



Historic England

Mr Kurt Gagen

Direct Dial: -

City of London Corporation

PO Box 270

Our ref: **W**: L01433583

Guildhall

London

EC2P 2EJ

27 July 2021

Dear Mr Gagen

### **Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2021**

**120 FLEET STREET, LONDON, EC4A 2BE**  
**Application No. 21/00524/LBC**

Thank you for your letter of 14 July 2021 regarding the above application for listed building consent. On the basis of the information available to date, we do not wish to offer any comments. We suggest that this application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance and that you seek the views of your specialist conservation adviser.

We have drafted the necessary letter of authorisation (attached) for your authority to determine the application as you see fit and referred the case to the National Planning Casework Unit (NPCU). You will be able to issue a formal decision once NPCU have returned the letter of authorisation to you, unless the Secretary of State directs the application to be referred to them.

It is not necessary for us to be consulted on this application again, unless there are material changes to the proposals. However, if you would like detailed advice from us, please contact us to explain your request.



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Telephone 020 7973 3700  
[HistoricEngland.org.uk](http://HistoricEngland.org.uk)





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Please note that this response relates to designated heritage assets only. If the proposals meet the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service's published consultation criteria we recommend that you seek their view as specialist archaeological adviser to the local planning authority.

The full GLAAS consultation criteria are on our webpage at the following link:

<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/our-planning-services/greater-london-archaeology-advisory-service/our-advice/>

Yours sincerely

Allison Sharpe

**Allison Sharpe**

Business Officer

E-mail: [Allison.Sharpe@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:Allison.Sharpe@HistoricEngland.org.uk)



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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [PLN - Comments](#)  
**Subject:** OBJECTION to both 21/00524/LBC and 21/00538/FULEIA  
**Date:** 04 August 2021 10:47:35

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THIS IS AN EXTERNAL EMAIL

**Please log the below against each application, and confirm when done. Thank you.**

As an architectural historian, author and lecturer with a special interest in and knowledge of the City, I object to this development. My principal concern is that the façade treatment of the 'Proposed New Building' – described in the application as showing “some reference to” and taking “inspiration” from the Daily Express building – is in fact far too similar to the Daily Express building in materials, form and colour and so will, when combined with the sheer scale of the Proposed New Building, have the effect of diminishing the appearance of the Daily Express building in its urban context and thus harming a Grade II\*-listed heritage asset as a result.

The application specifically accepts that the Daily Express building is currently the “most noticeable [...] presence on this stretch of the street” and “a singular building in this context, of unique design and materiality”. It also correctly remarks that the existing River Court building, constructed in 1998-2000 next to the Daily Express building, “sought to re-express the distinctiveness of [the latter’s] original frontage” by using stone rather than glass and thus “providing a counterpoint” to the Daily Express building.

Despite these admissions, the proposed scheme ignores the accepted principle that new insertions in historic architecture should be distinct visually from the existing fabric and it is apparent from the computer-generated imagery provided that if the application is granted visual confusion will arise between

- the alternating, horizontal layers of clear and very dark opaque glass, thinly framed in metal and curved in plan at the corners, of the Proposed New Building and
- the alternating, horizontal layers of clear and very dark opaque glass, thinly framed in metal and curved in plan at the corners, of the Daily Express building.

It is therefore impossible to understand how the application can claim to “enhance the setting of the listed building”, or allow it to “truly stand alone” and “‘go solo’ rather than remaining a mere appendage to a more substantial neighbour”, since the exact opposite would be the case – the Daily Express building would be not merely an appendage to but actually subsumed within ‘a more substantial neighbour’, namely a vastly over-scaled (more than twice the size of the existing River Court) pastiche of itself.

This approach is justified by stating that this is the only option that permits “a unified and coherent façade treatment” that is “capable of resolving the differing scales and characters of surrounding buildings. This is simply not the case as other material and form choices are available that could achieve this aim without producing a weak copy of the Daily Express building. It is also unclear to me how the Proposed New Building can be claimed to have “its own distinct character” and “its own identity”.

It should be recorded that the River Court scheme was specifically designed to centre and celebrate the Daily Express building by removing a previous weak copy of it, Aitken House, and using stone cladding on the replacement, this last with clear direction from Corporation planners. The current application thus turns the clock back as if the previous twenty years had not happened.

The application also shows a poor understanding of and respect for the Daily Express building overall, notwithstanding the Built Heritage report. The “sensitive addition of a small area of ramped access at the Fleet Street steps to afford inclusive access to the lobby” is proposed, along with a vertical extension of the original staircase, yet no illustration of either appears. Contrary to the stated desire to restore the lobby, a significant portion of it to the south east is to be permanently walled off and used for

retail. That the same report states the building's cladding was "made possible by the use of Vitrolite panels -- a material that resembles glossy stone, but has properties more akin to glass" is highly concerning, since of course Vitrolite IS glass.

In summary, the applicant says "Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting) should require clear and convincing justification." The applicant concludes that "Section 5 of [the Built Heritage report] provides this clear and convincing justification, in our view" but it does not in mine and nor, I hope, in officers' and members' in light of the facts I have outlined.

The application should be rejected.

Chris Rogers



Kurt Gagen  
City of London Corporation  
Guildhall  
Gresham Street  
London, EC2V 7HH

**Sent by email:** [PLNComments@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:PLNComments@cityoflondon.gov.uk)

04 August 2021

Our ref: 98 10 08

Dear Kurt Gagen,

**21/00524/LBC and 21/00538/FULEIA - DAILY EXPRESS BUILDING, FLEET STREET, THE CITY, LONDON**

The Twentieth Century Society has been notified of the above applications for Listed Building Consent and Full Planning Permission for alterations and refurbishment of the Grade II\* listed Daily Express to facilitate its change of use from office to learning and non-residential institutions use, retail, flexible learning and non-residential institutions and commercial use, and for the demolition of the neighbouring River Court Building and erection of a new building comprising two basement levels and ground floor plus 20 upper storeys for retail, commercial, office and service use. The Society was consulted on the scheme at pre-application stage and provided feedback based on the comments of its advisory Casework Committee which met to review the proposals on the 17th May 2021. It appears that the pre-application scheme was not revised in response to our letter and so we repeat here some of the comments we made in May.

**Background**

The Daily Express was built in the early 1930s in a streamlined Art Deco style by (Sir) Owen Williams, with interiors created by Robert Atkinson. It was commissioned by the owner of the Express William Maxwell Aitken (first Baron Beaverbrook) to provide the paper with new offices and printing works. When completed in 1932, the building's east side abutted a 19th-century newspaper office. In the late 1970s, buildings on the site were demolished to allow the Express to be extended to the north and east. Known as 'Aitken House', this extension was designed in an imitation Art Deco style. In 1997-8, a new scheme was carried out by John Robertson Architects (JRA) which saw the demolition of Aitken House and construction of the existing commercial office known as 'River Court'. River Court is attached and linked internally to the Express.

The Express is of 6 storeys with a basement, and its upper 3 floors are set back on its principal elevation (its 6th floor was originally open but was internalised in the 1990s/early 2000s). In the 1990s, its black Vitrolite and clear glass cladding was largely replaced, its interiors refurbished and its extravagant 1930s entrance foyer restored. Surviving internal fixtures include original doors on the upper office levels, the principal stair (with original light fittings), landings and passenger lifts, and entrance lobby with its Eric Aumonier-designed relief sculptures representing 'Britain' and 'Empire'. River Court is restrained and stripped-back in its design and is built from stone to contrast with, and complement, the Express. It is several storeys taller than the Express but its upper storeys respectfully step back from the road elevation.

**The Twentieth Century Society**  
70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ



The Daily Express was Grade II\* listed in 1972 and falls within the Fleet Street Conservation Area. River Court sits just outside this conservation area.

## Policy

The local authority should note paragraphs 199 and 200 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 which relate to designated heritage assets:

*When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be) (paragraph 199)*

*Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification (paragraph 200)*

## Comments

The Twentieth Century Society welcomes the proposals to facilitate the reuse of the Daily Express and has no objections in principle to the redevelopment of the neighbouring River Court Building.

However, the Society is concerned that the proposed design for the new building will harm the setting of the Express. We consider the design to be too overbearing with its stepped elevation projecting out into the street and across the arcade space towards the listed building. The Society believes the existing stone River Court building provides an appropriate counterpoint to the Express stylistically and materially. The proposed Art Deco-inspired design will, the Society believes, lessen the impact of the Express, which stands out in terms of both style and materials as a striking streamlined curtain-walled building within an otherwise quite architecturally conservative area.

The Daily Express Building is designated Grade II\* which puts it within the top 8% of listed buildings. The conservation of the building and its setting should therefore be of the utmost importance. Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 advises the local authority to "have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of architectural or historic interest which it possesses".

In the Society's opinion, the new development will also have a detrimental impact on the nearby Fleet Street Conservation Area. The Fleet Street Conservation Area Strategy states that the Express provides a "powerful visual statement", being so different in character to other buildings in the conservation area. The existing River Court building is noted in the Fleet Street Conservation Area Strategy for its "well-detailed stone-clad street frontage of proportionate scale to its neighbours". The new development will be visible from within the conservation area and we believe it will have a harmful impact on its character and significance.

The City of London's Local Plan (2015) outlines the council's commitment to good design, by "Ensuring that the bulk, height, scale, massing, quality of materials and detailed design of buildings are appropriate to the character of the City and the setting and amenities of surrounding buildings and spaces." and by "Ensuring that development has an appropriate street level presence and roofscape and a positive relationship to neighbouring buildings and spaces." (Core Strategic Policy CS10: Design).

## Summary

While the Twentieth Century Society welcomes the proposals for the Grade II\* Express Building, it believes that the proposed neighbouring development will harm the building's setting and will have a detrimental impact on the nearby Fleet Street Conservation Area. We therefore encourage the local authority to refuse the current application for the new building (ref: 21/00538/FULEIA) and

urge the architects to reduce the proposed building's massing and height and to revise its design to be more sympathetic to its sensitive historic environment.

We hope that these comments are of use to you. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,



**Coco Whittaker**  
Caseworker  
Twentieth Century Society

**Remit:** The Twentieth Century Society was founded in 1979 and is the national amenity society concerned with the protection, appreciation, and study of post-1914 architecture, townscape and design. The Society is acknowledged in national planning guidance as the key organisation concerned with the modern period and is a constituent member of the Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies. Under the procedures set out in *ODPM Circular 09/2005*, all English local planning authorities must inform the Twentieth Century Society when an application for listed building consent involving partial or total demolition is received, and they must notify us of the decisions taken on these applications.





Historic England

Mr Kurt Gagen  
City of London Corporation  
PO Box 270  
Guildhall  
London  
EC2P 2EJ

Direct Dial: -

Our ref: L01433583

27 July 2021

Dear Mr Gagen

## **Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2021**

### **Authorisation to Determine an Application for Listed Building Consent as Seen Fit**

**120 FLEET STREET, LONDON, EC4A 2BE**  
**Application No 21/00524/LBC**

Applicant:	River Court Properties Limited
Grade of building(s):	II*
Proposed works:	Alterations to and refurbishment of the existing Grade II* listed Daily Express Building at 120 Fleet Street, including works to detach the building from the River Court with demolition of part of linking floorplate and structure from basement level 01 to level 06, demolition of roof and installation of new roof with associated roof garden, erection of new north facade, retention of south-east curved corner and part demolition of existing east facade from ground level to level 05, erection of new facade and shopfront, demolition of level 06 landing and extension to existing oval staircase to provide access to new roof with new core on north side incorporating new lift between roof top level and basement level 01, installation of new staircase between rooftop level and basement level 02, demolition of mezzanine at basement level 01, removal of internal partitions and associated works.
Drawing numbers:	Drawings as approved by the Local Planning Authority
Date of application:	16 June 2021
Date of referral by Council:	14 July 2021
Date received by Historic England:	14 July 2021
Date referred to CLG:	27 July 2021



4TH FLOOR, CANNON BRIDGE HOUSE, 25 DOWGATE HILL, LONDON EC4R 2YA

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HistoricEngland.org.uk





Historic England

You are hereby authorised to determine the application for listed building consent referred to above as you think fit.

Yours sincerely

Allison Sharpe

**Allison Sharpe**

Business Officer

E-mail: [Allison.Sharpe@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:Allison.Sharpe@HistoricEngland.org.uk)

NB: This authorisation is not valid unless it has been appropriately endorsed by the Secretary of State.

Officials have considered the information given above on behalf of the Secretary of State, and do not intend to require the application concerned be referred.

Signed

Date 11/10/2021



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