The Capitoline Antinous and The Discophoros on The Portico Steps of The Main Building at University College London, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT

Introduction

1. This Design and Access Statement and Heritage Statement has been prepared in relation to the listed building consent application for the refurbishment of The Capitoline Antinous and The Discophoros statues on The Portico Steps of The Main Building at University College London, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT (the 'Site').

2. This Statement should be read together with the additional documents prepared to support the refurbishment works application.

Site and Surroundings

3. The Site consists of The Capitoline Antinous and The Discophoros statues, which are located within the curtilage of the University College (University of London) building, on the portico steps.

4. The Site is located within Bloomsbury, close to the border with Fitzrovia, in the west of the London Borough of Camden.

5. The University College (University of London) and attached railings to north and south wings are Grade I listed. The Site is also within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

6. The University College London ('UCL') Main Building itself is a grand Neoclassical building designed between 1827 and 1830, centered around the iconic Wilkins Building, with its portico and dome. The building serves both academic and administrative office functions and is a cultural and historical emblem of UCL.

7. The Site is located 0.2 miles from Euston Square Underground Station, 0.3 miles from Warren Street Underground Station and 0.5 miles from Euston Underground and National Rail Station. The Site is also in close proximity to multiple bus stops and cycle hire stations. The Site has a PTAL rating of 6b, the highest rating possible.

Historical Significance

8. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is the legislative basis for decision making on applications that relate to the historic environment. Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Act impose statutory duties upon local planning authorities with the aim to protect the special interest of a listed building or conservation area.

9. Paragraph 200 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') requires an applicant to describe

the significance of any heritage assets affected by development proposals. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is necessary to understand the effects of development proposals on identified heritage values. The Framework requires that proposals for change give 'great weight' to the conservation of heritage assets (paragraph 205), that harm to the significance of heritage assets requires 'clear and convincing justification' (206), and that such harm is outweighed by public benefits. Harm is to be categorised as substantial (207) or less than substantial (208).

10. Policy HC1 of the London Plan states that development proposals affecting heritage assets, and their settings, should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to the assets' significance and taking their surroundings into account. Policy D1 of the Camden Local Plan (2017) seeks to secure high quality design in development. As part of this Policy, the Council will require development to preserve or enhance heritage assets in accordance with Policy D2. Policy D2 of the Camden Local Plan (2017) itself states that the Council will preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas and listed buildings.

11. The Capitoline Antinous and The Discophoros statues form part of the curtilage of the Grade I listed University College (University of London) and attached railings to north and south wings (list entry number 1113056).

12. The full listing description is as follows:

> ***CAMDEN GOWER STREET (West side) University College (University of London) and attached railings to north and south wings 10/06/54***
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> ***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.***
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> ***EXTERIOR: main facade and wings, two storeys and attic. Central block: decastyle Corinthian pedimented portico on high podium approached by Imperial steps with solid stone balustrade and piers. Behind the pediment, the enriched copper dome, with blind stone lantern, of the Flaxman Gallery. Flanking the portico, 22 bays with rusticated ground floor and pilasters rising from the first floor and carrying an entablature. Architraved sash windows with cornices. Attic with rectangular, small paned windows in groups of three. Flaxman Gallery and Library: space***

below the dome remodelled by Donaldson to house the plaster originals of Flaxman's sculptures.

Library block of three storeys in brick with a stone arcade of paired columns at ground floor level. Stone band at first floor level. Large arcaded windows with stone impost bands. Second floor stepped back, a partly blind arcade only the arched heads being glazed. Enriched stone roundels in the spandrels. Stone capped parapet.

North and south wings: two storeys with 13 bays each of which the centre bays form projecting semi rotundas with Corinthian columns rising from the first floor carrying entablature and parapet. One bay either side of these features also projecting. First floor with pilasters between architraved sash windows with console bracketed cornices and sill string. Ground floor rusticated with architraved sashes with cornices. Architraved entrances, in the centre of projecting semi-rotundas, with console bracketed cornices, fanlights and panelled doors. Enriched frieze at first floor level.

North-west and south-west wings: 11 bays each in similar style but without rotundas. End bays projecting at entrance to quadrangle with three window returns. Similar facades to Gower Street.

INTERIORS: all retain original features.

SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings and stone piers to basement areas of wings.

HISTORICAL NOTE: founded to provide university education without religious bias and the first college of London University. Housed in a cupboard in the College is the dressed skeleton of Jeremy Bentham, philosopher and reformer who bequeathed himself on his death in 1832. Also housed at the college, a collection of neo-Classical sculpture by Flaxman and a collection of pictures. Listing NGR: TQ2958282298

13. In respect of the statues themselves, Rupert Harris Conservation Limited have provided commentary on their historic significance, noting they are confident that the casts are from the statuary workshop of John Cheere (1709-1787).

14. John Cheere was of Huguenot dissent and was a resident of Clapham. In around 1739, in partnership with his brother, Sir Henry Cheere, John Cheere took over the business of another leading sculptor, John Nost, including his London yard and his molds for lead-cast figures. John Cheere quickly dominated the trade for the next forty-seven years and ultimately made the most significant contribution to the quality, quantity and variety of English lead garden sculpture. The statuary he

provided ranged from antique Greek and Roman and Italian Renaissance figures and groups, to copies of later French and Italian sculptures, and contemporary portrait figures of royalty and noblemen. Pastoral rustic figures, Commedia dell'Arte figures, cherubs and animals were also produced in large numbers. Many of Cheere's works were produced from molds taken directly from casts of the Antique. Other subjects were either unique creations of the studio or sculpted copies made by the statuary studios. William Hogarth famously depicts Cheere's sculpture yard in his engraving A Statuary's Yard from The Analysis of Beauty (1753). Of all the makers of lead statuary in the 18th century John Cheere was by far the most prolific and influential.

15. Lead sculptures of the 17th and 18th centuries were either produced from molds taken directly from antique marbles or by making new models referencing the antique and other artists' work, often borrowing elements of a sculptural composition and using these to depict a different allegory or figure. In this case, it is probable that the Discophoros was molded directly from a Roman marble and was a special commission from the studio of John Cheere. The direct source for the Capitoline Antinous is yet to be researched. Both sculptures display the very characteristic hallmark of fine, after-cast, chased and punched detail seen on many other works known to be from Cheere's studio. The likely period of their making is between 1752 and 1765, during the period when John Cheere's workshop (situated near Hyde Park Corner) was at the height of its statuary production, although the Discophoros could be as late as c.1785, two years before Cheere's death.

16. John Cheere and his contemporaries cast their statuary using the traditional method of lost wax casting employed for bronzes, differing in that the lead sculptures had to be cast in one piece as there was no technique available to effectively structurally join lead until the availability of gas welding in the early 20th Century; consequently the refractory core and iron armature was left inside the finished lead sculpture. This necessity had the benefit of providing the soft lead some additional support but also introduced an inherent problem caused by the corrosion of the iron; this has caused significant damage and loss of sculpture over time. The iron armature that was left extending from the base of the castings also provided a means of attaching the sculpture to their plinths. After casting, the surface of the lead was then fine finished and chased to add texture and refinement to the piece. Cheere's craftsmanship, demonstrated in the quality of his surface finishing (chasing) in textured areas such as hair, clothing and vegetation (for instance vine leaves) is consistently distinctive and superior to that of his contemporaries.

17. It is well recorded in contemporary documents that almost all-English lead statuary was surface finished and coloured using paint before it left the workshop. This is further verified by the results of paint analysis taken from many lead sculptures of the period. The larger, classical or Renaissance subjects were generally painted to imitate stone or marble. Others were finished to resemble

patinated bronze using tinted lacquers and glazes, an excellent example of which survives on the interior sculpture of Andromeda at Osterley Park. Royal portrait figures were often leaf gilded. Comic subjects such as Punch, Harlequin and other pantomime figures, and rustic figures such as mowers, haymakers and shepherds were generally smaller than the classical subjects and were often naturalistically painted in bright polychrome. Inevitably the original surface finishes degraded over time. Although some appear to have been fairly consistently maintained for years, in the end most finishes were almost universally lost, the majority of sculpture returning to the dull grey of the bare lead surface, resulting in a change to our expectations and our perception of what is an appropriate finish.

18. In the case of the Capitoline Antinous and the Discophoros at UCL, traces of original paint can be seen on many surfaces, particularly within the more detailed and chased detail. The paint appears to contain both a faded red undercoat and whiter coloured upper layers, this is typical of the priming layers found on white or off white painted lead sculpture when imitating stone. If a more detailed inspection and analysis were undertaken of the surface, it is expected that stone coloured paint would be identified as being the original surface decoration.

Proposals

19. The proposals are for the refurbishment of The Capitoline Antinous and The Discophoros statues. The physical condition of the two sculptures is of concern as the damage (in the form of splitting, particularly at the ankles and distortion around the feet and sculpture bases) indicates that the internal core and iron armatures are stressing the lead.

20. From a review undertaken by a conservation specialist, to ensure the long-term survival of the sculptures it has been advised for a full conservation to be undertaken of the structure and surface, as in their current condition slow deterioration will continue.

    The recommended conservation work that is proposed is as follows:

    - Remove both the sculptures from site;
    - Undertake detailed paint analysis;
    - Remove all the internal refractory core material and the remains of iron armatures;
    - Remove the majority of existing paint, and sulphation - retention of the under layers, if sound, would be historically advantageous as evidence of past decoration;
    - Undertake full lead welded repairs to the areas of damage and hand finish to match the surrounding original surface;

- Remake any necessary armature supports and fixings in 316-grade stainless steel; and
- Reinstate the conserved sculptures.

21. The conservation specialist has also indicated, following their inspection, that there is strong visual evidence that the sculptures were originally painted to resemble stone. Should further investigations determine this to be correct, the proposals may include the reinstatement of the paint finish, but this is not definitive.

22. As such, listed building consent is being sought for the following:

> **"Removal, full refurbishment and reinstatement of the Capitoline Antinous and Discophoros statues on the portico steps of the main building at University College London."**

Heritage Impact Assessment

23. To ensure the long-term survival of the sculptures it is required to undertake full conservation of the structure and surface, as in their current condition slow deterioration will continue. Further, as both sculptures are such important objects historically, both in terms of English sculpture but also their local significance, ensuring their survival and displaying them in sound and decoratively correct condition is necessary.

24. There would be the option, as has happened before, of attempting in-situ repairs but these are seldom effective in the long term as lead welding would be very difficult to undertake with the sculptures in-place and in some areas quite impossible. This option also would fail to address the likely poor condition of the iron armatures and more importantly their fixing to the plinths. However, due to their importance, location, damage and the uncertainty surrounding the condition of the internal iron it is necessary that the sculptures be removed for full conservation. Undertaking this work will ensure that the sculptures are returned to structurally sound and sculpturally correct condition, with the option of reinstating the original paint coating.

25. It is therefore considered that the proposed works would preserve the special architectural and historic of the statues, the curtilage of the listed building and conservation area, in accordance with the statutory duties set out in Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. They would also accord with the relevant policies of the London Plan (March 2021), Camden's Local Plan (2017), including policies D1 and D2, and the National Planning Policy Framework (2023). It is therefore the conclusion of this report that the proposals would be acceptable in heritage terms.

Use

26. The existing statues do not have a planning use. However, the Main UCL Building itself is used for education and administration purposes.

27. No change of use is proposed as part of the application.

Access

28. Access to the Site is gained via Gower Street. No access alterations are proposed.