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Royal National Hospital For Rheumatic Diseases, Upper Borough Walls, City Centre, Bath, Bath And North East Somerset, BA1 1RL

19/04933/FUL

Change of use from hospital (Use Class D1) to 167 -bedroom hotel (Use Class C1) and 66 sq m of restaurant/café (Use Class A3); to include publicly accessible restaurant, health spa, bar, lounge/meeting spaces at ground and first floor; external alterations to East Wing roof including removal of lift room and flu, demolition and replacement of roof top plant area and extension to existing pitched roof; demolition and replacement of modern infill development to south elevation and new infill development to north elevation of the East Wing internal courtyard and new glazed roof to spa area; removal of modern external staircase to rear of West Wing and replacement infill development and glazed link to new extension; demolition and replacement of 3rd storey extension to West Wing; alterations to the roof of West Wing including new lift shaft and plant screen; erection of 3.5-storey extension to rear of West Wing with glazed link/conservatory space; removal of two trees and replacement tree planting; landscaping and associated works.



19/04934/LBA

Listed Building Consent: Internal and external alterations associated with proposed conversion to hotel (Use Class C1); demolition and replacement of modern infill extension, new glazed roof and new infill development of northern elevation to internal courtyard of East Wing; alterations to the roof of east and West Wings; removal of external staircase to West Wing and replacement with glazed link to new extension and replacement infill development; abutment of new glazed structure with West Wing chapel south wall;

demolition and replacement of 3rd floor extension to West Wing and additional plant screen and lift overrun to West Wing roof; partial demolition of the boundary wall on Parsonage Lane; construction of replacement glass screen to main internal ground floor lobby of West Wing; changes to internal layout and consequential changes to internal partitions and other fabric.

Revised Plans for the Rear Extension Submitted 31/03/2020

Support (with reservation re extension roof)

The Royal Mineral Water Hospital is a Grade II* Georgian former hospital situated in the core of the Bath conservation area and World Heritage site. The east wing was originally constructed in two phases in 1738-1742 and 1793-1795, with the west wing added in 1859-1862 with some rear and roof alterations in the 1960s and 1990s. A prominent building in Bath's cityscape from the top of Milsom Street, BPT recognises the importance of finding a socially and economically sustainable function for this building to sustain its material and associated historical integrity.

Therefore, BPT has a neutral opinion on the proposed use of the building as a hotel. We had hoped the building use would have been a more civic purpose e.g. a relocated Fashion Museum, or an above ground site for the archives and a local history centre. In responding to the proposed hotel use under consideration, from this developer for their chosen use, we are not assessing, or commenting on, whether the hotel use makes a positive addition to the variety of uses in the city.

BPT objected to the previous scheme proposed in this application, in particular the initial proposed design and appearance of the rear bedroom extension, which we felt would not suitably complement or stand apart from the west wing, and would conflict with Bath's backland architectural grain in a way that would neither preserve nor enhance the character of the conservation area or World Heritage site.

Following consideration of the revised design proposals for the extension, we are delighted to see the extent to which the applicant has accepted the detail of our objection in the modifications they have made. The Trust is supportive of the attempted reduction in roof parameters, height, and use of vernacular materials, and the improved incorporation of the garden space into the overall scheme. However, we remain resistant to the proposed plant room on the extension roof which creates an awkward form and retains the excessive height of the original design.

We feel that the introduction of a recessed mansard roof profile better reflects the immediate historic roofscape of Parsonage Lane and Bridwell Lane, and helps to break down the extension's otherwise over-dominant massing through an improved differentiation between the roof and building body. The use of traditional materials such as Bath stone ashlar and split faced Bath stone harmonises with the existing texture and colour palette of Parsonage Lane's backland character, and we commend the application's increased sensitivity to the existing aesthetic and historic significance of Bath's rear lanes and pedestrian routes that frequently reflect their original medieval origins, and how those significances might be affected by the proposed extension design.

We are additionally supportive of the improvements to the conservatory, which has been further recessed between the west wing and the rear extension to minimise the visual connection between the two buildings. The increase in roof height to incorporate the first floor glazed access link has resulted in a tidier, more minimal appearance that we feel results in a 'light touch' addition to the main hospital building that is both modest and unmistakably contemporary. With regards to the proposed internal use of timber cladding, we feel in this context it is suitably justified to lighten the conservatory interior and provide acoustic improvement without inappropriately intruding into exterior streetscape views.

The incorporation of the existing garden space into the overall scheme will improve the public benefit and accessibility of the site as well as the experience of hotel guests. Further tree planting will help to screen the extension and mitigate its impact on views from Bridewell Lane and neighbours. The existing undeveloped space within the rear curtilage of the Royal Mineral Water Hospital has contributed to the diversity of scale and design within Parsonage Lane and Bridewell Lane whilst breaking up the massing of adjacent terraced buildings; we are supportive of plans to make better use of the garden to provide a welcome green addition into a space that, whilst of historic and social value, could become overly narrow and overshadowed by new construction.

However, we unfortunately cannot support the proposed plant room that has significantly elevated the height of the extension roof to that of the superseded design. The louvred design will be of significant contrast with the darker zinc cladding, and therefore will be visually distinct from the roof and noticeable as an incongruous addition without suitable aesthetic mitigation. Furthermore, the sharp increase in height interrupts the mansard roof gradient, resulting in an awkward, blocky appearance that is disconnected from the existing form and roovescape vernacular of its setting.

The Trust would therefore recommend that the current incorporation of the plant design is reconfigured to better integrate with the new roof profile and further reduce the height of the extension. We wonder if the plant room could be brought down into the second floor to occupy one or two of the proposed guest rooms with significant aesthetic and architectural benefit to the setting of a Grade II* listed building and two rare medieval lanes running through the core of the Bath conservation area and World Heritage site.

We would additionally recommend that any resurfacing of Parsonage Lane that might form part of this scheme should implement a design in which the channel drainage is situated in the middle of the lane in order to better reinstate the original medieval characteristics of Parsonage Lane. We additionally feel that any potential resurfacing should use traditional paving materials and styles such as flagged or cobbled paving or setts, rather than a surface type that is obviously modern in its appearance.

Therefore, whilst we are supportive of the improved design of the rear extension, we feel that the proposed position, appearance, and massing of the plant room will distort the intended mansard roof profile and significantly raise the roof height, with consequent detriment to the setting of a Grade II* building, and the appearance and character of the Bath conservation area and World Heritage site. We would therefore suggest that this aspect of the proposal is reconsidered and amended before this application is permitted to progress further.

