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London Borough of Camden
Planning and Borough Development
5 Pancras Square
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FAO: Edward Hodgson

Our ref: LOL/PIR/ASI/U0027005

Your ref: PP-13423195

4 October 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

Wilkins Building, Gower Street, London, WC1E 6HJ
Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended)
Application for Listed Building Consent

We write on behalf of our client, University College London ('UCL') (the 'Applicant'), to submit an application for listed building consent for the proposed internal works at the Wilkins Building, London, WC1E 6HJ (the 'Site').

Listed building consent is sought for the following:

"Enlargement of existing kitchen area, creation of a new door for catering access, refurbishment of existing bathroom and other refurbishment works including the creation of a lounge reception and welcome space, high quality meeting and event hosting space, office and agile working space, furniture storage space, and other associated works."

Site and Background

The Site is located within the UCL Bloomsbury Campus on Gower Street and is bounded by Gower Place to the north, Gordon Street and Gordon Square to the east, and Gower Street to the West. The Site is currently occupied by UCL for education purposes (Use Class F1(a)).

The Site is Grade I statutory listed and is located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. There are a number of other designated heritage assets in close proximity to the Site including the Grade II listed 23 Gower Place, the Grade II listed University College Hospital General Block and the Grade II listed Kathleen Lonsdale Building.

The Site benefits from a public transport accessibility level (PTAL) of 6b, which is the highest achievable rating. This rating can be attributed to the Site's close proximity to a number of underground stations, including Euston / Euston Square, Russell Square, Goodge Street, Warren Street and Kings Cross & St Pancras Internal Station. There are also several bus routes serving the site, notably from Gower Street, Euston Road and Woburn Place.

Relevant Planning History

A planning history search has been undertaken using Camden's planning register to establish the planning record for the Site. A summary of the relevant planning history has been set out below.

On 10 April 2019, an application for full planning permission (2019/0456/P) and listed building consent (2019/0165/L) was granted for the following:

“The refurbishment of the Wilkins Building Old Refectory and adjacent spaces, including upgraded WC facilities, staff office space, and roof lighting to provide a new learning space.”

On 12 September 2019, an application for listed building consent (2019/3141/L) was granted for the following:

“Internal refurbishment works to improve the existing condition of room G02 in the South Wing of the Wilkins Building.”

On 11 September 2019, an application for listed building consent (2019/3142/L) was granted for the following:

“Internal refurbishment works of rooms B58 and B60 in the North Wing of the Wilkins Building to enable their continued as a sound recording areas.”

On 31 July 2024, an application for full planning permission (2024/3177/P) was submitted for the following:

“Refurbishment and improvement works, including creation of sloped access to the Slade and Wilkins Building, replacement of roof lights on Slade Building, installation of canopies and landscaping works in the Main Quadrangle, installation of plant and enclosure on the Wilkins Building roof, waterproofing works to the Chadwick Building basement, cycle parking, disabled parking, and associated works.”

This application is currently pending determination.

On 31 July 2024, an application for listed building consent (2024/3192/L) was submitted for the following:

“Refurbishment and improvement works to Wilkins Building, including the creation of new openings and replacement of glazing in the Cloisters and adjacent rooms, works for the installation of a new staircase and accessible lift, installation of plant at roof level, landscaping of the Main Quadrangle, introduction of sloped access to buildings, replacement of rooflights for the Slade Building, waterproofing works to Chadwick Building, and associated works.”

This application is currently pending determination.

As demonstrated by the planning history set out above, various alteration works have previously been undertaken at the Site over recent years.

The Proposal

The recent relocation of the President Provost and Vice Provost offices has freed up a suite of rooms at ground floor level. As UCL have identified a need for high quality meeting and hosting space, this provides an opportunity to utilise the vacant rooms and provide a suite of high quality multi-use space on campus.

In this regard, the following internal works are proposed:

- Enlargement of the existing kitchen area (room GO1A) to provide warming facilities for catering provision (no cooking, heating only). This includes new domestic kitchen units, stainless steel worktops, an undercounter fridge, dish washer, sink, zip tap, hot plate, hot cupboard and food warmer.
- Creation of a new door for catering staff access;
- Refurbishment of the existing bathroom (room GO3A) to provide an accessible WC toilet and acoustic upgrade of the partition walls and door;
- Refurbishment of room G02 as a lounge reception / welcome space with soft seating and a podium to meet and greet guests;

- Refurbishment of room G03 to provide a high quality meeting / event hosting space;
- Refurbishment of room G01 as an office space and agile workspace for hosting staff;
- Refurbishment of room G03C to provide furniture storage.

Please refer to the Design and Access Statement and supporting plans and drawings, prepared by Rivington Street Studio, for further information on the proposals.

Planning Policy Context

Section 38(6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicated otherwise. Accordingly, the proposals are assessed against the policies of the London Plan (adopted 2021) and Camden's Local Plan (adopted 2017).

Whilst not forming part of the Statutory Development Plan, the following documents remain important material considerations:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023);
- Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) (as amended); and
- London Borough of Camden's Supplementary Planning Documents.

In terms of emerging policy, Camden are currently in the process of reviewing their Local Plan. The draft Local Plan is currently in the early stage of development and Camden consulted on the Plan (Regulation 18 consultation) between the 17 January to 13 March 2024. The new Local Plan is expected to be adopted in the summer of 2026. Therefore, at this stage, in line with paragraph 48 of the NPPF, limited weight should be applied to policies within the draft Local Plan. They have therefore not been considered further in this letter.

As the proposal affects a listed building within a Conservation Area, consideration has been given to Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Planning Policy Assessment

Design and Heritage

Policy D1 of Camden's Local Plan sets out that the Council will seek to secure high quality design in development and requires that development respects local context and character. The policy also states that the Council will require that development is inclusive and accessible for all.

Policy D2 of Camden's Local Plan sets out that the Council will seek to preserve and where appropriate, enhance heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas. The Council will not permit the loss of or substantial harm to 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.

The proposed works would seek to provide high quality, inclusive and accessible space within the ground floor of the Wilkins Building. As set out in the supporting Heritage Statement, prepared by Alan Baxter Associates, the majority of the proposed changes are modest and would only affect fabric of limited significance. The works would therefore be 'negligible' in terms of impact on the significance of the Grade I listed building, and the special architectural and historic interest of the building would be preserved. Furthermore, as the works are entirely internal, they would not impact on the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

Moreover, the proposal would provide notable benefits by providing high quality, multi-use spaces within the vacant rooms and improving existing accessibility arrangements.

Overall, it is considered that the proposals are sensitively and appropriately designed and will preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade I listed building and the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. It is therefore considered that the proposal complies with Policies D1 and D2 of Camden's Local Plan and Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Enhancing Community Facilities

Policy C2 of Camden's Local Plan sets out their support for research bodies to expand and enhance their operations, taking into account the social and economic benefits they generate for Camden, London and the UK.

The proposal would improve the overall efficiency of the building for students, staff and visitors and provide UCL with an opportunity to bring the vacant rooms back into viable use.

The proposals are considered to comply with Policy D2 of Camden's Local Plan.

Accessibility

Policy C6 of Camden's Local Plan sets out that the Council will seek to promote fair access and remove the barriers that prevent everyone from accessing facilities and opportunities. The policy also states that the Council will expect all buildings and places to meet the highest practicable standards of accessible and inclusive design so they can be used safely, easily and with dignity by all.

The proposal aims to meet the highest standards of accessible and inclusive design to ensure that students, staff members and visitors can use the building safely, easily and with dignity. The proposals would improve the existing accessibility arrangements through refurbishing the existing bathroom facility at ground floor level and providing an accessible WC toilet.

Overall, the proposals are considered to comply with Policy C6 of Camden's Local Plan.

Summary

The proposals are for the enlargement of the existing kitchen area, creation of a new internal door for catering access, refurbishment of the existing bathroom and other refurbishment works to create suitable meeting / agile working space on campus.

In conclusion, the proposed development complies with the relevant statutory legislation set out above, as well as policies D1, D2, C2 and C6 of Camden's Local Plan.

As the proposed works are minor and internal, it is considered that the proposal would not have an impact on the special architectural or historic interest of the Grade I listed building or the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

It is therefore considered that the proposals accord with the Development Plan and should be determined positively without delay.

Application documentation

In accordance with the London Borough of Camden's validation requirements, the following documents have been submitted in support of this application:

- Application form, prepared by Gerald Eve LLP;
- Covering Letter, prepared by Gerald Eve LLP;
- Site Location Plan, prepared by Rivington Street Studio;
- Existing and Proposed Plans, prepared by Rivington Street Studio;
- Design and Access Statement, prepared by Gerald Eve LLP; and
- Heritage Statement, prepared by Alan Baxter Associates.

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

Please do not hesitate to contact Paige Ireland (020 7333 6277) or Aadam Siddiqui (020 7333 6246) of this office should you have any questions or concerns. We look forward to receiving notice of your receipt and validation.

Yours faithfully,

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