

12 September 2023

Design and Access Statement

Highgate Branch Library, Chester Road, London N19 5DH - Decarbonisation and Preservation Project

1. INTRODUCTION

This Design and Access Statement outlines the proposed project for the Highgate Branch Library which comprises the decarbonisation and essential maintenance to preserve the historic fabric. It is structured under the following, four headings:

- Response to the Context
- Use
- Amount
- Layout Access and Appearance

2. RESPONSE TO CONTEXT

2.1 The Existing Building

- 2.1.1 The building was designed to be a Public Library and its use has not changed since it was erected in 1906. Named, The Highgate Branch Library, it is an embodiment of William Nisbet Blair's architectural vision, who served as the St Pancras Borough Engineer. This building stands as a single-storey structure, fashioned from red brick and intricate terracotta embellishments. Its design reflects symmetry, encompassing three bays. The central bay features a distyle-in-antis arcaded stone loggia, adorned with Corinthian capitals and terracotta keystones. Brick pilasters on either side of the loggia support a dentil pediment. At the centre of this pediment, a Diocletian window is framed by a terracotta architrave and keystone. The adjacent bays replicate this layout, with brick arcading featuring terracotta keystones, and each bay accommodating three windows. Above the arcading, terracotta balustrades are flanked by brick dies.
- 2.1.2 It was the first public library in St Pancras and is now a Grade II listed building. A single storey extension was added to the rear (south end) of the library in 1936 and this was used as a Children's Library. Nowadays it is used as a community space, housing fitness classes, yoga classes and the like.
- 2.1.3 The interior is simple. The central isle is barrel vaulted and flanking bays are flat; both painted lath and plaster. Internal walls to the main library have feature round-arched recesses in painted plaster. Covering a total gross internal floor area (GIFA) of 494m² it is arranged over two floors with a Basement Plant Room, Ground Floor and Attic space over the central bay which has vaulted ceilings.
- 2.1.4 The external walls are solid red brick with terracotta dressings, windows are timber painted, the flat roofs are all mineral felt and the pitched roof to the central isle is natural slate. There are carved Buff and Portland stone dressings and balustrades, columns and loggia to the front elevation. Internally, walls and ceilings are painted plaster. Roof windows are uPVC with single polycarbonate sheeting.

2.2 Proposed works

2.2.1 The project is the Decarbonisation of Highgate Library. As part of The London Borough of Camden's (LBC), Carbon Reduction Programme, Highgate Library has been identified as a suitable building with a number of opportunities to upgrade the life expired heating and ventilation system and improve the thermal properties to the main elements of the building, including the walls, roof and windows. As there will be a requirement to close the library whilst the decarbonisation works are undertaken, LBC will take this opportunity to undertake essential maintenance works at the same time to minimise disruption and to ensure the preservation of the historic fabric.

2.2.2 The decarbonisation works are being funded by the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) which is funded by The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and delivered by Salix Finance Ltd who are a non-departmental public body, owned wholly by government and is funded by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the Department of Education, the Welsh and Scottish Government. The scheme was made available for capital energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation projects within public sector non-domestic buildings, including central government departments and non-departmental public bodies in England only, to deliver the following objectives:

- Deliver stimulus to the energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation sectors, supporting jobs.
- Deliver significant carbon savings within the public sector.

2.2.3 The driver to the proposed works is Camden Council's initiative to reduce the carbon footprint of their building stock in line with the UK's target to become net zero by 2050. Highgate Library is a historic building with a life expired gas fire heating system and inoperable natural ventilation system along with inefficient walls, single glazed windows and roof coverings. The existing systems and as-built construction present many opportunities to upgrade thermal performance, increase the efficiency of the heating and ventilation system and reduce the carbon footprint. In addition to the carbon reduction works, LBC will take the opportunity to undertake essential maintenance works to the property.

2.2.4 All proposals have been developed on the basis of the following design parameters and conservation principles:

- a) Mitigate the loss of historic fabric wherever possible.
- b) Allow only minimal and sympathetic adaptation / intervention in order to improve the thermal efficiency and decarbonise the building.

3. USE

3.1 The building was originally designed as a Public Library in 1906 and has not changed use since. The proposed works do not include any change of use but include the decarbonisation and essential maintenance works to preserve the historic fabric.

4. AMOUNT

4.1 The following **carbon reduction works** are proposed:

- a) Improvements to the flat roof insulation and replacement pitched roof coverings.
- b) Solar PV Panels to the flat roof areas and internal battery storage.
- c) Replacement uPVC roof lights and roof lanterns with aluminium framed, double glazed.
- d) Installation of secondary double glazing to existing single glazed arched timber windows.
- e) Replacement timber windows to the main roof dormers and rear courtyard.
- f) Improvements to the thermal performance of the external walls including the addition of lime plaster finished Woodfibre Insulation Board to the internal feature arches.
- g) Replacement boilers, distribution pipework and emitters and installation of Air Source Heat pumps. Installation of a forced air ventilation system
- h) Alterations to the entrance doors and draught lobby configuration that is inefficient.

4.2 The following **maintenance works** are proposed:

- a) Replacement slate roof tile covering with Welsh Slate alternative including the replacement uPVC downpipes for cast iron.
- b) Lead cappings to the parapet wall to Croftdown Road to create sufficient overhang and prevent damage to external wall at high level on Croftdown Road.
- c) Sympathetic in-situ repair to two individual terracotta stonework balustrades to the main Chester Road façade.
- d) Removal of cementitious mortar and repointing external walls in lime mortar.
- e) Isolated lath and plaster ceilings repairs.

5. LAYOUT ACCESS AND APPEARANCE

5.1 The project will address several aspects of layout, access, and appearance:

- a) Layout: The library's internal layout will remain largely unchanged. However, alterations to entrance draught lobby configuration will improve functionality and energy efficiency.
- b) Access: The existing accessibility ramp constructed of brick and stone will be retained to ensure access for all visitors, in line with previous planning approval (Ref:8501572; 27 November 1985).
- c) Appearance: The library's distinctive red brick and terracotta façade along with natural slate pitched roof will be preserved. Any necessary repairs to stonework and repointing will be carried out sympathetically, ensuring the building's appearance remains consistent with its historical character.

In conclusion, this Design and Access Statement underscores Camden Council's commitment to preserving the historical and architectural significance of the Highgate Branch Library while enhancing its functionality and energy efficiency for the benefit of the community.