

Our Ref: 3956

29th January 2024

Dear Sirs,

Retrospective Applications for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent; Retention of Rooftop Air Handling Equipment and Associated Fixings, Including the Provision of a Conservation Roof-light for Access and Maintenance Purposes; Unit 3 The Stables, Parrs Wood, East Didsbury, Manchester M20 5PG for Europium World UK Ltd.

Please find attached the following application documentation.

1. Appropriate and duly completed Planning Application Form.
2. Appropriate and duly completed Certificate of Ownership and Agricultural Land Declaration.
3. Drawing No. 2967-S01 Site Location Plan.
4. Drawing No. 2967-AC01 Roof Plan & Details 'As Built'.
5. Drawing No. 2967-AC02 Section & Details 'As Built'.
6. Drawing No. 21-2188 400 T1 Plant Deck 'As Built' prepared by CCS Structural Engineers.
7. Schedule of Samsung Air Conditioning Condenser Units.
8. Detail Sheet for Air Conditioning Condenser Samsung Units.
9. Noise Impact Assessment by e3p Environmental Consultancy.
10. Heritage Impact Assessment prepared by BTP Architects.
11. Thermal Comfort Assessment prepared by Hydrock Consulting Engineers.
12. Letter Report of Canning O'Neil Commercial Agents.
13. Statement of Fact of Ian Boulger, Managing Director, Outgoing Ltd.
14. Appeal Decision Ref Nos. APP/B4215/W/22/3301586 & APP/B4215/Y/22/3301573.

Following our email to Constance Phillips of the 11th of January 2023, our clients has considered the dismissal of their appeal and have taken counsels opinion resulting in the revised details now placed before you.

The applicant proposes retention of the rooftop air handling equipment, associated fixings and conservation roof-light, as installed at Unit 3, The Stables, Parrs Wood, East Didsbury M20 5PG. Further to the appeal decisions dated 12 December 2022, the applicant has considered carefully the comments made by the appointed inspector and has addressed fully all concerns raised. In particular, details of fixings are now provided, and a thermal comfort assessment is included. Alternative possible methods of achieving satisfactory environmental conditions have been considered and discounted and a signed statement of fact has been obtained from the previous occupiers confirming the problems encountered with over-heating in recent years. In addition, the views of commercial agents have been sought regarding the importance of the air handling equipment in securing the continuing viability and longevity of the building moving forward.

It is widely acknowledged that securing continuing viable use of a listed building is in many cases the preferred option for ensuring continuing preservation and maintenance of the heritage asset. Indeed, guidance set out in the NPPF (Para. 208) advises that *“Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use”*. In this case, the proposals would clearly result in less than substantial harm. This is accepted by the appeals inspector (Appeals Decision Paragraph 12).

The Thermal Comfort Assessment prepared by Hydrock clearly recommends provision of a fixed heating and cooling system as now installed, in order to achieve a comfortable and reasonable temperature during summer months, in line with relevant legislation and industry guidance. The assessment concludes furthermore that, when the system is also set up to provide heating during the winter as in this case, then the building can be adequately heated at an increased efficiency compared to traditional boiler fed or electric radiator systems. The combined fixed heating and cooling system as installed is fully supported by Hydrock as the recommended solution, offering the greatest benefit in terms of both thermal comfort, reduced energy consumption and reduced carbon emissions.

The Hydrock Assessment concludes that the installation of the fixed heating and cooling system has clearly improved the buildings demonstrably poor environmental performance and that, as a result, it has increased the buildings desirability as high-quality office accommodation and ensured its longevity. The assessment notes that an ever-increasing proportion of quality UK rental office space now includes comfort cooling as standard.

Furthermore, it is noted that as global warming increases, office spaces without cooling may struggle to attract tenants and thereby increase the risk of buildings like this falling into disrepair through lack of continued use. Installation of the cooling system in this case will enable the building to remain viable in spite of the forecast rising temperatures. This will be essential in ensuring the sensitive ongoing maintenance of the listed fabric, retaining positive use and thereby its contribution to the local community and economy for future generations.

Hydrock’s views regarding continuing viability and longevity of the building are fully supported by the submitted letter report of commercial agents Canning O’Neil dated 10th October 2023. Canning O’Neil confirm experience of a greater demand from tenants in recent years for air conditioning as a standard requirement, further fuelled most recently as a result of the Covid pandemic and increasing focus upon global warming. Canning O’Neil confirm that offices without air conditioning are harder to let and inevitably attract lower rental values.

Canning O’Neil also report a “flight to quality” following Covid, as companies are now often seeking less space as a result of an increase in home working. The agents advise that lack of air conditioning means not only lower rentals, but also longer void periods and higher “holding costs” on vacant offices. Inevitably this results in increased risk of building maintenance being neglected and a growing risk post-Covid of office buildings (particularly of older age) falling into long term disrepair and neglect.

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In the Thermal Comfort Assessment, Hydrock note that the previous occupier (who owned the building for over 20 years) did appear to have encountered problems with overheating and climate problems and might have attempted to address those problems without taking the proper remedial action required. This they consider might be either because their tenure was not critically affected by the problem or, perhaps, because they were unable to make the significant investment required in implementing a viable solution.

Canning O'Neil furthermore confirm that they had direct experience of the building prior to the heating and cooling system being installed and that it was clear that there were problems keeping the building warm in winter and cool in summer. Canning O'Neil in fact report witnessing the use of unsightly portable a/c units (with extract tubes/vents hanging out of windows) in the summer months and recall occasions when staff had to be sent home as result of the uncomfortable/unhealthy working environment. They consider that such issues could well have been an influencing factor in sale of the property by the previous owners.

The problems previously experienced are confirmed in the Statement of Fact provided by Ian Boulger, Managing Director of Outgoing Limited who owned and occupied the building from 2008 until 2021. Mr Boulger confirms that staff in the building suffered with extremes in temperature between winter and summer months to such extent that it affected productivity and morale. The problems in fact led to staff complaints and were often cited in exit interviews as one of the negative points about working at the Stables. Mr Boulger confirms that, whilst mobile a/c units and fans were used in attempt to deal with the excessive temperatures, they were not practical due to the noise created, high moisture content and due to them proving potential health and safety hazards with trailing wires and ducted vents out of windows.

It is clear from the above that provision of the heating and cooling system now installed is necessary in order to improve environmental conditions within the building and so secure viability of the building for employment purposes moving forward. Alternative solutions have been carefully considered and discounted for reason of greater impact and harm upon/to character and appearance of the heritage asset. Securing such viability is key to securing ongoing maintenance and preservation of the listed building in the future, in accord with legislation, policy and guidance enacted, adopted and issued with the objective of preserving heritage assets in the public good.

In addition to helping secure preservation of the listed structure, the thermal comfort assessment prepared by Hydrock also sets out how the fixed heating and cooling system now installed will serve to heat the building at an increased efficiency compared to traditional boiler fed or electric radiator systems. The system installed therefore results in reduced energy consumption and reduced carbon emissions and is therefore in accord with the stated commitment of UK Government to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and achieve net zero by 2050. All energy saving strategies implemented will have the result of benefitting the public in the long term. Public benefits therefore result not just from helping to secure viability and preservation of the heritage asset but also in helping to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and assist with climate change.

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In addition to these clear benefits, the improved conditions that will result for employees must also be a public benefit in its own right. As set out by Hydrock in the thermal comfort assessment, employers are required under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations to assess risks to workers and to put controls in place to protect them. Furthermore, the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations require employers to provide a reasonable indoor temperature in the workplace. The Health and Safety Executive also advise that all workers are entitled to an environment where risks to their health and safety are properly controlled.

Provision of the fixed heating and cooling system will result in clear public benefit in securing viability and preservation of the listed structure moving forward, in improving energy efficiency, reducing reliance on fossil fuels, and assisting with climate change and by way of improving conditions for and safeguarding the health of employees. Provision of the fixed heating and cooling system is therefore considered to be in accord with relevant guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The proposals are also in accord with relevant policies set out in the statutory development plan, including Policy EN3 of the Core Strategy and Saved Unitary Development Plan Policy DC19, both of which seek to secure the preservation of listed buildings. In particular, Core Strategy Policy EN3 provides that proposals that enable re-use of heritage assets where they are considered consistent with the significance of the heritage asset will be encouraged. In such context, it should also be noted that both the NPPF and the statutory development plan are documents prepared to guide future development at national and local level in the public interest.

We trust that the submitted documentation is sufficient for your purposes and that you will now find the applicant's proposals acceptable. Please revert to us, however, should anything further be required at this stage.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'A. Pearson'.

For and behalf of BTP Architects Ltd.

Planning Portal Submission

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