



Planning Committee Councillors,
LB Islington,
Council Chamber,
Town Hall,
Upper Street,
N1 2UD

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Our reference: 22019

31st August 2022

Dear Councillors,

Planning Application P2022/0871/FUL: Partial demolition of the existing building, construction of two new floors, reconfiguration of floorspace and renewal of the existing facades to provide new office floorspace (Use Class E), retail floorspace (Use Class E), a replacement public house (Sui Generis), plus new access arrangements, landscaping improvements, new public realm and other associated works - 1 Torrens Street, London, EC1V 1NY.

I write on behalf of SAVE Britain's Heritage to reaffirm our strong objection to the above planning application and our call that you refuse planning permission on heritage grounds at Planning Committee on 5th September 2022. As set out in our previous objection of 7th April 2022, we consider this application fails to comply with national and local policy for preserving Islington's historic environment for the following reasons:

The existing building is a high-quality landmark

1. 1 Torrens Street, known as Angel Square, is a high-quality post-modernist style building and a rare survivor of its period which contributes positively to the varied and historic character of Angel.
2. The building has become a recognisable landmark in the Borough, successfully responding to the character of its surroundings and its important civic position. Angel's Square's distinctive polychromatic brick and Portland stone facades, together with decorative features such as the unusual Italianate campanile and sundial are designed to reflect and complement its setting opposite the elaborately decorated historic buildings opposite. These include the grade II listed Co-Op bank building, with its decorative terracotta facades and corner roof dome, as well as the grade II listed 1913 tower of the former Angel picture theatre a few doors along. As Historic England points out in the listing description, both of these buildings mark the 'gateway to Islington'. Regardless of listing status, the Angel Square building makes a no less significant contribution to the townscape of Islington.
3. Angel Square's distinctive curved corner and composition of three interconnected but distinctly designed buildings also respond positively to the important junction with City Road. These elements were a direct design response to the site's high profile location and the arrival of more standardised

slab-block office developments at the time, not dissimilar to that proposed under the current proposals.

4. We believe this great civic location in the Borough at the gateway to Islington deserves a building of commensurate landmark quality, as already exists.
5. On account of its positive contribution and landmark character, Angel Square should therefore be considered a non-designated heritage asset of high architectural value and significance in planning terms.
6. We consider officers have failed to properly recognise the significance of this building and the weight it should therefore carry in the planning balance, thereby bypassing key planning duties outlined in NPPF (2021) paragraph 203 and London Plan (2021) Policy HC1 Heritage conservation and growth.
7. These concerns are also echoed in many of the 29 public letters of objection against this application and the formal objection from the Twentieth Century Society (21 April 2022).

Harm caused by the proposed building

8. We politely disagree with the officer's conclusions in the committee report (para 4.3) that the proposal poses no harm to the character or appearance of the area and surrounding heritage assets.
9. On the contrary, we consider the design and bulk of the proposal poses significant harm to the surrounding area. The bland glass and steel corporate style block proposed is of a considerably larger size and bears no relationship to or respect for the historic character of this sensitive location in the Borough.
10. The monochrome facades and single slab silhouette of the proposed office block appears alien in this context, dominating rather than harmonising with existing townscape and diminishing the settings of numerous surrounding designated heritage assets. This stands in direct contrast to the varied façade treatments and mixture of classical and modernist forms of the existing building
11. We consider that a development proposal that shares the architectural language of just one building (the Angel building by the same architect) in an area as rich as Angel, cannot adequately contribute to the long-term conservation and enhancement of Islington's historic environment.

Responding to historic townscape

12. London Borough of Islington (LBI) Development Management Policies (June 2013) Policy DM2.1(vii) states that new development must "*respect and respond positively to existing buildings, the streetscape and the wider context.*" When considered against this policy we fail to see how the design and increased height of the proposed block responds to either the scale or character of its context.
13. The site is also sits immediately adjacent to, and therefore affecting the setting of three designated conservation areas: the Angel Conservation Area located to the north-west, the New River Conservation Area to the south and the Duncan Terrace/Colebrooke Row Conservation Area to the east. LBI Development Management Policies (June 2013) Policy DM2.3 states that development within the setting of a conservation area must conserve or enhance its significance. For the reasons stated above regarding the loss of the existing post-modernist landmark and the single office block building proposed in its place, we do not consider the application meets this policy test.

Conclusion

For these reasons we consider this planning application fails to comply with planning policy designed to conserve and enhance the special historic and architectural character of places like Angel and we call on Islington Planning Committee to refuse planning permission.

Yours sincerely,



Benedict Oakley

Conservation Officer, SAVE Britain's Heritage