is accepted that some form of advertisement is warranted if the viable use of the building as a Hotel and associated facilities, including Gio's restaurant/bar, is to be secured in the long-term. However, advertisements on Listed Buildings should not detract from the integrity of the building's design, historic character or structure, and should not spoil or compromise its setting.

In refusing the earlier retrospective application, it was recognised that the concept of applied lettering onto the windows is a relatively discreet form of advertisement compared to the alternative of a hanging sign or individual letters applied to the external wall of the building. However, it was considered that the red lettering on the paired, narrow, arched-top windows and the traditional squared-headed window on the west elevation was unduly dominant in that the particular form and extent of lettering failed to respect the narrower proportions of those windows (compared with the larger, arched windows), detracting from their visual integrity. Following the refusal of the earlier application and discussions on site involving the Council's Conservation and Design Architect, the signage on the above-mentioned arched-top windows and the square-headed window has been removed in its entirety. Only the applied lettering 'Gio's' in the top segment of one of the large arched-top windows on the west elevation, and two of the arch-top windows in the south side of the enclosed verandah and on one bottom pane in the west side of the enclosed verandah, remain in situ. The resulting effect is considerably subdued and is considered satisfactory.

There is no objection in principle to the external floodlighting of historic buildings. Where this is sensitively designed to respect the historic character and architectural features of a building it can add to their visual interest and complement commercial function.

In this case, the existing lamps, when illuminated, cast a vertical blue light which illuminates the cornice band and underside of the eaves (rather than any specific feature on the building) on the south and west-facing elevations, together with the entrance to the nightclub on the south side. In refusing the earlier retrospective applications, no objection was raised to either the principle of the external lights, or to the blue colour of their illumination. The main concerns related to the design of the lamps, and their method of attachment and positioning on the building. In particular, the siting of the existing up-lighters is not sensitive to the architectural features of the building and the lamps themselves are rather 'bulky' and utilitarian in appearance. They have been poorly fitted, with wiring cutting across, both horizontally and vertically, the rustication on the ground and first-floor.

Following discussions on site, the current applications seek to address the concerns about the siting of the lamps on the west elevation by re-positioning 2 existing lights so that all 4 light fittings would be aligned on the string course adjacent to the bottom edge of the first-floor balconies. This would achieve a more balanced appearance with the lamps sited symmetrically on either side of the balcony features. The wiring would be re-positioned horizontally along the top edge of the string course where its visual impact would be minimised.

On the south elevation, it is proposed to re-site the 2 no. lights currently positioned on either side of the first-floor canopy, to new positions just above the eaves of the canopy. At present, the prominence of the existing lights is emphasised by their relatively exposed positioning and trailing wiring. The proposed re-siting of the lights in juxtaposition to the canopy will result in a less cluttered appearance and allow the wiring to be concealed by the existing downpipes on either side. It is also proposed to lower the other 2 lights on this elevation so that they sit on the top of the string course separating the first and second floors (with the wiring running horizontally along the edge) thereby having a slightly less exposed position than at present.

It is proposed to retain the existing decorative lights on either side of the entrance to the single-storey nightclub element, and the flood lamp positioned over the entrance door of the latter. The siting of the decorative side lights appears slightly awkward on the narrow mullions of this façade, but from their condition, it would appear these have been in existence for many, many years.

Conclusion

The re-positioning of the lamps will result in an improvement compared to the existing situation, albeit that the re-use of the existing light fittings is not ideal. However, during the course of discussions with officers the applicant has made it clear that the cost of replacing the existing light fittings with new (either smaller or more sensitively designed fittings), is prohibitive in the current economic climate.

Up-to-date national policy contained in PPS5 states that where a proposal has a harmful impact on the significance of a designated heritage asset which is less than substantial harm, the local planning authority should weigh the

public benefit of the proposal (for example, that it helps to secure the optimum viable use of the heritage asset in the interests of its long-term conservation) against the harm and recognise that the greater the harm to the significance of the heritage asset the greater the justification will be needed for any loss.

In this case, both the external lighting and the remaining vinyl signs support the commercial viability of the existing Hotel, which is the optimum use of the listed building. It is also pertinent that neither the lighting nor the applied lettering will result in permanent harm to the fabric of the listed building. All things considered, whilst the existing lighting fittings themselves may not be the most sensitive type of flood lamp, it is considered that providing they are re-sited in a sympathetic manner, as described, refusal would not be justified as proportionate to the harm caused to the visual integrity or historic character of this Listed Building.

10. RECOMMENDATION

WB/11/0249/FULL

Planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:-

1. Works to be carried out within 2 months of date of decision.
2. Approved plans

WB/11/0250/LBC

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1. Works to be carried out within 2 months of date of decision.
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11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Third party representation.