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Mr Steve Austin
London Borough of Ealing
Perceval House
14-16 Uxbridge Road
London W5 2HL

Direct Dial: 020 7973 3749

Our ref: P00473880

16th September 2015

Dear Mr Austin

**Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2015 &
T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
ARCADIA, 9-42, THE BROADWAY, EALING, LONDON
Application No P/2015/3479**

Thank you for your letter of 13 August 2015 notifying Historic England of the above application. We were consulted on this mixed-use scheme at pre-application stage by the applicants, when we raised a number of serious concerns. It is disappointing to see our advice has not been reflected in the application scheme. We have considered the current submitted proposals as part of our internal major cases review panel, and I can now set out Historic England's position as follows.

Summary

In our view 14 of the buildings proposed for demolition make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Ealing Town Centre Conservation Area. We consider that, cumulatively, their loss would cause serious harm to the conservation area. Further harm is caused by the scale and form of the new development, which fails to respond to the character of the conservation area and has significant impacts on the settings of nearby designated heritage assets. On balance, we believe the cumulative impacts of the proposals equate to substantial harm to the significance of Ealing Town Centre Conservation Area.

Harm to additional nearby designated heritage assets is set out in the body of the letter.

On the basis of the information we have seen, Historic England is not persuaded that this harm is necessary to achieve the public benefits identified in the submitted application. Our current view is that, given the nature and extent of the harm and the lack of convincing justification, the proposals are clearly contrary to Government objectives for the delivery of sustainable development and we therefore object strongly to them.

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Historic England Advice

Our statutory remit is the impact of the proposals on the historic environment. Our advice below is based on an understanding of the historic environment affected by the proposals, and an assessment within the context of national and local planning policy as to whether the proposals harm, retain or enhance this significance.

Significance of the Historic Environment

The site is located within the Ealing Town Centre Conservation Area whose character is set out in detail in the Ealing Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal (2007). Broadly it is suburban, commercial and low-rise, clearly reflecting the Victorian and Edwardian phases of development. As the Appraisal notes, it is the surviving buildings from these eras that make the principal contribution to Ealing Town Centre's unique character, in terms of form, mass, scale, architectural detailing and grain.

Under the proposed scheme an entire urban block would be demolished which includes fourteen such Edwardian and Victorian buildings. Eight of these buildings have been clearly identified as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of this conservation area in the area appraisal.

The proposals will also impact upon the setting of the Grade II* listed church, Christ the Saviour. This church, constructed in 1852 to the designs of Sir George Gilbert Scott, has been a key landmark for this town centre since its construction. The setting of the Grade II listed National Westminster Bank, which is located on the opposite side of The Broadway, will be changed significantly by the scheme. The building dates from 1874, and it was originally designed as Ealing Town Hall. It is French Gothic in style and built of Kentish Ragstone with Bath stone dressings.

Also adjoining the site is the Haven Green Conservation Area, the principal feature of which is Haven Green, a public park and open space that reflects Ealing's rural origins. There will also be an impact on views from several neighbouring Conservation Areas- Montpelier, Manor Park, Mount Park, Ealing Common and Ealing Green - and Walpole Park, which is a Grade II registered Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest that is intrinsically linked to the Grade I listed Pitzhanger Manor, the jewels in Ealing's historic environment.

The proposals and their impact on the Historic Environment.

In summary, the proposals are for the complete demolition of 9-42 The Broadway and 1-4 Haven Place and their replacement with a large development comprising two buildings. One building is set mostly to the north of the site, and includes a tower of eighteen storeys set above lower elements of two to six storeys. The other building, which contains most of the Broadway frontage, includes podium elements of four storeys with taller elements of six to nine storeys.

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The proposed new buildings rising behind the new shop frontage are of a scale and character similar to those on the Uxbridge Road outside the conservation area. Their greater height will be clearly visible from street level views as the setbacks, where they have been introduced, are little more than a room deep. This will fail to achieve the sense of discretion that has been accomplished in those elements of the Dickens Yard development that have been completed behind the Town Hall and the locally listed terrace beside it.

Due to its height and bulk the proposed tower would become a visually dominant feature seen from important public areas within the conservation area which will compete for attention and challenge the visual dominance of the existing historic landmarks.

We consider the size and bulk of the new twin buildings opposite the station have an unacceptable impact on their context. This part of the existing street is low rise - three storeys at most, with the junction of the Broadway currently characterised by a harmonious group of buildings which have a similar scale, materials and detailing. Therefore to insert two nine storey blocks into this streetscape would be highly incongruous. The proposals would appear out of place and overbearing, damaging the character and appearance of the conservation area, including the setting of the listed and locally listed buildings on the other side of the street. In our view this approach needs to be fundamentally reconsidered, and we would suggest that the maximum building height of any new elements on this part of the site should be no more than five storeys in order to respect their context.

The demolition of historically contextual buildings and the scale of the new development would be detrimental to the setting of the Grade II* listed Christ the Saviour church. This church, constructed in 1852 to the designs of Sir George Gilbert Scott, has been a key landmark for Ealing town centre since its construction, allowing residents and visitors to understand the structure of the town centre. Among its most prominent features are the belfry and octagonal spire, which are highly visible from around the town centre, notably along the Broadway and from the Mall. A key civic feature at the top of the belfry is the clock, which will be obscured by the new development. We agree with the Planning Inspector's views at the previous Public Inquiry, where he stated that the "masking of a key landmark on one of Ealing's main thoroughfares as a serious townscape loss which would also diminish the legibility of the town centre."

Policy Context

Both Section 16 and Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 impose a statutory duty upon local planning authorities to consider the impact of proposals upon listed buildings. It states that the determining authority, 'shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses'.

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Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) sets out the obligation on local planning authorities to pay special regard to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas and to preserving the settings of listed buildings.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's policies for decision making on development proposals. At the heart of the framework is a presumption in favour of 'sustainable development', where conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance is one of the 12 core principles. NPPF policy advises that for new development to be sustainable it needs to encompass an economic, social and environmental role, with the latter (paragraph 7) including the protection and enhancement of the built and historic environment. Paragraph 8 notes that these roles are mutually dependent and should not be taken in isolation and that to achieve sustainable, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system.

Section 12 of the NPPF sets out how the historic environment should be conserved and enhanced and makes it clear at paragraph 132 that when considering the impact of a proposed development on a heritage asset (which includes its setting), 'great weight' should be given to preserving its significance. Any harm or loss should require a 'clear and convincing justification' (emphasis added).

Section 7 sets out policies requiring good design, and states in paragraph 58 that local authority policies should ensure that developments respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials.

Ealing Council has a number of relevant plans and documents including the London Borough of Ealing (LBE): Development Strategy 2026 (April 2012); LBE: Development Management Development Plan Document (December 2013); LBE adopted Development Plan Document (December 2013); and the LBE Arcadia site Draft Supplementary Planning Document (June 2012). The latter two documents contradict the two former documents as well as the Conservation Appraisal, stating that the existing buildings are not considered to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and that they can be redeveloped. Historic England agrees with the assessment given in the conservation area appraisal concerning the heritage significance of these buildings and justification given for this assessment.

The site has been subject to a previous application in 2008, which was 'called-in' by the Secretary of State and dismissed in 2009. The two schemes share some similarities and we consider that some of the guidance given by the Inspector in his judgement is material to this scheme.

Historic England Position

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This is a large site in a town centre location in close proximity to a future Crossrail station. The site clearly offers substantial potential to contribute to regenerating Ealing's town centre, as well as fulfilling its strategic objectives in line with its status as a Metropolitan Centre in the London Plan. There are opportunities for this site to make a significant contribution to Ealing's growth requirements which can be achieved with optimisation of this site in a way that respects its existing character. The current scheme seems to be based on maximising development without reference to existing character which is resulting in, unsustainable over-development.

The loss of 14 Victorian and Edwardian buildings that, in differing degrees, make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of this part of Ealing Town Centre Conservation Area demonstrates that the approach to regeneration is unsustainable in this scheme. It will cause harm to the historic built environment and to the significance of the designated heritage asset (Ealing Conservation Area). We acknowledge that there are some later C20 buildings within the development site which make little contribution to the special character of the conservation area and therefore, in principle could be demolished and redeveloped in an appropriate contextual response.. However, the loss of 14 buildings that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area would cause very serious harm by removing irreplaceable buildings that are integral to the significance of the conservation area and their removal would call into question the designation of this part of it.

In his report the Secretary of State on the previous proposals, the Inspector also considered the relative benefits of the creation of a new view to the church spire, which he stated would be a significant benefit, but would not satisfactory compensation for the loss of existing views from the Mall and Ealing Broadway. As the belfry and spire are partially obscured by the new development we would endorse the Planning Inspector's judgment that the benefit of the new does not outweigh the harm. We also consider that the quality of the proposed new view within the development is significantly reduced by the raised walkways and planting which largely obscure the spire.

The Inspector also hi-lighted the importance of the setting the Grade II listed NatWest Bank in his report, and we consider that the size, bulk and elevation treatment of the proposed corner buildings are so out of scale with the NatWest Bank, that the proposals would dominate the listed building and diminish its special interest. Historic England also considers that the scheme will cause harm to the Haven Green Conservation Area, due to the impact of the tower as the dominant built feature in all southerly views from the park. At the public inquiry it was noted that the relatively open skyline to the south of the Green makes an important contribution to the sense of spaciousness that characterises the park and the conservation area. Radical changes to this significant character trait caused by tall

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buildings that would be markedly greater in height than the trees, and thus prominent above that level, was considered oppressive and harmful by the Inspector.

The proposed tower is also considered harmful to the setting of Walpole Registered Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest and also in long views to the Montpelier, Manor Park, Mount Park, Ealing Common and Ealing Green Conservation Areas. It would cause harm to their significance, by distracting from the experience of many of the existing characteristics that they were designated for, such as their historic suburban character which has particular calm and tranquil qualities with skylines that have been further softened by mature trees, including in some of the most prominent public views.

The applicants claim that the proposals will enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area, but that any perceived harm is outweighed by a series of public benefits, most of which relate to the design of the scheme.

The NPPF requires that harm to the historic environment on the scale set out above requires clear and convincing justification and is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm. We accept that the proposals will deliver some urban design and public realm improvements, but we are not convinced that these are so significant as to outweigh the substantial harm to the historic environment we have identified.

Recommendation

The current proposals fail to deliver sustainable development as required by the NPPF and do not meet the statutory test within Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Decision makers are required to refuse proposals which cause substantial harm to designated heritage assets unless it can be clearly and convincingly demonstrated that it is necessary and public benefits outweigh that harm. We do not believe that the harm is necessary to deliver the benefits and therefore strongly object to the scheme in its current form.

We recommend that Ealing Borough Council either seek significant amendments to avoid the harm outlined above, or, if the applicants do not wish to amend the scheme, to refuse planning permission. If the Council decide to approve this development, we would suggest that a review of the significance and boundaries of the Ealing Centre Conservation Area is undertaken, as, in our opinion the current boundaries would be difficult to justify, as per paragraph 127 of the NPPF. We note that this conservation area is already highlighted on our Conservation Area Management Survey as being At Risk, due to the threats to significance caused by the potential loss of historic buildings through redevelopment.

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An alternative approach that integrates the buildings which make a positive contribution into a redevelopment scheme would provide the opportunity to create a section of high street that has an authentic character. Retaining the historic grain and mix of building styles and periods, with sensitively scaled new building responding to existing heights and plot widths, would ensure that any new development would preserve and enhance what is distinctive to Ealing, rather than creating a development, such as that which is currently proposed, which takes its scale and many of its design cues from Central London examples.

Given the importance of the site, we would be happy to give further advice and please consult us again if any additional information or amendments are submitted. We would be grateful to receive a copy of the decision notice in due course. This will help us to monitor actions related to changes to historic places.

Please note that this response relates to historic building and historic area matters only. If there are any archaeological implications to the proposals it is recommended that you contact the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service for further advice (Tel: 020 7973 3712).

Yours sincerely

Harriet Whitehorn

Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas

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Cc R. Wakelin, London Borough of Ealing
Ealing Civic Society