

18 January 2024

London Borough of Camden
Development Management Team
5 Pancras Square
London
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FAO Elaine Quigley and Catherine Bond

Dear Officers

Applications for planning and listed building consent | British Museum Roof works at 89 Great Russell Street

Introduction

On behalf of the Trustees of the British Museum (BM), we enclose an application for planning and listed building consent to repair and reinforce the roof at 89 Great Russell Street, London, WC1B 3DG.

89 Great Russell Street is one of the perimeter properties owned by the museum. The BM has identified water ingress entering the roof space and main living area at third floor via several areas, including the party walls, through loose and missing/badly fitting slates and failed lead flashings. As a result of the water ingress, the condition of the building deteriorated and requires strengthening to support the existing roof structure and prevent further water ingress.

The proposed description of development is:

"Upgrade works to the roof structure at 89 Great Russell Street".

Submission content

This application has been submitted via the planning portal (ref: PP-12387231). 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;
- Roof investigation report by CBP (for information only).

The relevant planning application fee of £357 has also been submitted. 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.

89 Great Russell Street | The building is one of the BM perimeter properties, located around the main Bloomsbury Estate. It has 3-storeys, plus basement and attic. It is a Grade II listed building. It is one of three terrace houses on Great Russell Street. No. 89 is dated earlier C19, with darkened brick and rusticated stucco ground floor, slate mansard roofs with dormers. The full listing entry can be found in the appendix. The existing condition of the building is also described in the Design and Access Statement. The end of terrace property is located on the southwest corner of the British Musuem estate. The Museum's South West Gate for deliveries is situated adjacent to the property. There is a blind elevation with two external lights mounted to the gable. A security booth sits adjacent to this gable wall to securely manage this access to the Musuem.

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, 89 Great Russell Street is not included in the CMP.

The Heritage Statement for this application, prepared by Dannatt, Johnson Architects, identifies the historic interest of to 89 Great Russell Street which this application relates. 89 Great Russell Street has group value as part of the three terraces featuring a similar typology and architectural elements and characteristics across all three facades.

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. There is limited planning history at 89 Great Russell Street. Of most relevance to this site, there has been multiple applications related to the Lime tree in the garden.

Pre-application discussion

The like for like replacement of roof slates was agreed with LBC and HE officer in October 2022. The scope had moved on to include the full replacement and other roof works which were presented to officers at the LBC and HE Quarterly Estates meeting on the 18th May 2023. It was confirmed with LBC officers that the proposal works require listed building consent.

Proposal

The works are described in detail in the Design and Access Statement but in summary, the Museum propose the following:

- Install temporary scaffolding to enclose the works and allow working space, (scaffolding ties into mortar) – front and back only not gable end
- New slate roof and breathable underlay to the front elevation.
- Install new steel purlins to front and back roof slopes.
- Install new front rafters/hangars if required to strengthen existing.
- Repair the rear elevation slates and replace as required using 'tingles'.

- Repair/new lead flashings to ridge, and party walls.
- Carefully take down partial front, rear and side parapets and rebuild including structural strengthening, re-render to match existing.
- Include ventilated eaves and ridge.
- Install new insulation in roof void at ceiling level.
- Replacement of existing rooflight with new Velux conservation rooflight of similar size.
- Insulation of roof void

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 roof to prevent further water ingress and damage at 89 Great Russell Street. A long term solution is required to prevent further deterioration to the exteriors and interiors as a result of water ingress from failed slates and deteriorated fabric. It is proposed to refurbish and reinforce the roof, as outlined in the DAS, to provide structural stability for the building and prevent further water ingress. This part of the proposals will entail replacing the slate tiles that have mostly failed; become loose and displaced. The internal timber roof structure is not fully supported and requires steel reinforcement to support the building internally. These works are necessary to restore the 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 reinforcement works will not be visible as the steel reinforcement will be hidden within the void and the replacement slate tiles 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 proposed works will cause some harm to the overall building, through the loss of the original failed slate tiles and decayed timber support structure, 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 roof will improve the appearance and usability of the whole building. It concludes that the works will have a neutral impact. 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 replacement of slate tiles and reinforcement works.

Summary

The proposed works include the repair and reinforcement of the roof at 89 Great Russell Street. The proposal will repair the whole roof structure on a like for like basis and include structural reinforcement that is necessary. 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: 1330372

List Entry Name: NUMBERS 89, 90 AND 91 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS

3 terraced houses. No.89, earlier C19; Nos 90 and 91, late C18 altered. Darkened brick; No.89 with rusticated stucco ground floor. Slate mansard roofs with dormers. 3 storeys, attics, and basements. 3 windows each. Gauged brick flat arches to recessed sash windows, No.90 with original glazing bars. Stucco cornices and blocking courses. No.89: round-arched doorway with pilaster jambs carrying cornice head; fanlight and panelled door. "Y" shaped glazing bars to dormer windows. Attached cast-iron railings to areas with urn finials. No.90: later C19 shopfront with pilasters carrying entablature flanked by brackets. Shop window altered. Square-headed doorway with fanlight and panelled door. No.91: later C19 stucco shopfront with Ionic pilasters carrying entablature with dentil cornice. 3 ground floor openings with arched end bays with enriched spandrels. Doorway with pilaster jambs carrying entablature with figured frieze. INTERIORS not inspected.

SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railing to entrance with cone finials and 3 shoe scrapers.

HISTORICAL NOTE: No.91 was the home of George du Maurier 1863-1868 (GLC plaque).