



**THE RECOGNISED ASSOCIATION
REPRESENTING THE INTERESTS
OF BARBICAN RESIDENTS**

The City Planning Officer
Department of Planning and Transportation
City of London
PO Box 270
Guildhall
London
EC2P 2EJ

14 February 2011

For the attention of Rob Chipperfield

Dear Sir,

Barbican Exhibition Hall 1 - Internal and external alterations to include the installation of new external facade cladding in lieu of existing and new plant equipment alterations for internal enabling works – 10/00875/LBC

I write on behalf of the Barbican Association to object in respect of the application to make a radical change to the appearance of the Grade II Listed Barbican Estate.

The entire Barbican Estate was listed because “[t]he Barbican represents the high point of mature modernism at its most serious and urbane in Britain. At a time when large public housing schemes in the modern idiom were being widely pursued in this country and elsewhere, the Barbican is notable not only for its size, site, and the commitment of adequate investment, but also for the consistency and quality of its architectural design and detail, sustained over decades of building.” Barbican Listed Building Management Guidelines Vol 2 ¶2.4.5.

The policy on modifications of listed buildings is clear. POLICY ENV 16 of the Unitary Development plan permits the planning committee “To grant consent for the alteration of the exterior or interior of a listed building only where this would not detract from its special architectural or historic interest.” The wholesale removal of the façade of a primary entrance to the estate would certainly detract from the special historic interest of the Barbican.

Paragraph 10.56 under Policy ENV 16 explains that “Particular care and attention is necessary in works to listed buildings: even quite minor changes, such as the removal or alteration of glazing bars, can have a serious effect on their overall character and appearance.” This proposal is to do rather more than remove some glazing bars – it proposes to remove the entire façade.

The existing façade style is prevalent throughout the north side of the estate, below podium-level, as shown in the following pictures.



Aldersgate Street



Aldersgate Street



Bridgewater Street



Golden Lane

We urge you to visit north Barbican noting the current below podium facades at the west end of Beech Street, Aldersgate street, White Lyon Court, the frontages facing north towards Fann Street, those onto the street called Golden Lane as well as the northern, eastern and southern facades of the trade hall forming the site of the application before you.

The Barbican Listed Building Management Guidelines (which have been adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance) state that “The materials, components and layout of the common areas contribute to the architectural character that is both varied yet consistent across the Estate. No alterations should be made that would introduce local departures from this character.” Vol 2 ¶1.2.2.8.

The form of this façade is a curtain wall in the truest sense of the word. The curtain is draped from the parapet and held a few inches off of the floor at the bottom. The strong vertical lines serve as the folds in the curtain. One would have thought that this metaphor would have been perfect for a cinema space but the developers have chosen instead to insert a vast light box at the

mezzanine level of the space. This is exactly the sort of inappropriate change that the Guidelines require this committee to resist: “the essential gravitas of its buildings should be preserved from makeovers, prettification or camouflage as otherwise the essential character of the Barbican will be compromised or lost.” Barbican Listed Building Management Guidelines Vol. 2 ¶2.5.3.



The proposed site.

We do not suggest that the building should be fossilised and we support the intended use of the building for the cinemas (subject to appropriate planning conditions) but we believe this can be accomplished while doing much less damage to the façade. The façade at the other end of Beach Street tunnel has been much more sympathetically modified. The curtain has been largely maintained while providing the ground floor windows and entrance that were required for the health club.

We note with interest that the applicant recognises “The guidance [PPS5] also recognizes that modification of historic assets can be supported **when the local character and sense of place is maintained**, and where good design is central to the proposals, and due consideration is given to the context,

scale, massing, height, alignment, materials and use.” Planning Statement p. 24 (emphasis added).

We believe that the applicant has plainly failed to follow PPS 5 when it comes to the design and materials of the proposed façade and greater use should and could be made of that currently existing. The materials proposed hardly even nod to the context.

The ostensible reason for destroying the façade is that it cannot provide thermal and acoustic properties required for the cinema use. Surely, these can be met behind the current façade, with minor adaptations.

Finally, we believe that certain technical aspects of the proposal could damage the listed building apart from the facade. Permission for these aspects should be granted only on the basis that the planning department’s experts in listed building are satisfied that the detailed proposal and method of working will not detract from the listed building.

These aspects include:

- 1) The cleaning of:
 - a. Any part of the concrete structure or outside surfaces, vertical, horizontal or otherwise, of the ramp leading from street pavement level to the upper level podium; and
 - b. Any part of the upper level podium rounded concrete coping, balcony or balustrade immediately above the proposed cinema location.
- 2) The work in the car park
 - a. All reinforcing beams installed in the basement car park should be covered in a manner in keeping with the Listed Grade II car park and should be installed so as to not detract from the continued use of the car park.

In sum, we submit that this application should be denied because it will unnecessarily harm this listed building.

Yours faithfully

Randall K Anderson
Chairman, Barbican Association Planning Committee