

Email: planning@haringey.gov.uk

21 June 2023

Dear Samuel Uff

HGY/2023/1043 - Civic Centre High Road London, N22 8ZW

The Twentieth Century Society has been notified of the Listed Building Consent application for the “Redevelopment of the existing rear car park for the erection of a three storey building (plus roof enclosure) comprising of Class E floorspace; 2 x two storey links; creation of central courtyard; parking and landscaping; and refurbishment and external alterations of the existing Civic Centre and offices, including alterations to entrance facade and fenestration; and associated works”.

Haringey Civic Centre was built in 1955-58 to designs by Sir John Brown, A E Henson and Partners and was the first civic centre of its size to be completed following World War II. It was Grade II listed in 2018 and is located within the Trinity Gardens Conservation Area (which was designated in 1978 and extended in 1988).

Policy

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that “In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning 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.”

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021) includes paragraph 194 which states that “In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance”. Paragraph 199 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 [...] This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.” Paragraph 200 states that “Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset [...] should require clear and convincing justification.”

Comments

The Twentieth Century Society is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England no 05330664

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Registered Charity no 1110244

The Society has been concerned about the future of the civic centre for many years and has followed this case closely. We very much welcome the council's decision to relocate its staff back to the civic centre, allowing the building to continue to perform its original intended function.

We have no objections to the proposed 'Trinity Building' extension. We appreciate that its location and points of connection have been informed by original plans for a larger civic development.

The Society is concerned about the extent of fabric proposed for removal from the building's elevations. As recorded in its list entry, the Harginey Civic Centre was listed partly "for the level of survival of key aspects of the building's character and physical fabric". We will address the glazing and cladding separately:

Glazing:

- The curtain-walling and windows are a character-defining feature of the listed building's elevations, particularly on the building's principal (east) road-facing elevation. On this elevation, the extensive glazing along with the clearly articulated canopied entrance contribute to the building's public character, communicating its transparency and accessibility. The glazing is original and therefore also has evidential value as surviving historic building fabric.
- The applicant proposes the complete replacement of the curtain-walling and windows. This would involve a significant amount of fabric loss and needs to be clearly justified. We feel that this proposal needs greater justification.
- If the issue with the glazing is its poor environmental performance then there are other options which are less harmful to the heritage than full replacement that need to be considered, such as secondary glazing. We have not seen evidence that these alternatives have been properly explored.
- We would only accept full replacement if the curtain-walling and windows are proven to be in unrepairable condition. The applicant claims that they are "in poor condition" and that Buro Happold has recommended complete refurbishment. We would welcome the opportunity to review this report, which does not appear to have been uploaded with the submitted documents.
- If replacement is clearly proven to be the only option, it is essential that the glazing pattern, face proportions, opening movements and finishes match the originals (as the applicant proposes). If double-glazed, potential changes in the glass's reflectivity and tint also need to be examined.

Pre-cast concrete cladding panels:

- We note that PAYE have recommended full replacement of the pre-cast concrete panes (in their report dated to March 2023). Buro Happold had recommended the replacement of the 3rd floor panels in an earlier report, but PAYE recommends full removal owing to the composition of the concrete and issues with water ingress and reinforcement corrosion, and poor past repair and treatment efforts, all of which makes repair very difficult. We would normally resist fabric removal, but appreciate that replacement may be unavoidable here.
- Are there small and isolated areas of cladding where original panels in good or repairable condition could be retained to conserve some of this historic fabric without compromising the building's overall design integrity?

- We note that the replacement panels would increase the thickness of the cladding (by 60mm) and that this would change the window depth in relation to the clad surfaces, which perhaps needs consideration?

We have no objections to proposals to glaze the covered walkway beneath the rear (west) wing. We appreciate that the glazing would be placed on the inner face of the columns and therefore set back, conserving the character of this space with its pilotis and overhang.

Turning to the interiors, we appreciate that interior spaces of high significance, such as the entrance lobby and council chamber, will be retained as existing and preserved. Proposed visuals of the entrance lobby suggest the application of colour to the glazing on the 'flying corridor' bridge – what exactly is proposed here? We welcome proposals to reinstate the suspended, dog-leg acoustic ceiling in the council chamber, which was removed owing to the presence of asbestos, and ask that this is done on a like-for-like basis.

We are concerned about the loss of the original plan to the north wing, with its central corridor leading off to cellular offices spaces, through the opening up of the office interiors. We appreciate that a number of rooms with original partitioning, panelling and joinery would be retained as existing, but question if more could be kept to conserve more of the building's original plan form, fabric and character.

The applicant notes that the basement included a civil defence suite, built in anticipation of a nuclear war (sections 3.42 and 4.18), as is recorded in the list entry. This was noted in contemporary reviews of the building:

- "The office block basement is constructed to 'Class A' air raid loading..." (Architecture and Building, May, 1958).
- "The whole of the basement was required to conform to Home Office requirements relating to possible atom bomb attack, with escape tunnels to the external gardens. The basement therefore has walls of 24-inch thick reinforced concrete below a ground floor of similar thickness." (Official Architecture and Planning, June, 1958):

The original basement plan is reproduced in The Architect and Building News (Jul 1958) which shows 3 strong rooms with a GPO telephone exchange, switch room, internal telephone exchange, a 'future public shelter', and various offices and stores. The applicant notes that this feature is of 'historic interest', but the architectural and evidential significance of the plan and fabric—which looks to survive well, based on existing plans—appears to have been overlooked. In the significance plans, the applicant identifies the basement as having blanket 'neutral significance'. We challenge this assessment and are concerned about proposals to strip out the basement. We ask the applicant to revise their proposals at this level.

We hope that these comments are of use to you. We would welcome the opportunity to visit the site and discuss the proposals with the project team. Please don't hesitate to get in touch if this would be of interest.

Yours sincerely,

Coco Whittaker

Senior Caseworker

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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.

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