

NEWS

## Approval for Parry's hotel plans spells end for Brutalist gem

11 AUGUST, 2017 • BY COLIN MARRS



COMMENT

Westminster Council has approved the demolition of an iconic Brutalist car park and its replacement with a luxury hotel designed by Eric Parry Architects

The authority's planning applications committee this week voted in favour of the plans for a 10-storey, 206-bedroom hotel with publicly accessible restaurant just off Oxford Street in central London.

It will stand on the site of The Welbeck Street multi-storey car park, built between 1968 and 1970 for department store Debenhams and designed by Michael Blomfield and Partners.

A report by planning officers said: 'The design of the replacement building is modern, using coloured ceramic cladding in a banded pattern which is considered a bold, eye-catching design of high quality and it is considered acceptable in this location.'

In 2013, the Design Museum included the car park, with its façade of prefabricated concrete diamonds, in an exhibition celebrating lesser-known architecture in London.

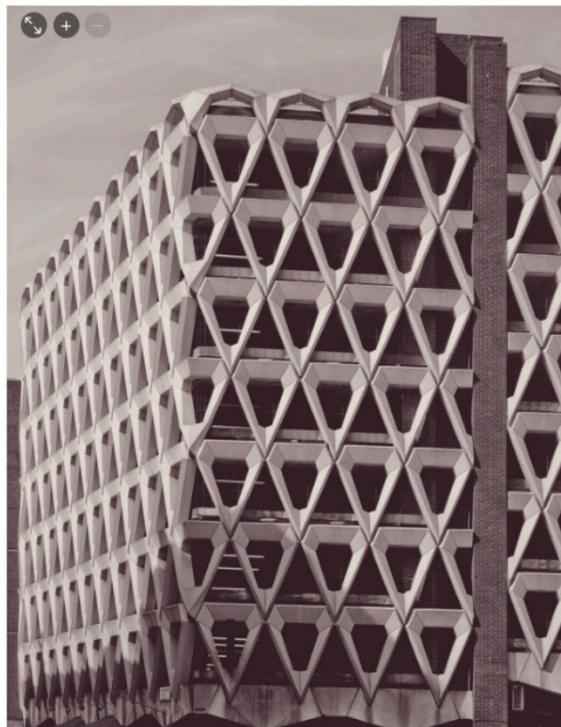
Nominated for the show by Sam Jacob, the structure was ranked alongside the likes of Stockwell Bus Garage and the Crystal Palace Subway.

However, in 2015 the building was assessed and rejected for listing by English Heritage (now Historic England).

Parry's application was opposed by nearby members club the Oriental Club, which complained about the potential loss of light to residential bedrooms in its property opposite the development site.

In a submission to the council, it said: 'Despite the efforts of the club and the owner/developer's representatives (Four Communications) there has been an evasiveness and arrogance surrounding the owners/developers communications – contrary to what was originally indicated by the owner/developer during a face-to-face meeting.'

Eric Parry Architects has been contacted for comment.



# West End car park to be replaced by Eric Parry-designed hotel

10 August 2017 | By Jim Dunton



COMMENT



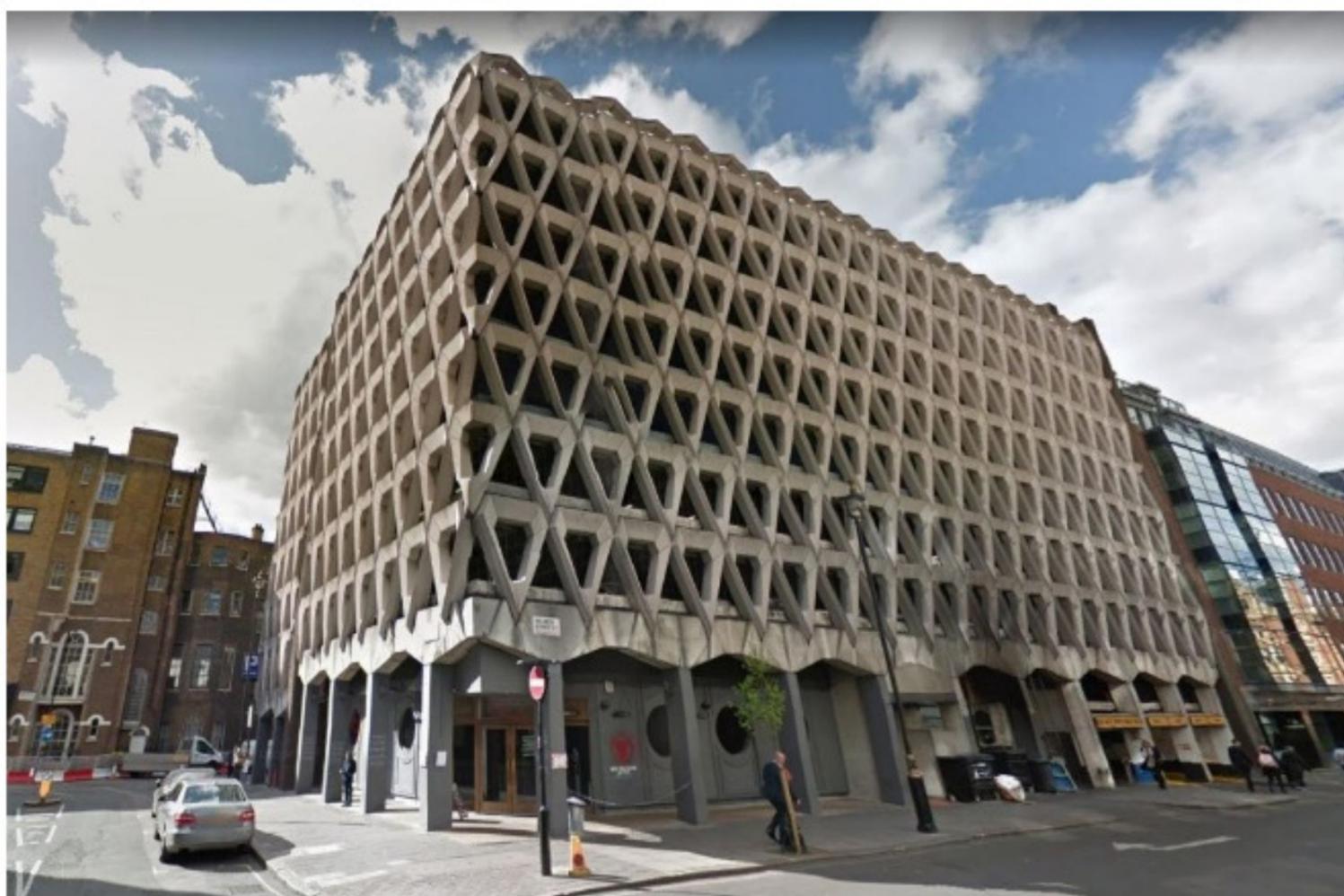
SAVE

Westminster City council has approved plans to demolish brutalist 1970s landmark

A brutalist car park in a prime part of London's West End is to be demolished to make way for an Eric Parry Architects-designed hotel.

Westminster City council this week cleared Parry's 10-storey structure, which will feature ceramic cladding in a banded pattern, for the site of Welbeck Street Car Park, just north of Oxford Street.

The car park, designed by Michael Blampied and Partners and completed in the early 1970s, has a distinctive geometric motif, placing it at the "lighter" end of the Brutalist spectrum.



Welbeck Street Car Park, designed by Michael Blampied and Partners

It was denied listed status earlier this year by the Department for Culture Media and Sport on the advice of Historic England.

The government heritage adviser said that while the building "stands out nationally as an exemplar of 1960s car parks", it did not compare well with "more striking and slightly earlier commercial buildings in the Pop Art movement".

Parry's replacement scheme will deliver a new 206-room structure for developer Shiva Hotels featuring a ground-floor café, a bar and restaurant, a publicly-accessible spa higher in the building, and a roof terrace.

**ERIC PARRY ARCHITECTS | DESIGN HOTEL**

Publication: Building.co.uk

Date: 10 August 2017

URL: <http://www.building.co.uk/news/west-end-car-park-to-be-replaced-by-eric-parry-designed-hotel/5089160.article>

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View of Eric Parry's proposals for the Marylebone Lane Hotel

The design and access statement supporting the proposals said the architect had examined the potential of reusing parts of the existing structure for the hotel development.

However it said that at 2.1m the structural height of its floors was very low, prohibiting the reuse of the existing building's frame, while reuse of its existing façade would entail "potentially costly re-engineering with a considerable loss of floor area".

The statement added that raising the existing building's façade so that its pre-cast diamond-shaped apertures matched with the new hotel's proposed floor levels had been considered, but differing dimensions between the car park levels and modern hotel standards meant "no suitable solution was found".

Recommending the Parry proposals for approval, Westminster planning officers said the scheme was a high-quality building that would contribute positively to, and preserve and enhance, the character and appearance of the local area.

This is a bold, eye-catching design, of high quality and it is considered acceptable in this location," they said.

Although the 0.12 hectare development site is on the edge of the Harley Street Conservation Area and the Stratford Place Conservation Area, it does not sit inside either.

Planning officers said the scheme would not harm nearby heritage assets, which include the Oriental Club and St Peter's Church, both of which are grade I-listed.

Welbeck Street Car Park was originally built for department store chain Debenhams, whose flagship Oxford Street branch is immediately south of the structure, and whose UK head office is immediately east.

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