

14th August 2024

Design and Access Statement

Highgate Branch Library, Chester Road, London N19 5DH – Courtyard alterations.

1. INTRODUCTION

This Design and Access Statement outlines the proposed project for the Highgate Branch Library which comprises the adjustments to the courtyard to allow the siting of Air Source Heat Pumps in connection with the proposed decarbonisation works to the building. 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 proposed works form part of the decarbonisation work to the Library (Work previously approved under Planning Application - 2023/3328/L) and are required to create sufficient space to install the air source heat pumps in the courtyard (subsequent planning application 2023/5039/P).
- 2.2.2 The work associated with this application involves the removal of an existing plywood store door and frame from the courtyard with the opening bricked up and painted to match the existing external courtyard walls.
- 2.2.3 The existing plywood faced flush doors that provide a fire exit from the courtyard into the existing flats, will be removed and re-sited approximately 600mm towards the corner of the courtyard. This will require the removal of a section of brickwork to the new door position and the bricking up of part of the existing opening, to match the existing. The existing doors will then be reinstalled, to maintain the required width for the fire exit.
- 2.2.4 The existing cast concrete steps that lead up to the fire escape will be broken out and a new set of aluminium steps will be provided to the new fire exit location.

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 of the existing heating system.

4. AMOUNT

- 4.1 The adjustment of the location of the fire exit doors is by approximately 600mm. The existing fire doors and frame will be reinstalled.
- 4.2 The existing store door will be removed and bricked up, the new brickwork will be set back by 25mm from the face of the adjacent walls to maintain the brick arch feature over.

5. LAYOUT ACCESS AND APPEARANCE

- 5.1 The layout of the courtyard will remain unchanged other than the removal of one door and the adjustment of the location of the fire exit doors.
 - 5.2 The store door is located behind a c. 3m high brick boundary wall and will not be visible from the Public Highway. There are mature shrubs and tree on the neighbouring side providing additional separation.
 - 5.3 The fire exit doors open into the rear amenity space of the adjacent Chester House Flats which is a London Borough of Council owned residential building. The fire exit is not visible from the Public Highway.
 - 5.4 The new wall sections will match the existing; the internal side of the courtyard walls and the external wall around the existing store door are painted brickwork. The external side of the courtyard wall is rendered with a tyrolean finish.
- 5.5 The existing tarmac pathway to the amenity space of the adjacent Chester House flats will be extended to include the new fire exit door opening.