

## ADDRESS

The Grand Hotel, COLMORE ROW, BIRMINGHAM

Parish BIRMINGHAM  
District BIRMINGHAM  
County WEST MIDLANDS

Case UID: 156550

Date First Listed:

Formerly Listed As:

## RECOMMENDATION

Inspector: Mr M Bellamy

Outcome: No, do not issue COI

Recommended Grade: II\*

23-FEB-2004

Advice Comments/Reason for No Previous Listing:

Reason For Decision: I have looked at all the papers on this file and other relevant information and have carefully considered the architectural and historic interest of this case. In my view the criteria for listing are fulfilled and a COI should not be issued.

BACKGROUND: The applicant wrote in his capacity as agent for the owner enclosing a copy of an historical survey of the building together with reports on the external wall, masonry surface and cleaning and durability of the stonework together with an assessment of the potential for listing by Roy Worskett, RIBA. The points raised in Mr Worskett's submission have been answered in the listing description and accompanying advice. The principal reasons given by the owners' agent for lodging an application were:

- 1] The building has been considered and rejected for listing in the past.
- 2] Although the building may have local interest it does not have sufficient "quality and character" to qualify for listing in a national context and is not included on the local list.
- 3] There is no association with well known people or events.
- 4] The building has never been regarded as showing structural innovation, contrary to the views of one of the two separate applicants for spot listing.
- 5] The Conservation Area within which the building sits provides adequate protection.
- 6] The building has failed as a hotel on a number of occasions and this is partially due to the layout and construction.
- 7] The stonework of the hotel is of poor quality, creating escalating maintenance and safety concerns.

## ASSESSMENT:

The building is of listable quality and the application for spot-listing has been considered in tandem with this application for a Certificate of Immunity. The reasons for listing are given in full in that report and are summed up in the assessment: "The Grand Hotel block forms one of the largest C19 buildings in central Birmingham. Within the overall urban context, and most particularly within its immediate neighbourhood, it makes a very positive and well-mannered contribution to the townscape. Placed in close proximity to James Archer's magnificent Church of St Philip, it achieves the difficult task of not dominating its smaller neighbour but still retaining individuality, most particularly by its distinctive skyline. The Barwick Street façade of the block designed in 1894 by Martin and Chamberlain is a fine work by this noted practice and shows an assured and interesting handling of masses. Inside are some especially fine original interiors including the principal staircase and, most notably, the rich and impressive French-style decoration of the Grosvenor

Room, Grosvenor Drawing Room and Crush Room. Elsewhere there is evidence of the Stock Rooms, which were an essential part of the commercial accent of the hotel, and the decoration of the Billiard rooms in the basement as well as the rare survival of the shop interior at the Anatomical Boot Co., 25, Colmore Row.

The application of paint to the outside along Colmore Row and Church Street has had a detrimental effect upon the appearance of the building, as has the removal of the tall, distinctive chimneys and the removal of some decorative stonework [principally immediately above the Colmore Row door to the hotel]. Allowing for the size of the building, however, these are not large alterations and are reversible. Within the national context the building is certainly sufficiently important and intact to qualify for inclusion on the list."

The concerns raised by the applicant are answered as follows:

- 1] Although the building has been surveyed for listing in the past, as part of the 1970 re-survey, knowledge of Victorian building history and types continues to develop and expand. The history of commercial buildings has not been as thoroughly or rapidly explored as other areas such as country houses or churches but it is now understood better and the development of large hotels and their multiple uses is now seen as an important facet of industrial and manufacturing success. This hotel with its Stock Rooms [and, originally with commercial rooms and arbitration suites] together with offices and externally accessed restaurant and placed in close proximity to the Snow Hill Station formed a useful and well-equipped meeting ground for out-of-town businessmen conducting their affairs in the city.
- 2] The building is considered to have sufficient quality and interest to qualify for inclusion on the list. The Colmore Street facade is a well-mannered composition which is well juxtaposed with what is now the cathedral church of St. Philip and the Barwick Street facade by Martin and Chamberlain is a fine piece of work.
- 3] An association with important people or events is not obligatory.
- 4] The structural innovation of the Grosvenor Room was mentioned in the obituary for William Martin in the Birmingham Post of 19 July, 1900 which said "some new peculiarities of construction were adopted in order to secure for the Grosvenor room its wide expansive ceiling without any supporting pillars. This is by far the largest room of its kind in the country ... and it was made secure by the employment of a series of deep girders."
- 5] The act of listing a building does not stop development of the site but does impose greater responsibilities and require an extra degree of vigilance when considering alterations.
- 6] We understand that negotiations between the relevant parties, including the owners of the building, the local planning authority and English Heritage, are ongoing and aimed at achieving a mutually satisfactory solution to these problems.
- 7] Similarly, we understand that consultations are ongoing.

Decision Precip: The building is recommended for inclusion on the list at II\* and the Certificate of Immunity should not be allowed.

#### VISITS

17-FEB-2004 Full inspection

COUNTERSIGNING

First Countersigning Inspector: Ms Porter

Comments: Agreed. The Grand Hotel has been assessed and is being recommended for listing at Grade II\*. The Certificate of Immunity should not be allowed.  
25 March 2004

Second Countersigning Inspector:

Comments:

Proposed List Entry

COLMORE ROW  
The Grand Hotel

GV

II\*

Hotel, offices and shops. Colmore Road range of 1876 by Thomson Plevins, re-arranged internally in 1890-91 by William Martin and John H. Chamberlain with additions to Church Street and Barwick Streets of the 1880s and 1890s and a further range to Barwick Street of 1894 by Martin and Chamberlain. Ashlar and brick with stone dressings and hipped slate roofs with lead dressings. Principally French C17 and C18, a style first used on a large hotel at the Great Western Hotel Paddington by P.C.Hardwick in 1851 and later by J.T.Knowles Snr. & Jnr. at the Grosvenor Hotel, Victoria. Four to six storeys with attics, lower ground floor and basements.

EXTERIOR

The Colmore Row front is of 22 bays and symmetrical, divided into 5 distinct sections having pavilions of 5 bays with Mansard roofs at the corners and a similar, central pavilion of 4 bays. Pilasters are used across the front to

group the fenestration and as a decorative motif, being rusticated, panelled or divided. Windows are horned sashes bearing plate glass panes. At ground floor level are shop fronts, all of which have been altered from their original appearance. The left hand end pavilion has the main hotel porch doorway at centre, which has paired columns and plinths of red granite with Corinthian capitals and single pilaster responds at either side of the door. This appears to have been part of the re-modelling of c.1890. To the right hand end pavilion and to right of centre are semi-glazed doors both of which have surrounds with pediments. These give access to staircases which lead up to offices. The first floor windows are all arched with bands of floral decoration at the level of the springing. The second floor windows have segmental heads and aedicular surrounds with brackets supporting segmental pediments and the third floor windows have a cresting of undercut decoration above the windows. At fourth floor level the windows all have arched heads and the ranges between the pavilions are here recessed with a shallow decorative balustrade. To the fifth floor the pavilions have panels above and to the sides of the windows. Elsewhere are aedicular surrounds set in Mansard roofs. The steep roofs of the 3 pavillions terminate in rectangular platforms with a decorative iron balustrade. Tall chimneys, placed so as to counteract the symmetry, have been truncated. The shop front to No. 25, Colmore Row dates from the 1930s.

The Church Street façade has 7 bays at right which date from Plevins' work with possible later alterations by Martin and Chamberlain c.1891.

Decoratively they are similar to the Colmore row front. To the left are 6 bays of 4 storeys, probably built in the 1880s to which 3 further storeys were added in the 1890s. The ground slopes down from Colmore Row, gradually exposing the lower ground floor. The ashlar walling to both Church Street and Colmore Row has been painted since the 1970s.

The Barwick Street front consists of 3 ranges, all of brick with ashlar dressings. That at right is of 5 bays and a continuation of the Church Street block of the 1880s and 90s, already referred to above. Here it has arched openings to the lower ground and first floors and aedicular surrounds to the ground floor. The left block is of 4 bays and 4 floors with an attic. Between these is the extension by Martin and Chamberlain which houses the entrance to the Stock Rooms at Lower Ground level. Above is the 2-storey ballroom with 6 large, arched windows. The drawing room windows to right of this and the bedroom windows above it are all canted bays which project from the wall to form mutli-storeyed oriels. The brick piers between the windows are also angled and the windows appear to project from, but also to be set into, the thickness of the walls. Each bay is capped by a gablet and there are hipped dormers above. The opposite side of this range, which faces onto the narrow courtyard at the centre of the site, is similar save that it is of yellow brick.

## INTERIOR

The staircase halls at ground and first floor levels each have 2 paired marble columns with granite bases. That at first floor level has pilaster responds, round arches and decorative plaster to the ceilings and there are floral motifs to the cast iron balustrade. Two first floor rooms to the corner of Colmore Row and Church Street, with views towards the cathedral, appear to retain their original plan form. The billiard rooms in the basement have had a suspended ceiling inserted but show evidence of the original ceiling decoration with encased beams and gilded leaves to the cornices. The range in Barwick Street by Martin and Chamberlain contains the Grosvenor Room which has richly elaborate plasterwork. Six bays by two bays, each bay is marked by a round arch, those to the road front having windows and those opposite forming a colonnade into which a balcony with iron balustrade was inserted in the 1930s. The bays are divided by Corinthian pilasters which support brackets and beams. There is elaborate stucco work to the spandrels where cherubs support the halves of a scrolled pediment upon which figures in high relief recline. The ceiling is divided into panels with more high relief stucco to the surrounds, some of it undercut to allow for ventilation as per the architects' instructions. Martin and Chamberlain appear, from surviving drawings, to have left a shell to be completed by an unidentified decorator although the dado panelling of Ashburton and Ogwell marbles is indicated. The Crush Room is similarly decorated with marble panelling and stucco. The Grosvenor drawing room has boiseries, the panels of which originally held amber silk. Rich carving to the doors and stucco to the ceiling and cornice with very elaborate door furniture of white metal. Fireplace with marble slips, metal and tiled insert and overmantel.

The Anatomical Boot Co Ltd at 25 Colmore Row has an early C20 shop interior of c.1909 when the company moved to the premises. Iron columns which support the upper building can be seen in the side walls, presumably from the Plevins building of 1875. The ceiling is panelled and papered with Lincrusta and there is a frieze with stylised paterae and trygliphs, also of Lincrusta, running around the front of the shop and across a wooden screen which divides the space. This has 3 cusped arches supported on columns and lattice work to the upper body with a miniature balustrade and finials.

**HISTORY:** The Second Birmingham Improvement Act of 1861 cleared the way for the redevelopment of Colmore Row. The Great Western Railway had built Snow Hill Station in 1853, close by, and this was rebuilt in 1870. Leases on the Georgian properties in Colmore Row began to fall in by the 1860s and demolition started in 1870. A new road, Barwick Street, behind Colmore Row, was constructed in the 1870s with frontages which were mostly of brick and stone.

Several separate plots of land were acquired to create the site of the current hotel which takes up the greater part of the block bounded by Colmore Row, Barwick Street, Church Street and Livery Street. Isaac Horton and Thomson Plevins, who was to become his architect, were both active in acquiring land and developing it in line with the improvements in the 1861 Act. The Colmore Row frontage was theirs by 1875, although the right hand portion came fully into their hands a little later. Thomson Plevins was architect and he issued three separate contracts for the building of the Colmore Row front and work started with the pavilion at the corner with Church Street. Next it extended to the right as far as the central pavilion. Lastly the balancing range and corner pavilion completed the symmetrical composition.

The hotel opened in 1879 and a contemporary advertisement referred to "Commercial rooms, stock rooms and every convenience for commercial men... large rooms for dinners, weddings, breakfasts, meetings, arbitrations etc." There were 100 bedrooms, with 60 more unfinished at the time of opening, a restaurant with separate entrance in Church Street and 2 coffee rooms. The inclusion of Stock Rooms, where businessmen could demonstrate their products to each other, shows that the hotel was directed towards this market. Placed near to Snow Hill Station, the hotel aimed to attract commercial visitors from out of town. In the early 1880s the corner site on Church Street and Barwick Street was added to the hotel with a building of four storeys plus basement which was extended in 1894 by another 3 storeys. Also in the 1880s another large plot of land facing on to Barwick Street and Livery Street and turning the corner to connect with the Colmore Row facade was developed with a 5 storey block, called Great Western Buildings, of which a 4-bay section now survives on Barwick Street and is part of the hotel.

In 1890, before the end of the lease the hotel appears to have failed and the building was handed back to the landlords. Hortons' Estates decided to re-order the interior of the Grand and newspaper reports spoke of £40,000 spent by the prominent Birmingham architects, Martin and Chamberlain. The Birmingham Daily Post recorded the hotel as "entirely reconstructed, decorated and furnished" and the Midland Counties Herald wrote that "although the external walls are retained, there is practically a new building on the old site, and all that remains of the old building is the facade on Colmore Row". The contractors were Barnsley and Son of Ryland Street North and the building was furnished and decorated by Norton and Co. of Corporation St. There was electric lighting to the public rooms and gas in the bedrooms. As well as the Stock Rooms and an arbitration suite there was a series of reception rooms called the Windsor Suite and a banqueting and ballroom. The grandest of all the reception rooms was built in 1894 when Martin and Chamberlain were asked to fill the remaining gap along the Barwick side of the site. They built a large new ballroom called the

Grosvenor Room, together with a Drawing Room, arched internal colonnade and crush hall. The architects' drawings show that the ballroom was designed as a shell and the elaborate decoration was entrusted to decorators [perhaps Norton and Co. once more]. Five upper floors contained 75 new bedrooms. Other alterations at this time included 2 additional billiard rooms in the hotel basement.

In the 1970s the architects Harper and Sperring undertook a modernisation of the interior and the exterior stone work on the Colmore Row and Church Street fronts was painted with a cement wash.

The inclusion of rooms designed to appeal to businessmen was paralleled at the City Terminus Hotel, Cannon Street, London and the Caledonian Hotel, Glasgow. Amongst listed hotels in London, the Grosvenor, Buckingham Palace Road, the Russell, Russell Square are comparable in date and in their provision of grand public spaces, as is the former Midland Grand Hotel, Euston Road [grade I] and the Midland Hotel, Peter Street, Manchester [grade II\*].

The Grand Hotel block forms one of the largest C19 buildings in central Birmingham. Within the overall urban context, and most particularly within its immediate neighbourhood, it makes a very positive and well-mannered contribution to the townscape. Placed in close proximity to James Archer's magnificent Church of St Philip [now the Cathedral], it achieves the difficult task of not dominating its smaller neighbour but still retaining individuality, most particularly by its distinctive skyline. The Barwick Street façade of the block designed in 1894 by Martin and Chamberlain is a fine work by this noted practice and shows an assured and interesting handling of masses. Inside are some especially fine original interiors including the principal staircase and, most notably, the rich and impressive French style decoration of the Grosvenor Room, Grosvenor Drawing Room and Crush Room. Elsewhere there is evidence of the Stock Rooms, which were an essential part of the commercial accent of the hotel, as well as the rare survival of the shop interior at the Anatomical Boot Co., 25 Colmore Row. The special qualities of this building merit its listing at II\*.

The building forms a group with the Cathedral Church of St Philip, St Philip's Churchyard; 55, 61-67 and 71-73 Colmore Row and 4, Temple Row West [q.v.].