

## University College London, Gower Street, London, WC1E 6BT

### Heritage Assessment

#### Introduction

1. On behalf of University College London (UCL), Gerald Eve has prepared a Heritage Assessment to accompany the advertisement consent and listed building consent application relating to the display of 2 x non-illuminated signs on the railings of the west entrance to the Main Quad, Gower Street, London, WC1E 6BT.
2. The Heritage Assessment identifies the designated heritage assets which may be affected by the proposed signage and describes the significance of those assets in a proportionate manner. This statement also provides a summary of the proposals, and an assessment of how the proposals impact the heritage significance of the asset as a whole.

#### Statutory Framework

3. Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant listed building consent, special regard shall be paid to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
4. Section 72 of the same Act states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

#### Planning Policy Context

5. Under Paragraph 200 of the NPPF (2023), in determining applications, Local Planning Authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including the contribution made by their setting.
6. Paragraph 203 of the NPPF (2023) states that in determining planning applications, Local Planning Authorities should take account of:
  - a) The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
  - b) The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic viability; and
  - c) The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
7. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, Paragraph 208 of the NPPF (2023) states that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
8. Policy D1 of Camden's Local Plan (2017) sets out that the Council will seek to secure high quality design that, amongst other things, respects local context and character and preserves or enhances the historic environment and heritage assets.
9. Policy D2 of Camden's Local Plan (2017) sets out that the Council will seek to preserve and where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, especially the conservation areas and listed buildings. The Council will not permit the loss or substantial harm of a designated heritage asset, including conservation areas, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits. To maintain the character of Camden's conservation areas, the Council will require that development within conservation areas preserves or, where possible, enhances the character or appearance of the area.

## Assessment of Significance

10. The main campus of UCL is subject to two separate statutory listings. The first and primary listing relates to "University College (University of London) and attached railings to north and south wings". This entry (List Entry: 1113056) was made at Grade I on 10 June 1954.

11. The list description states:

**"CAMDEN GOWER STREET (West side) University College (University of London) and attached railings to north and south wings 10/06/54 GV I College. Central block c1827-29 by W Wilkins and J.P Gandy-Deering. Flaxman Gallery and Library c1848 by T.L Donaldson. South wing, c1869-76, north wing c1870-1881, both by T. Hayter Lewis. North-west wing 1912-13 by F.M Simpson. South-west wing, c1923 by A.E Richardson. South Junction block 1950, North Junction block 1951, Physics Building 1950-52 by A.E Richardson and E.A.S Houfe. STYLE/PLAN: stone buildings in Neo-Grecian style enclosing a quadrangle, the Flaxman Gallery and library extending from the rear of the portico."**

12. The Site is also located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area within Sub-Area 3 (University of London/British Museum) of the Conservation Area designation. UCL is described in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy as follows:

**"The most notable building in the northern section of the sub area is the grade I listed University College (UCL), known as the Wilkins Building, a range of buildings grouped around a central element topped by a dome and a pedimented west portico, built in 1827-29 to a design by William Wilkins. Other buildings include the 1849 library rear extension and the ranges forming the sides of the central quadrangle. The north and south ranges of the quadrangle were added in the 1870s and 1980s. They are articulated by central, two-storey curved bays. The returns fronting Gower Street enclose the western edge of the space, and rise to three storeys (built 1891-1913, extended 1984). These ranges and the entrance lodges frame views of the dome from Gower Street. The central space has some grassed areas with a couple of mature trees that soften the formality of the surrounding architecture. The grade II listed observatories to the north and south were added in 1905-7."**

13. The works proposed in the current applications relate to the two railings which form part of the boundary of the main campus of UCL and are situated by the entrance of the Main Quad on Gower Street. Directly opposite the Site to the west is the UCL Cruciform Building which is Grade II listed and to the northwest lies Grade II listed University College Hospital.

## The Proposals and their Impact on Significance

14. The proposals seek to improve legibility and wayfinding at UCL's entrance into the Main Quad. The applicant is seeking listed building consent for the display of 2 x UCL branding non-illuminated signs on the railings facing onto Gower Street.

15. Further details can be found in the supporting drawings and planning record document, prepared by UCL, and covering letter, prepared by Gerald Eve LLP.

16. **Works to the building** – The signs are attached to the railings by a clamping fixing solution. The signs are made out of rigid dibond. The proposals would be reversible and would not cause harm to the significance of the asset as a whole.

17. **Works within the Conservation Area** – The signs have been sympathetically designed and would have no adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

18. Overall, the proposals are minor in nature and would preserve the significance of the Grade I listed building. The proposals would also preserve the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. Therefore, the proposals are considered to be in accordance with the relevant policies of Camden's Local Plan, namely Policies D1 and D2 as well as relevant national policy relating to the historic environment. Furthermore, the applications would satisfy the statutory provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.