



James Hughes
Planning, Regeneration and Economy
Level 6
River Park House
Wood Green
N22 8HQ

Sent by email: james.hughes@haringey.gov.uk

28 September 2017

Our ref: 96 06 08

Dear James Hughes,

**HGY/2017/2220, HGY/2017/2221, HGY/2017/2222, HGY/2017/2223
Hornsey Town Hall, The Broadway, London N8 9JJ**

Thank you for consulting the Twentieth Century Society on the above applications. The Society was involved in pre-application discussion with the applicants. At this time we acknowledged that whilst the current application would in some ways constitute less harm to the heritage asset than the previously approved 2010 scheme, we maintain concerns with the proposed scheme.

The submitted application has been discussed by our September 2017 casework committee, and members wished to **object** to the proposals in their current form. Our comments relate only to the works affecting Hornsey Town Hall and its setting. Members had no comments on proposed alterations to the Broadway Annexe.

Significance

Hornsey Town Hall is a Grade II* listed building, designed by the architect Reginald Uren and completed in 1935. Only 5.8% of all buildings nationwide are listed at this high grade, and only a fraction of all listed buildings date from the twentieth century. This gives an indication as to the outstanding importance of this heritage asset. The quality of the interior fittings and their survival throughout are of major significance, and their retention within any proposed scheme is vital.

Pre-application discussion

We were pleased to see a number of clear improvements from the previous scheme, including the retention and repair of the council chamber fittings. The removal of the proposed balconies to the hall is also a positive change.

In summary, our primary comments related to the dropping of the windows to the south-east elevation of the Town Hall Square and the two extensions to the east wing. We also expressed concern about the impact of the proposed residential blocks on the town hall, the adjacent library (Grade II) and the

wider conservation area. We emphasised the importance of an exhaustive building survey, given the exceptional survival of original features.

Twentieth Century Society Comment

The Donald Insall Associates Historic Buildings Report (July 2017) quantifies the harm as 'less than substantial', and concludes that this harm is outweighed by the heritage benefits. Whilst we recognise that there are a number of heritage benefits, we query the genuine heritage benefit of some of those set out in the report (p. 6-7). In some instances, we consider these contribute to the overall level of harm rather than help to outweigh it. Our position is set out in more detail below.

Town Hall square

Committee members objected to the proposed dropping of four of the six cills to the south-east elevation of the Town Hall Square. The elevations to the square are the ceremonial, public face of the hall. The fenestration is finely proportioned and carefully balanced across these frontages; to drop the cills on the south-east elevation would not only involve the loss of original fabric, but would irrevocably harm the whole composition and relationship between these key facades.

The removal of original hard landscaped access and an extension of the platform, with a new inbuilt ramp to connect both entrances are also proposed. This is to provide linked disabled access to both entrances and a terrace for outdoor seating for the proposed café, to which the new doors will give a direct entrance.

The alterations to the landscaping here is also of concern due to loss of the original historic fabric, which is both integral to the design significance of the listed building and to the way the building currently sits within the square and relates directly to this context. The justification for these changes is to ensure the viability of the café and the overall scheme. Members were not persuaded that the scheme would become unviable without outdoor seating and direct access to the café from the square, given the proposed public use of the interior of much of the ground floor, and the fact that it may also be catering for hotel use. The Broadway Annexe will also provide outdoor seating for people in the immediate area who require it. Furthermore, we have seen no convincing justification as to why disabled access could not be retained as it is in this location, and provided to the east elevation entrance through the insertion of a removable ramp which would not damage the listed fabric.

Members also noted that there was no visual or other information relating to the current areas of the building that are to be converted into this café space within the Condition Survey. It is unclear therefore what will be lost or altered in the conversion of these ground floor rooms into open plan.

Original furniture and fittings

Members required more detail with regards to some of the retained furniture and the re-use. For example, it was not clear how the rates desk will be truncated, or how the original desks will be turned into seating. It was felt that these should be retained in their original form, and that sufficient justification had not been provided as to why this was not possible. Given the proposed new use as a hotel, it was queried why the reception desks could not be found a more suitable new use within the proposed scheme.

Members also deeply regretted the loss of the ticket office and noted that it had not been shown within the condition survey report, where it received only a brief mention. Whilst the need for increased access was recognised, as a major feature within the building the proposed removal was deeply regretted, and would contribute significantly to the overall level of harm.

East wing extensions

The proposed roof extension to the east wing is presented as a heritage benefit, on the grounds that it is better designed than the current temporary 1970s structure. Members disagreed with this assertion, and considered that the proposed roof extension will fundamentally compromise this fine elevation. Although the roof is currently cluttered with a poor quality, dilapidated structure, it has the benefit of being clearly subservient and temporary. This proposed replacement would be neither, but would completely transform the original stepped, layered massing of the rear on either side of the showpiece glass staircase. In our consideration, the extension here cannot be considered a heritage benefit, but quite clearly causes harm.

Equally we consider that the proposed residential extension 'Block B' will cause harm to the setting of the east wing due to its sheer scale and mass, and are concerned by the loss of fabric its construction will entail. We also consider that the full impact of this block on the listed library is currently unclear, with verified views being limited, at oblique angles and with trees in full leaf. It is unquestionable that the way the listed buildings and the conservation area are visually and spatially experienced will be harmfully impacted; we are not convinced that enough information has been provided at this point to fully understand that impact.

Justification – feasibility, management

There was concern that the application as it stands has not adequately shown that the long-term future of the building can be secured, and this calls into question the assertion by the applicants that the public benefit will outweigh the harm caused.

The key public benefit to significant historic buildings is usually achieved through securing their sustainable future. However, there is no information regarding feasibility for the community use or for the 'apart-hotel', and little information relating to the proposed management or operation of these spaces. We note that several local stakeholders including the Crouch End Neighbourhood Forum and the Weston and Haringey Parks Residents' Association have called for further information in this regard. The Society supports this request, to better guarantee that any harm carried out as part of these works, if they are approved, is truly justified through an established sustainable future use.

Policy

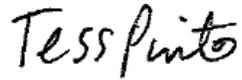
Paragraph 132 of the NPPF states that 'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. *As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification*'.

Conclusion

The Society has concerns with some details of the proposed scheme, and urges that the proposals to drop the eaves, to alter hard landscaping, and to extend the east wing are reassessed. In addition, given the lack of information provided regarding the feasibility of the proposed new use, the overall argument that the scheme will outweigh the harm caused through public benefit has not been adequately made. For the above reasons, the Society wishes to **object** to the application in its current form, and recommends that it is withdrawn and amended, or refused.

I trust that these comments are of use to you in your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tess Pinto". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of "Tess" and "Pinto" being capitalized and prominent.

Tess Pinto
Conservation Adviser
Twentieth Century Society

Remit: The Twentieth Century Society was founded in 1979 and is the national amenity society concerned with the protection, appreciation, and study of post-1914 architecture, townscape and design. The Society is acknowledged in national planning guidance as the key organisation concerned with the modern period and is a constituent member of the Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies. Under the procedures set out in ODPM Circular 09/2005, all English local planning authorities must inform the Twentieth Century Society when an application for listed building consent involving partial or total demolition is received, and they must notify us of the decisions taken on these applications.