

A10.3 – 10 King William Street Heritage Statement Addendum



10 King William Street Over Site Development

Heritage Statement Addendum

May 2014



10 King William Street Over Site Development

Heritage Statement Addendum

May 2014

Bank Station Capacity Upgrade Project
4th Floor
10 King William Street
London EC4N 7TW

LUL Document Reference URS-8798-RPT-G-001679
LPA Application Reference: 14/00178/FULEIA

Limitations

URS Infrastructure & Environment UK Limited (“URS”) has prepared this report for the use of Dragados and London Underground Limited in accordance with the Agreement under which our services were performed. No other warranty, expressed or implied, is made as to the professional advice included in this Report or any other services provided by URS.

Where the conclusions and recommendations contained in this report are based upon information provided by others it is upon the assumption that all relevant information has been provided by those parties from whom it has been requested and that such information is accurate. Information obtained by URS has not been independently verified by URS, unless otherwise stated in the Report.

The methodology adopted and the sources of information used by URS in providing its services are outlined in this Report. The work described in this Report was undertaken during May 2014 and is based on the conditions encountered and the information available during the said period of time. The scope of this Report and the services are accordingly factually limited by these circumstances.

Where assessments of works or costs identified in this Report are made, such assessments are based upon the information available at the time and where appropriate are subject to further investigations or information which may become available.

Certain statements made in the Report that are not historical facts may constitute estimates, projections or other forward-looking statements and even though they are based on reasonable assumptions as of the date of the Report, such forward-looking statements by their nature involve risks and uncertainties.

Table of Contents

- 1 Reason for Addendum 2**
- 2 Building description..... 2**
- 3 Significance and architectural interest..... 3**
- 4 Significance tested against NPPF definition 5**
- 5 Significance tested against English Heritage Conservation
Area Designation, Appraisal and Management checklist..... 5**
- 6 Significance tested against English Heritage Designation
Listing Selection checklist 7**
- 7 Comparative architectural quality: existing and proposed
development 8**
- 8 Conclusion..... 10**

1 Reason for Addendum

- 1.1.1 This report is an Addendum to the Heritage Statement forming part of the 10 King William Street Over Site Development planning application (LPA ref 14/00178/FULEIA) submitted in February 2014. The purpose of the report is to provide additional information in response to the objections of Planware on behalf of McDonald's Restaurants Ltd and the Twentieth Century Society who are of the view that the Heritage Statement does not provide sufficient justification for the demolition of 10 King William Street in particular.

2 Building description

- 2.1.1 10 King William Street was built in 1974-8 to a design by Fitzroy Robinson & Partners.



Plate 1: 10 King William Street from the north

- 2.1.2 The building is of ground and six floors (plus lower ground floor and basement). The facade is articulated into a series of bays by groupings of monumental columns, groups of three (two attached, one free-standing) at each end and a central attached pair either side of the entrance. The groups of columns to the flanks rise to the full height of the main facade while the central columns rise to fourth floor level. Pairs of more slender columns rise to third floor level between the groups of monumental columns. More delicate mullions divide the windows.

The groups to each side of the building provide turning points into the side streets of Nicholas Lane and Abchurch Lane and were used to carry air conditioning ducts.

- 2.1.3 At ground floor level the facia of the building is set back, and there are sloping lightwells.
- 2.1.4 A broad band emphasises the second floor level. A requirement of the Corporation of London from 1959 to the early 1970s was for all new buildings to incorporate a pedestrian walkway ('ped-way'), the intention being to link them with bridges. This was rarely (and fortunately) never achieved except on London Wall and the strategy was abandoned when pedestrian/traffic segregation fell out of favour. The second floor is recessed to the same depth as the facia while the third and fourth floors step progressively forward.
- 2.1.5 A balcony runs the width of the building at fifth floor level and is continued between the columns at either side of the building. An exaggerated cornice above the fifth floor finishes the building off and masks the attic storey and roof-top services. The main elements of the building are broadly replicated in the Abchurch Lane elevation, at the southern end of which monumental columns stand either side of a goods entrance.
- 2.1.6 The building is of concrete construction clad in flame-textured Sardinian beige granite while the window frames are of bronze anodized aluminium.
- 2.1.7 The interior of the building was designed by the French firm of Cabinet Eric Lieure. The ground floor contained the reception area and banking hall with floor and walls clad in travertine marble. The wall coverings and doors of the sixth floor management offices were of plane tree burr and the offices boasted custom-built furniture. In the basement the wall coverings of the dining rooms, which also contained custom-built furniture, were of silk framed in plane tree burr. The interior of the building has been modified over time, and modern open plan office accommodation, without the original custom-built furniture, is now present throughout most of the building.

3 Significance and architectural interest

- 3.1.1 The building is situated within the Bank Conservation Area. The Conservation Area was first designated in 1971 and extended in 1974, 1981 and 1991, the area either side of King William Street between Lombard Street and Cannon Street which includes No. 10 King William Street being added as part of the 1981 extension. In 2007 the conservation area was reviewed and the designated area enlarged to include the former Abchurch Yard Conservation Area.

- 3.1.2 When King William Street was laid out between 1829 and 1835 it was lined with neo-Classical stuccoed frontages designed by Sir Robert Smirke. These buildings were largely replaced by large banks and office buildings of the early 20th century, the Grade II listed No. 1 (1921-2, William Campbell-Jones and Alex Smithers for the London Assurance Co.) and the Grade II listed Phoenix House at Nos. 3-7 (1915, by H L Anderson, extended 1931-32 by Campbell-Jones and Sons) being surviving examples.
- 3.1.3 The Banque National de Paris was housed in just such a building on the site of No. 10 King William Street in the 1960s. *Building Design* (1979, 31) describes it as 'a handsome Edwardian building...its principal feature was a grandiose banking hall covered by a glass dome.' By 1969 the bank had outgrown the building and with 30 years left on its lease decided to rebuild rather than move.
- 3.1.4 The bank acquired two small parcels of land adjacent to the existing building and commissioned architects Fitzroy Robinson and Partners to design a new headquarters. The partners in charge were Leonard Bitcheno and Geoffrey Rainbird and Bitcheno recalls (*Building Design* 1979, 31) that the client wanted to make a statement of its role in the London banking world by creating 'a building of quality...that would fit in with the City planners and into the City scene'. The building was designed in 1973-75 and completed in February 1978. In an article he wrote for *Interior Design* (Bitcheno, 1978) he stated that his intent was 'to make a truly modern building which would fit and enhance its distinguished surroundings.'
- 3.1.5 The building garnered a measure of praise in the architectural and building press of the time. *The Architects' Journal* (Battle, 1978) called it 'a bold attempt at being innovative while keeping faith with the essential feel of City Architecture.' To *Building Design* it was 'an office building with a sense of occasion and style (Pearce, 1978) and 'a good looking building, not modish, but of a robust sophistication.' (1979). Bradley and Pevsner thought it 'grand and imposing' (1997, 536) and the architects' best work of the 1970s (1997, 135). The Bank Conservation Area Character Summary and Management Strategy SPD (City of London Corporation 2012) notes that the building 'is clad in granite with giant columns that add interest to the street elevation, and creating a strong vertical rhythm and monumentality of scale appropriate to the setting.' The building won a Civic Trust Award in 1979 and is listed amongst 20 others in a catalogue of significant banks in John Booker's *Temples of Mammon, The Architecture of Banking*, 1990.
- 3.1.6 However, these commentaries are not without criticism of the building. *Building Design* (Pearce, 1978) notes 'a certain over-ponderousness' in the handling of the building and says that the monumental second floor emphasis lost meaning after the abandonment of the City of London Corporation's ped-way scheme. The same article criticised the interior design as 'predictably petty' and noted

the uncomfortable juxtaposition of the robust architecture and the interior designer's 'stripped-down second Empire style'. The same journal notes (1979) 'the job was complicated by the bank's own French architects overseeing the plans, French banking technicians advising on the layout and French interior designers completing the building.'

- 3.1.7 Bradley and Pevsner's accolade of 10 King William Street as the architects' best work of the 1970s is tempered by their descriptions of the firm's other buildings of the period of which they are generally critical. These include their Royal Bank of Scotland (1970), 'a regrettable replacement' (for Cockerell's Sun Life Assurance Building, 1942), (1997, 422); 110 Fenchurch Street (1972-5), 'a dreary grey-granite block' (1997, 489); 100 Lower Thames Street (1973-77), 'a long slab' (1997, 549); Ironmonger's Hall (1977-70) 'a bland brick office extension' (1997, 395) and 41-53 Cannon Street for Midland Bank (1977-81), 'too heavy altogether' (1997, 441). On King William Street itself, Nos 81-82 (by Curtis Green 1927) was reconstructed and extended by the Fitzroy Robinson Partnership in 1982-85 with what Bradley and Pevsner describes "an unsympathetic new front to Nicholas Lane".

4 Significance tested against NPPF definition

- 4.1.1 Annex 2 of the NPPF defines significance as 'the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic'.
- 4.1.2 10 King William Street's significance in this definition is in its limited architectural interest, a 1970s take on monumental classicism. It has no archaeological (evidential), artistic or historic interest.

5 Significance tested against English Heritage Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management checklist

- 5.1.1 The English Heritage consultation document Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management (2011) contains a check list with which to identify elements in a conservation area which may contribute to its special interest. A positive response to one or more of the items may indicate that an element makes a positive contribution; the results of such a test against those items relevant to the building follow:

- *Is it the work of a particular architect or designer of regional or local note?*

While Fitzroy Robinson were very active in the City in the 1970s and 1980s their buildings are generally regarded as unexceptional and

mediocre. The principal partners in charge of the project, Leonard Bitcheno and Geoffrey Rainbird were not architects of note. 10 King William Street does not have the inherent interest of earlier Fitzroy Robinson works completed as executive architects to major names such as Sir Basil Spence, and in fact marks a move away from their previous brutalist aesthetic towards the post-modern style of their later 1980s buildings.

- *Does it have landmark quality?*

While the building was designed to make a statement of wealth in its use of materials, it was also designed to respect its neighbours rather than stand out. It could not therefore be described as having landmark quality.

- *Does it reflect a substantial number of other elements in the conservation area in age, style, materials, form or other characteristics? Does it relate to adjacent designated heritage assets in age, materials or in any other historically significant way?*

The building takes cues from, rather than reflects other elements in the conservation area, and relates to surrounding assets in its massing and to some extent in its monumental verticality and classical overtones, although the scale of the distinct elements of the building, for instance columns, is oversized in relation to those of its neighbours. The Bank Conservation Area Character Summary and Management Strategy SPD (City of London Corporation 2012) judges that the monumentality of the building is slightly weakened by the raking light well which breaks the street line at pavement level.

- *Does it contribute positively to the setting of adjacent designated heritage assets?*

The building does not harm the setting of adjacent designated heritage assets, 5 King William Street and 1 King William Street, but makes a neutral contribution to their settings due to its respectful massing and the chamfered corner to Abchurch Lane.

- *Does it reflect the traditional functional character or former uses in the area?*

As a former bank headquarters the building goes some way to illustrate the development of the area. However, subsequent to a refit the building has lost its original function and to all intents and purposes is just another City office building. Built as a bank headquarters the building is now let to a variety of businesses and no longer reflects the traditional functional character or former uses in the area.

- *Does its use contribute to the character or appearance of the area?*

The use of the building is consistent with that of others in the area, and makes a neutral contribution to the character or appearance of the area. The proposed replacement building will contain the same uses, as well as passive provision for a new entrance hall for Bank Station.

- 5.1.2 Under this test, the building should not be seen as making a clearly positive contribution to the Bank Conservation Area. Its impact is neutral, as a competent infill within the streetscape which respects its neighbours.

6 Significance tested against English Heritage Designation Listing Selection checklist

- 6.1.1 The English Heritage Designation Listing Selection guide for Commerce and Exchange Buildings (2011) provides a useful checklist of points to be considered when considering the significance of buildings associated with Commerce and Exchange. The performance of 10 King William Street with regards to these points is as follows:

- *Selectivity.*

The majority of commercial buildings post-date 1840 and survive in large numbers from the 19th and 20th centuries. As a principle therefore, selection for designation needs to be very discriminating, and buildings should have very great qualities to be listed.

- *Group value.*

The buildings of King William Street that replaced the original mid-19th century buildings were built in the early 20th century and exhibited group value. Their replacements, built in a variety of styles in the late 20th century stand amongst the two surviving (and listed) examples of the early 20th century. 10 King William Street does not therefore exhibit group value.

- *Date.*

Most buildings prior to 1840 surviving in anything like their original form will be listable but for buildings after 1840 rigorous selection is necessary. With a completion date of 1978 10 King William Street would be eligible for listing under the 'thirty year rule' if it met other criteria.

- *Rarity.*

The selection guide notes that listing in the past has favoured opulent and grand buildings at the expense of the more modest, and cites palazzo banks being given precedence over humble savings banks,

where the latter has suffered disproportionate loss as an example. It goes on to suggest that listing should aim to redress this balance.

- *Alterations.*

The guidance notes that commercial premises are intrinsically prone to change and alteration and cannot be expected to survive in their original configuration. A building may still be listable if its front elevation is sufficiently interesting or rare architecturally even if the interior has been substantially altered or even lost. As noted above however, 10 King William Street has limited architectural interest.

- *Interiors.*

The interior of 10 King William Street has undergone considerable change, with the loss of custom built furniture and a programme of unremarkable modernisation and refurbishment.

- *Community Interest.*

The Banque National de Paris was never a public building, indeed apart from a few holders of BNP accounts, only employees would enter the building. It does not therefore have any community interest.

7 Comparative architectural quality: existing and proposed development

7.1.1 The existing 10 King William Street is a building which, whilst being of some interest due to its contemporary awards and architectural media attention, and its use as a bank headquarters, lacks significant architectural quality. The building was designed to be polite to its older neighbours, whilst employing a more fashionable post-modern aesthetic that was well received in the late 1970s and early 1980s. However, its massive, monumental form and rich materials jar with the buildings which surround it, and although of its time, the building may be seen as not having stood the test of time.

7.1.2 The proposed replacement building has been carefully designed to have arguably a greater respect for its neighbours. The façade to King William Street has been carefully detailed to correspond with the lines of cornices, string courses and bands which decorate 5 King William Street. Its use of Portland stone reflects the Portland stone elevations of the majority of edifices on King William Street, and will allow a flow and clarity in the streetscape that is currently undermined by the existing building. The retention of the chamfered corner which is a particular feature of King William Street will further reinforce the contextual character of the new building within this historic townscape, whilst the removal of the raked pavement lights, which the Conservation Management Plan notes as being anomalies, will de-clutter the pavement. In

addition, the cut back corner of the proposed building turning onto Nicholas Lane will have a positive impact within the conservation area, improving the streetscape and pedestrian access.



Plate 2: Current corner of King William Street and Nicholas Lane

- 7.1.3 In short, the replacement building will enhance the setting of its neighbours and the character and appearance conservation area to a significantly greater extent than the existing building.
- 7.1.4 The objection from Planware on behalf of McDonald's Restaurants Ltd notes that the block of disparate buildings currently on the development site will be replaced by one building, and suggests that this may harm the appearance of the conservation area. The proposed building has been carefully designed so that each elevation responds to its context; for example, the elevations of Cannon Street, Abchurch Lane and Nicholas Lane articulated to appear as more than one façade, with the 19th century façade retained to Abchurch Lane;

this reflects the current townscape. The King William Street elevation is read as one façade, to conform to the style of its neighbours. The architectural quality of the current buildings on the development site, aside from that of the retained façade and 10 King William Street, are of little interest or quality, and indeed do not make a positive contribution to the conservation area on Cannon Street.

- 7.1.5 The Twentieth Century Society suggests that a façade retention scheme be utilised in respect of the existing 10 King William Street. Façade retention, whilst it has been used in some more appropriate locations in the City of London, is not conservation best practice. Whilst the 20 Abchurch Lane facade is being retained it is an already retained facade (in the previous redevelopment scheme of the 1980s) which is considered to have a very positive contribution to the conservation area and the setting of the Grade I listed St Mary Abchurch and Abchurch Yard itself. Aside from this point, for the reasons discussed within this document, it is concluded that the existing façade of 10 King William Street (even if it were technically feasible) does not merit retention within the new scheme, and its replacement will better serve both the purpose of the site, the setting of nearby listed buildings, and the surrounding conservation area.

8 Conclusion

- 8.1.1 10 King William Street is a building which was both praised and criticised in the architectural press at the time of its construction. Whilst it is respectful to its designated neighbours, and made use of high quality materials and design details which took their cue from the predominant architectural style of King William Street, it is considered that the building makes a neutral contribution to the Bank Conservation Area, and has elements which jar with those of surrounding buildings, such as the oversized columns to its façade. The façade does not merit retention within the proposed scheme.
- 8.1.2 The current elevations to Abchurch Lane, Cannon Street and Nicholas Lane are of poor quality and make no contribution to the conservation area, except that of 20 Abchurch Lane which will be retained as part of the proposed scheme to enhance the context of St Mary Abchurch and Abchurch Yard.
- 8.1.3 The proposed replacement building will retain the uses of the current buildings and provide passive provision for a new entrance to Bank Station, whilst providing a building of quality which has been carefully considered so that each elevation responds to its context and makes a positive contribution to its surroundings. The proposed King William Street façade in particular has been designed to correspond with the cornice lines of 5 King William Street, and its use of materials better fits the palette of the conservation area in this location. Elsewhere, the facades relate to the townscape of narrower buildings, particularly that of Abchurch Lane, and are a respectful and measured contribution to the conservation area.