

President: Sir Nicholas Underhill

Chairman: Miss June A Stubbs MBE MCSD FRSA



Friends of St. James's Park and The Green Park

39 Westminster Mansions Great Smith Street London SW1P 3BP Telephone (020) 7222 2449

John Walker Esq.,
Operational Director
Development Planning
Westminster City Hall
64 Victoria Street
London SW1E 6QP

By e-mail southplanningteam@westminster.gov.uk

For the attention of Ms. Julia Asghar

12th February 2014

Dear Ms. Asghar

Ref 13/12539/FULL 1-3 Queen Anne's Gate London

Demolition behind retained facade of 1-3 Queen Anne's Gate including rebuilding of mansard; façade retention of No. 9 Dartmouth Street up to second floor level; demolition and reconstruction of Dartmouth Street Corner of 1-3 Queen Anne's Gate, former No. 8 and No.11 Dartmouth Street and demolition and redevelopment of 12-15 Dartmouth Street and 12-14 Carteret Street to provide a building of two basements, lower ground, ground and five upper floors comprising 28 residential units (18x 2-bed and 10 x 3-bed units) with car parking for 33 cars in an automated car stacker system at basement level accessed from Carteret Street and plant enclosure at roof level.

(Site includes

1-3 Queen Anne's Gate; 8, 9, 11 and 12-15 Dartmouth Street; and 12 - 14 Carteret Street)

Thank you for your letter dated 16th January 2014 and the large number of documents forming the Application for the above proposals. We have reviewed the application documents and the Design and Access Statement. The Society is very disturbed by the proposals.

We understand that there is considerable local concern regarding the Application. We have been in contact with Mr. Graeme Cottam, the owner of 16 Dartmouth Street. His house is an adjoining property to the proposals' site and would be seriously impacted should the proposals be implemented. Further Mr Cottam as a long time resident of the area and with a considerable knowledge of the history of "Queen Anne's Gate" generally, makes a very strong case of objection. The Society supports his letter of Objection dated 5th February 2014.

Further we have been forwarded a copy of the letter in support of Mr. Cottam's objection, prepared by Planning Consultant Adrian Kearley dated 5th February and addressed to Westminster City Council. Mr Kearley states very clearly the reasons for objection, and makes reference to Planning procedure and processes. The Society considers that both letters contain significant arguments which the Council will take into account prior to formalising its decision on behalf of the local and wider community of Westminster.

In addition the Society considers the proposals to be inappropriate not least by their substantial over development and the nature of the proposed residential use including basements of car parking. The changes to some of the existing uses would affect the social and employment aspects of the local area. There appears to have been no full assessment of the consequences of changing office use into residential and which is happening seemingly at random in Central Westminster. The case has not been made for such change here, where the existing office use provides for small scale and locally beneficial office space along with employment and other uses.

The Proposals necessitate massive site excavation, to a depth of at least three basements. There is potential risk of endangering the existing adjacent and surrounding structures. The level of the water table will be seriously affected; and will be displaced by the considerable volume of the excavation for the huge volume of the basements. The impact does not appear to be justifiable nor to be supported by a reasoned argument. A concept which proposes changes to foundations of such magnitude and depth is highly questionable. The nature of the process and its construction period causing major disturbance to the historic area is also highly questionable.

Were there to be an argument that such development was absolutely essential for the centre of Westminster and in this historic environment, then the case might warrant careful consideration. But the fact is that there is no necessity to put at risk and inconvenience this historic local area. Therefore bearing mind the greater good of the Conservation Area, the motivation for the application proposals is seriously questioned. The Society's opinion is that the application cannot be acceptable.

A further factor which influences the Society's opinion is, - does the design of the residential proposals justify the impact of such major change? The detailed plans and sections for the proposals were examined. What is discovered is a proposal which has little empathy with the local lifestyle and culture of this historic location. The Applicant's arguments are that the changes are to restore residential use while retaining the external wall of 1 - 3 Queen Anne's Gate; this needs to be examined further, and to note the quality of the replacement. It is strange that the ground floor plan provides for the large 'foot print' with only one main entrance. This is the existing entrance into 1-3 Queen Anne's Gate. Retaining the front steps, no provision for disabled access is indicated on the plan. The ground floor layout shows a very long internal corridor serving eight dwellings as duplex's and triplex's - the latter having basements with little or no daylight, while even at the ground floor the depth is such as to have little benefit of natural day light.

One may ask, why is the entrance only from Queen Anne's Gate rather than conveniently placed on Dartmouth Street or Carteret Street - or both. This restrictive proposal no doubt comes about purely for 'marketing' reasons i.e. so that the address for dwellings is 'Queen Anne's Gate'. Such is purely commercially driven rather than convenience.

The Society is equally concerned by the proposed elevational treatments on both 'side streets'; and also the additional floor and increased height of the proposals compared with the original. Rather than repeat the criticisms we refer you to the objections in the two letters referred to above.

In our opinion, the proposals are seriously flawed and unacceptable. They represent over development for little if any acceptable benefit, while causing considerable risk and disturbance to the surrounding environment and occupancies. There would be much dis-benefit for such an important location at the heart of Westminster. Along with the cases made by the two letters referred to above, we urge the application be rejected for the reasons stated and which in essence may be summarised as being contrary to the wider amenity values of the area in its broadest sense.

We trust our observations and comments will be of assistance and ask that our comments be made known to the Council and the Planning Committee.

Yours Sincerely
for and on behalf of the Thorney Island Society
PP Tom Ball
June A Stubbs
Chairman

Please reply to : Tom Ball AADipl RIBA DipCD MRTPI(Rtd) FRSA
10 Paxton Terrace Grosvenor Road London SW1V 3DA 020 7834 5173

