

Application ref: 2024/4532/L
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Dear Sir/Madam

DECISION

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Listed Building Consent Granted

Address:
UCL Wilkins Building
Gower Street
London
WC1E 6BT

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

Drawing Nos: Design and Access Statement and Heritage Statement; Conservation Survey; Outline Report Paint Finishes on English Lead Sculpture; Drawing No. 950 - PNR13378 (Location Plan);

The Council has considered your application and decided to grant Listed Building Consent subject to the following condition(s):

Conditions And Reasons:

- 1 The works hereby permitted shall be begun not later than the end of three years from the date of this consent.

Reason: In order to comply with the provisions of Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Design and Access Statement and Heritage Statement; Conservation Survey; Outline Report Paint Finishes on English Lead Sculpture; Drawing No. 950 - PNR13378 (Location Plan).

Reason: In order to safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of the building in accordance with the requirements of policy D2 of the Camden Local Plan 2017.

- 3 All new work and work of making good shall be carried out to match the existing adjacent work as closely as possible in materials and detailed execution.

Reason: In order to safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of the building in accordance with the requirements of policy D2 of the Camden Local Plan 2017.

Informative(s):

- 1 Reasons for granting listed building consent (delegated):

The Site consists of The Capitoline Antinous and The Discophoros statues, which are located adjacent to the portico steps, within the curtilage of the University College London (UCL) Wilkins Building. The UCL main campus on Gower Street, which includes the Wilkins Building, plus attached buildings and railings to north and south wings, is Grade I listed. The main campus is also located within Sub Area 3 (University of London/British Museum) of Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

The statues have been identified by Rupert Harris Conservation Limited as casts from the statuary workshop of John Cheere (1709-1787). John Cheere is considered to have made perhaps one of the most significant contribution to the quality, quantity and variety of English lead garden sculpture.

Contemporary documents record that almost all-English lead statuary was surface finished and coloured using paint before it left the workshop. 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.

Inevitably the original surface finishes have degraded over time, resulting in the majority of sculpture returning to the dull grey of the bare lead surface, which has resulted in a change to expectations and the perception of what is an appropriate finish.

The statues are currently in a state of disrepair and require significant restoration to prevent further degradation.

The proposals are for the removal, refurbishment and reinstatement of both statues.

Refurbishment off-site is considered the most appropriate method but would lead to temporary, low-level harm arising from the removal of the statues.

The proposed restoration work includes:

- o Remove both the sculptures from site,
- o Undertake detailed paint analysis,
- o Remove all the internal refractory core material and the remains of iron armatures,
- o Remove the majority of existing paint, and sulphation - retention of the under layers, if sound, would be historically advantageous as evidence of past decoration,
- o Undertake full lead welded repairs to the areas of damage and hand finish to match the surrounding original surface,
- o Remake any necessary armature supports and fixings in 316-grade stainless steel; and
- o Reinstall the conserved sculptures.

The reinstatement of an evidence-based historically appropriate paint finish to the statues is not opposed. The finish should be toned to match the colour of the adjacent stone of the Wilkins building.

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.

It is considered that the proposed works will preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the statues, the curtilage of the listed building and conservation area.

- 2 Public consultation was undertaken by way of a site notice and a press notice, but no responses were received. Bloomsbury CAAC was consulted but have chosen not to respond. Historic England was consulted and responded on 4 November 2024 with a letter broadly supportive of the statues' restoration, and a further letter (authorised by the Secretary of State on 13 November 2024) authorising the Council to determine the application as it deemed fit. The site's planning history has been taken into account when making this decision.

Special regard has been attached to the desirability of preserving the listed building and its features of special architectural or historic interest, under s.16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act (ERR) 2013.

As such, the proposal is in general accordance with policies D1 and D2 of the Camden Local Plan 2017. The proposed development also accords with the London Plan 2021 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 3 Historic England has requested that UCL retain Rupert Harris Conservation Limited as the consulting specialists through the completion of the project.
- 4 UCL is encouraged to set in place, with the assistance of Rupert Harris Conservation Limited, a long-term strategy and methodology document that covers the maintenance of these important statues (as well as mitigation of graffiti) to ensure their future survival.
- 5 You are advised that any works of alterations or upgrading not included on the approved drawings which are required to satisfy Building Regulations or Fire Certification may require a further application for listed building consent.

In dealing with the application, the Council has sought to work with the applicant in a positive and proactive way in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework. The council publishes its adopted policies online, along with detailed Camden Planning Guidance. It also provides advice on the website for submitting applications and offers a pre-application advice service.

You can find advice about your rights of appeal at:

<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/planning/appeals/guidance/guidancecontent>

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DPope', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

Daniel Pope
Chief Planning Officer