

Designated assets:

Grade II-Star Listed 3 Queen Square, Grade II Listed warehouse to the back of 3 Queen Square, City and Queen Square Conservation Area, setting of Grade II-Star Listed Granary, Welsh Back.

Summary

Development poses a degree of harm to the Listed buildings and Conservation Area that lacks the required clear and convincing justification. Design amendments will be required, as well as further information for specific elements. The Planning Officer should re-consult Conservation following the receipt of revised material.

The Heritage Assets

The highest graded asset is the Grade II-Star Listed townhouse facing onto Queen Square. This is one of a short terrace of similar late-Georgian style properties post-dating the 1831 Bristol Riots. The interiors and planform appear well preserved and typical of a townhouse of this period.

The Grade II Listed warehouse to the rear faces onto Little King Street, Development is shown in this location from the 18th Century. The present building is more likely to share a construction date with the house it shares a plot with on Queen Square. The use of the building is debatable, as it may have provided a carriage house and stable on the ground floor with loft above; This does not preclude the warehouse use, as merchants living around Queen Square regularly used their own cellars and buildings to store wares offloaded from the surrounding quays. The building has an attractive and well composed façade with some architectural distinction. The ground floor is built of ashlar limestone, with a wide access arch on the west side and paired windows (blocked) above an arched cellar hatch to the east. In the far eastern corner a pedestrian door opening, since blocked, has been rendered.

At first floor level a pair of arched recesses are symmetrically composed with a carved limestone stringcourse at springer level. The western bay has a recessed panel of classical proportions with a cill, conceivably a blocked sash window opening. The eastern arch is entirely open to the springing with a timber sliding door. An attractive feature is the swivelling wrought iron hoist fixed at this level formerly providing goods access to the first floor. An odd horizontal window sits uncomfortably between the two arches at a higher level, and appears to be a later insertion, perhaps replacing the blocked one in the arch below. The facade finishes in a gable end to Little King Street; this appears to be a change from a continuous parapet design with hipped roof beyond; there is a defined line above the horizontal window on the internal face supporting that assessment.

Internally the warehouse retains a significant area of pennant stone slabbed floor to the north end of the building. This may represent the original extent of the building before extension over the former garden area of the house to the south or evidence of internal separation of spaces. The floor above is a traditional timber structure with joists and cross beams and planks, but heavily reinforced with additional steel beams to support a new cast concrete floor surface above. A short brick partition wall divides the entrance from the street from the blocked windows at this level. Scars in the floor and wall indicate the likely location of a small room in this location.

At first floor level the roof is exposed to ridge height with trusses of apparent later 19th or early 20th Century design. The interior of this floor is lined with vertical boarding; this over sails any evidence for a first floor window overlooking Little King Street.

The character of the building is an attractive mix of Georgian proportions and simplicity and semi-industrial functionality. The timber doors, especially those at street level, are an important feature where they express the industrial use and visual difference with the formality of the façade around it. The double doors to the street are a heavy-duty set, with formerly open timber grilles and iron reinforcing panels below. The hoist is another visual cue to the industrial use.

Within the Conservation area Little King Street has a unique character, described as “intimate” in the Character Appraisal. The west end of the narrow lane has an intimate feel with 2 or 3-storey

development along most of its length. Historically this lane serviced the rear of properties on King Street and Queen Square. It became the location of carriage houses, stables, service buildings and small warehouses. Consequently, the buildings here are diverse in material and architectural treatment, some having greater formality, others less so, and a wide variety of styles creating a visually rich and evocative streetscape.

Towards the eastern end a 1980s development mimics a small row of houses, breaking back from the historic building line slightly. The 1972 building on the application site introduces an alien broken edge to the pavement and amplified height of four-storeys. It is of four and a half storeys to the street including a half-basement level. A well-judged low-profile fifth storey is heavily recessed back from the parapet so as to be virtually invisible within the Conservation Area. In views east along Little King Street, its west elevation rises blankly over the Grade II Listed warehouse adjacent. Formerly there was a larger Victorian warehouse at the corner with Queen Charlotte Street which gave precedent for the 1970s development to extend at a similar height westwards down the lane. This post-war development demolished a number of smaller warehouse style buildings that once abutted the host site. The building is identified as a neutral building withing the Conservation Area Character Appraisal.

Another significant Listed building in the area is the Grade II-Star Listed Granary on Welsh Back. This is a substantial warehouse building of landmark form and design. The steep pitched roof and ornamental Northern Italian 'Byzantine' battlements are a skyline features in several short and medium-distance views. The view east up Little King Street focusses the eye on the decorative red-brick Granary along the length of the lane.

Proposals

This application seeks to refurbish the existing office building, with revised street elevations to Little King Street and Queen Charlotte Street. The most significant alteration would be the roof extension of two storeys. This would be set back from the existing parapet in some views, and step-back from the building line onto Queen Charlotte Street. The new extension would be finished in powder-coated metal. Roof profiles would be flat.

Development would not directly impact the historic fabric of the Grade II-Star Queen Square townhouse beyond the installation of a platform lift within the front curtilage, facing the square. Proposals would be more invasive within the Grade II Listed warehouse. Proposals include the removal of the existing first floor and its replacement at a higher level. The ground floor would also be replaced and raised. Proposals seek consent to insert and open-up new windows in existing and assumed historic openings. The proposals seek to remove the timber doors at ground and first floor.

Assessment and potential mitigation

Is there harm posed by the development? (NPPF para 200):

The proposals pose no harm to the Queen Square townhouse, though the lack of detail on the proposed platform lift is concerning. This would require removal and disturbance of the present paved front court, introduce a complicated arrangement of new railings and gates, and require the existing steps to be moved forwards into the yard space away from the front door. Further information should be provided that illustrates the viability of the proposed platform lift and its intended design and integration into this setting.

The proposed rooftop extension to the existing 1972 block would impact on the character of the Conservation Area through projecting over the roofscape of Queen Square and through impinging on views of the Grade II-Star listed Granary building in views along Little King Street. Generally, the proposed massing would be seen from Queen Square seasonally, however, the proposed materials would tend to be visually incongruous in this setting, with metallic coloured machined metal panels and glass giving the new mass a distracting prominence. The strong horizontal form is considered to conflict with the grain and rhythm of the grade II-Star Listed terrace in the foreground.



Similar issues would arise in views down Little King Street, where the proposed materials would compound the sense of overbearing of the historic scale of the lane and distract from the Grade II-Star Listed Granary; this should remain the landmark building in these views. Although the Granary is partially obscured by the existing building, the roofscape makes a contribution to the scene. The additional visual obstruction of the Victorian building would have greater impact because of a choice of materials and finishes at odds with the traditional palette of natural and naturally weathering; those materials contribute to the Conservation Area's special character. The proposed materials would not weather down to mitigate the visual impact, so would continue to be visually incongruous in the Conservation Area, albeit in limited but significant views.

The proposed massing of the building against the Grade II Listed warehouse and other traditional buildings in the street is of great concern. Despite the pulling-back of the upper storeys from some edges, particularly Queen Charlotte Street, the additional height would be perceptible from Little King Street and tend towards having an overbearing impact, especially on the Listed warehouse. The 'intimate' character of Little King Street would be negatively impacted. Our own massing study has indicated the amplified height would look out of character in these views. The applicant is advised to provide their own assessment of the view down Little King Street from its junction with King William Avenue on the pavement beside the King William Ale House.



The Grade II Listed warehouse retains a number of features that would be lost through development. The timber gates and barrel drop at ground floor and door at first floor contribute to the semi-industrial character of the building and streetscape. The loss of traditional features like this results in undermining of the protected special character. Their loss would not be mitigated by the installation of modern metal framed windows in these openings which relate poorly to the proportions and levels expressed in the façade.

It's acknowledged that the existing first floor is compromised by its later reinforcement. The proposed removal is accepted, but the proposed raising is not. The existing floor level has a key relationship with the openings of the principal façade, and not with the adjacent modern building. The alteration of floor levels would have a direct impact on the external appearance of the building, resulting in a visual and physical disconnect between floors and façade. The scale of openings to be introduced between the office and warehouse building should be minimised to retain the historic separation between properties as far as possible. The existing stone slab floor at ground level has not been fully assessed for its contribution to the building's significance and discarded in proposals. Alternatives that might better protect original features and levels should be prioritised. The proposed significant alteration of original floors is considered unjustified and is strongly objected to.

The interior of the existing warehouse building has a particular character. The exposed rough materials and finishes give it a workmanlike appearance in keeping with its historic use. There's no demonstration that the semi-industrial character of these spaces has been considered during design development, and there's a concern that a standard office fit-out would fail to protect the evidential and aesthetic value of the interiors. Further information on the proposed approach to the building is required.

The proposed changes to elevations of the 1972 building would make no demonstrable impact on the character of the Conservation Area.

The Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2009) includes several pertinent statements regarding scale and materiality. These are:

- "Insensitive additions to existing buildings can come about by over-intensive developments to roof spaces or the addition of extra storeys on a building without regard to its proportions, scale or context"
- "Where consent is required, resist unsympathetic alterations and loss of traditional architectural details through positive use of existing development control powers".
- "Ensure that predominant scale, materials, details and building lines are respected in line with BLP/LDF policies and findings within the Conservation Area Character Appraisal"

In considering these aspirations we assess the additional height would have a negative impact on the protected architectural and historic character. Therefore, proposals would not preserve the character of the Conservation Area or offer an enhancement. The impact on the Grade II Listed building specifically would be considerable and negative. Considered as a whole, the impact on designated heritage assets would not result in harm to a substantial level, but we are required to place great weight in their conservation. Despite being "less than substantial" under the definitions of the NPPF, harm would be significant to the assets affected and permanent.

Has clear and convincing justification been given for the harm? (NPPF para 200):

The NPPF sets out that *any* harm caused by proposed development, regardless of its scale, should have a clear and convincing justification. The Planning Statement fails to recognise this key element of national policy in its summary under point 6.17.

We recognise the improvement to access within the buildings, however, the change in levels with the Grade II Listed warehouse could be addressed in alternative ways to that proposed, allowing the original floor levels to continue to relate to the building elevation. It's unclear what generates the

need for the additional storeys, how the public benefits might be delivered in less impactful ways, or why the specific site should be considered as appropriate to service any demonstrable demand for more office space. This is particularly relevant where the Heritage Statement has assessed a degree of harm, but proposals appear not to recognise and address negative impacts identified.

The Planning Statement implies that the development attracts public benefit through “securing optimum viable use” despite their being no demonstration that the existing use is no longer viable, that alternative uses posing less impact could not attract similar or greater benefit, or support the expressed need for further floorspace to achieve viability. Further evidential basis should be supplied for these statements to demonstrate harm is indeed justified.

Recommendations

Design amendments and further information are required to address the above issues before moving to determination. This should include:

- Review of the proposed massing and impact on Little King Street and Grade II listed warehouse
- Reconsideration of proposed materials for the rooftop extension
- Changes to the approach to the grade II Listed warehouse
- Further information on the internal treatment of the Grade II Listed building
- Further detail and information on the design and appearance of the platform Lift facing Queen Square
- Applicant’s own assessment of the view east along Little King Street
- Further evidence to demonstrate optimum viable use and justification for any residual harm following design changes.