

14 August 2023

London Borough of Camden
Development Management Team
5 Pancras Square
London
N1C 4AG

FAO Elaine Quigley and Catherine Bond

Dear Officers

Applications for listed building consent | British Museum Window repair and reinforcement works at 9 Montague Street

Introduction

On behalf of the Trustees of the British Museum, we enclose an application for listed building consent to repair and reinforce a bow window at the rear of 9 Montague Street, London, WC1B 3BP.

The BM has identified water ingress around the bow window at 9 Montague Street which is one of the perimeter properties owned by the museum. As a result of the water ingress, the condition of the window deteriorated and it has now collapsed and requires reinforcement to urgently reinstate it and to provide additional support.

The proposed description of development is:

"Reinforcement and repair works to the rear bow window at 9 Montague Street".

The proposals were discussed with LBC officers at the quarterly meeting on the 18th May 2023. It was confirmed with LBC officers that the proposal works require listed building consent.

Submission content

This application has been submitted via the planning portal (ref: PP-12386844). The following forms the submission and supporting documents:

- Application and CIL form;
- Location Plan at scale 1:1250 and Block Plan at scale 1:500, prepared by Dannatt, Johnson Architects;
- Existing and proposed plans prepared by Dannatt, Johnson Architects;
- Existing and proposed elevations prepared by Dannatt, Johnson Architects;
- Existing and proposed sections prepared by Dannatt, Johnson Architects;
- Design and Access Statement, prepared by Dannatt, Johnson Architects;
- Heritage Statement, prepared by Dannatt, Johnson Architects;
- Structural Statement and methodology prepared by Alan Baxter.

There is no fee for an application for listed building consent.

The Site

British Museum Estate | The British Museum is one of the UK's most popular visitor attractions. BM was founded in 1753, the first national public museum in the world, and has been open to the public since 1759. With approximately eight million objects in the collection, it is arguably the world's greatest display of human history, culture and art. Both permanent collections and special exhibitions are presented within displays for the public. The BM's Bloomsbury estate is situated on the north side of Great Russell Street

within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. It is bounded by Montague Place, Montague Street, Bloomsbury Street and Great Russell Street. The estate houses a number of important listed buildings, including the Grade I listed Quadrangle Building, the King Edward VII Galleries north of the site and the Grade II* railings at the front. The original elements of BM date back to 1755- 1822 when Montague House was purchased to house the new British Museum collection. There was a need to expand BM as the collection grew bigger. Robert Smirke was the designer of a masterplan which dates from 1823-47. His plans consisted of four wings with an impressive iconic colonnade along the building's south elevation. This building consists of two principle storeys, adhering to the Greek Revival style, which also includes the columns and pediment at the South entrance.

9 Montague Street | The building is one of the BM perimeter properties, located around the main Bloomsbury Estate. It has 4-storey, plus basement, it is a Grade II listed building, designed by James Burton. It is one of eleven terrace houses along Montague Street. The properties date from circa 1803-06. The full listing entry can be found in the appendix which highlights no.8-10 with attached fluted Greek Doric Columns carrying cornice-heads.

Surrounding uses and designations | These include a range of commercial office, hotel, residential and education uses. The building is located in the Midtown BID district (Holborn, Bloomsbury, St Giles), an Archaeological Priority Area, the Background Strategy View (Blackheath), and the Central Activity Zone (CAZ). The building is located within an area of excellent transport accessibility with a PTAL rating of 6b. It is close to Russell Square, Holborn, Tottenham Court Road and Goodge Street tube stations, several bus routes operate along Southampton Row and Bloomsbury Street. There are cycle networks in close proximity with secure bike stands. There is a Santander bike hire stand towards the junction between Great Russell Street and Montague Street.

Conservation Plan & heritage significance | The BM's Conservation Plan was originally adopted in 1999 and later revised by Purcell Architects in 2007/8. The BM has recently consulted LBC and Historic England on the latest revision of the CMP (2019). The Conservation Plan contains a detailed appraisal of the significance of the BM as a whole and highlights that it represents the high point of neo-classical Museum style in the UK. However, 9 Montague Street is not included in the CMP.

The Heritage Statement for this application, prepared by Dannatt, Johnson Architects, identifies the historic interest of the bow window to which this application relates. The timber joist and bow window are original fabric, however, the fabric has deteriorated and collapsed caused by water ingress which is affecting the stability of the building.

The Bloomsbury Conservation Area as a whole derives its special interest from its surviving early street pattern, which is laid out in a rectilinear pattern with straight streets leading to open squares, which are often landscaped. The dominant architectural form is the townhouse, with some earlier 17th and 18th century examples surviving alongside later 19th century properties, though a large proportion have been adapted during the 20th century for office or other uses.

The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal states that "the British Museum is a cultural institution of international importance, occupying a major ensemble of outstanding Grade I listed buildings which make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area as a whole". It recognises that large portions of the BM cannot be seen from the public realm due to the 'backland nature of much of the site'.

Planning History

There is a very detailed planning history relating to the British Museum and the perimeter properties as a whole. Of most relevance to this current application is the planning and listed building consent (2015/3203/P and 2015/4344/L) in 2015 for the refurbishment of 8-11 Montague Street and 39 Russell Square.

Pre-application discussion

The proposed works were presented to officers at the LBC and HE Quarterly Estates meeting on the 18th May 2023. It was explained that a steel beam will be introduced to reinforce the structure. Officers noted that the inclusion of steel structural supports would need to be justified in the application. The team noted this and would interrogate the proposal further to confirm the approach.

Proposal

Following further interrogation of the proposal including the use of timber instead of steel, it was concluded that the use of timber is not appropriate and the use of steel will help with the long term conservation of the Grade II listed building. The Museum propose the following:

- Install new support steels and bed on new padstone.
- Window will be restored and finishes will be renewed locally to match with the existing.
- Using as much existing brickwork as possible, the brick bay will be reinstated.
- Apply lime render to the exterior and masonry paint

All works will be done on a like for like basis. The works are described in detail in the Design and Access Statement.

Planning policy context

The policies within The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) (including the NPPG); and the Development Plan form a material consideration in the determination of this application. The Development Plan is formed of GLA's London Plan 2021 and the Camden Local Plan adopted in July 2017. These documents are supported by Camden's Planning Guidance Note on Design; and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal 2011.

The LBC planning policies most relevant to the consideration of the works presented as part of this application include D1 (Design), and D2 (Heritage). Policy D2, reflects the aims of the NPPF: developments that involve the loss or substantial harm to a designated heritage asset will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss. Developments that propose less than substantial harm are required to be convincingly outweighed by the public benefits of the proposed works. Development should also preserve or enhance the historic environment and heritage assets. LBC will resist development that would cause harm to significance of a listed building through an effect on its setting.

London Plan Policy HC1 (heritage conservation and growth) requires development proposals affecting heritage assets, and their settings, to conserve their significance by being sympathetic to the assets' significance and appreciation within their surroundings. The cumulative impacts of incremental change from development on heritage assets and their settings should also be actively managed. Development proposals should avoid harm and identify enhancement opportunities by integrating heritage considerations early on in the design process.

Other relevant guidance is Historic England's Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (April 2008). Paragraph 117 of the documents confirms that repair necessary to sustain the heritage values of a significant place is normally desirable if:

- a) there is sufficient information comprehensively to understand the impacts of the proposals on the significance of the place; and
- b) the long term consequences of the proposals can, from experience, be demonstrated to be benign, or the proposals are designed not to prejudice alternative solutions in the future; and
- c) the proposals are designed to avoid or minimise harm, if actions necessary to sustain particular heritage values tend to conflict.

Policy Assessment

The proposed works are essential and urgent repairs to the bow window which has collapsed. A long term solution is required to prevent further deterioration to interiors as a result of water ingress from the collapsed window. It is proposed to repair and reinstate the bow window, as outlined in the DAS and structural statement, to provide structural stability for the building and prevent further water ingress. The team has interrogated alternative structural solutions for the repair of the window, including the use of timber, however this was not considered viable in this instance. The introduction of steel, while not a traditional building material, will provide structural stability in the long term and preserve the Listed building.

In accordance with NPPF paragraph 194, the significance of the building affected has been described as part of the application. In accordance with paragraph 199 of the NPPF great weight has been given to the assets conservation. Where a development proposal leads to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use (paragraph 202). The works proposed is essential to protect and restore the historic fabric. The proposed works will not be visible as the steel reinforcement will be hidden within the void and the window will be restored to match existing. The proposals will not result in any visual difference. Therefore there will not be any impact on the appearance of the building nor the conservation area.

The Heritage Statement identifies that while the new steel beam will cause moderate harm to the overall building, through the loss of the original decayed timber beam, they will provide long term structural integrity this building requires, which will sustain their contribution to the significance of the building. The works are necessary to prevent further damage to the fabric of the building and the restoration of the window will improve the appearance and usability of the space. It concludes that the works will have a neutral impact. However, the proposals act to sustain the significance of the building and in turn the overall Museum, and thus afford sufficient public benefits to outweigh the 'less than substantial' harm that will be caused because of the works (para 202). The proposals will also accord with LBC Policy D1 whereby they will preserve and enhance the historic environment and comprise high quality details and materials and LBC Policy D2 whereby the less than substantial harm is convincingly outweighed by the public benefits that will result from the installation of steel beams.

Summary

The proposed works include the repair and reinforcement of the rear bow window at 9 Montague Street. The proposal will install a steel beam structure and restore the bow window on a like for like basis. These works are part of the Museum's site wide strategy to minimise deterioration and water ingress. The proposed works will improve the upkeep and maintenance of the perimeter property and help the museum overall, which will contribute to the overall visitors' experience and in turn will help BM maintain its international reputation and meet with the objectives of the local and national policies. The proposals may cause a small level of harm to the significance of the building but this is outweighed by the public benefits of providing structural stability to the building and avoiding further deterioration internally.

In accordance with the agreed terms of the BM Planning Performance Agreement (clause 9.3(h)) we look forward to confirmation of validation of the application within 3 working days of submission, or notification within the same timeframe to confirm if additional information is required.

If you have any questions, please contact Victoria@theplanninglab.com or melanie@theplanninglab.com, or on 0207 257 9363.

Yours faithfully

The Planning Lab

Appendix – Listing entry

List Entry Number: 1322130

List Entry Name: NUMBERS 1-11 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS INCLUDING WHITE HALL HOTEL (NUMBERS 2-5) AND MONTAGUE HOUSE (NUMBERS 8-11)

Terrace of 11 houses. c1803-06 by James Burton. Built by WE Allen. Yellow stock brick with stucco ground floors, mostly rusticated. No.11 with slate mansard roof and dormers. 4 storeys and basements, No.11 with attic. 3 windows each except Nos 1 and 2 with 4 windows each. Nos 1 and 2 form a symmetrical pair with projecting end window bays. No.11 slightly recessed. Round-arched doorways with reeded doorframes or sidelights, mostly 2-leaf doors; Nos 8-10 with attached fluted Greek Doric columns carrying cornice-heads. Nos 6 & 7 with radial patterned fanlights. Gauged brick flat arches to recessed sash windows, most with original glazing bars. 1st floor with cast-iron balconies. Nos 1 & 2, stucco cornice at 3rd floor level; the remainder with 3rd floor sill band. Parapets.

INTERIORS: not inspected.

SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings with urn finials to areas, No.1 flanked by cast-iron lamp-holders.