PLANNING STATEMENT

In respect of

Francis Crick Institute – Level 06 Chiller Compounds

On behalf of

Francis Crick Institute Ltd

00293
FINAL
January
2025

rpsgroup.com

Document status

Version	Purpose of document	Authored by	Reviewed By	Approved by	Review date
FINAL	Planning Statement	Summer Wong	Tanya Jordan	Tanya Jordan	30.01.25

Approval for issue

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Contents

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared to accompany a full application for two chiller compounds on the Level 06 southwest roof of the Francis Crick Institute ("FCI"), Midland Road, London NW1 1AT ("the site") within the London Borough of Camden (LBC).

1.2 The proposed development ("the development") is described as follows:

> *"Removal of existing satellite dish and installation of two chiller compounds on Level 06 southwest roof."*

1.3 The FCI building was constructed in 2016 and hosts over 100 biomedicine research groups in the heart of London immediately adjacent to St Pancras International Station. The research facilities rely on an existing freezer farm which has over 100 scientific freezers securely storing research samples. Due to high demand, the freezer farm room is experiencing overheating issues. In order to address the overheating issue and ensure resilience of the freezer farm, a more robust cooling solution is needed, in the form of two new chillers which will assist in rejecting the heat generated by the freezers.

1.4 The FCI technical team has explored various locations for these external chiller compounds and it is proposed that the Level 06 southwest roof facing Ossulston Street to be the most appropriate and feasible location. The existing redundant satellite dish and antennas located on the Level 06 roof will be removed.

1.5 Further details about the reasons and details of the proposed development are set out in Section 4 of this Planning Statement.

1.6 The application is accompanied by the following supporting documents:

- Application Form;
- CIL Form 1;
- Site Location plan;
- Existing drawings;
- Proposed drawings;
- Planning Statement, prepared by RPS;
- Design & Access Statement, including townscape views, prepared by Pilbrow & Partners;
- Noise Assessment, prepared by Suono Consultancy;
- Heritage Statement, prepared by SmithJenkins Planning & Heritage;
- Ecological Note including Biodiversity Net Gain Exemption, prepared by RPS;

1.7 The remainder of this Planning Statement is set out as follows:

- Section 2: Site and Surrounding Context
- Section 3: Relevant Planning History
- Section 4: Proposed Development
- Section 5: Planning Policy Context
- Section 6: Planning Assessment
- Section 7: Conclusion

2 SITE AND SURROUNDING CONTEXT

2.1 The Level 06 southwest roof, to which this application relates, forms part of the FCI building, a biomedical research centre bounded by Ossulston Street to the west, Brill Place to the north, Midland Road to the east and the British Library to the south.

2.2 The FCI lies adjacent to the King's Cross Conservation Area to the east, including the Grade I listed St Pancras Station and former Midland Grand Hotel. To the south is the Grade I listed British Library. The site is bounded by residential blocks to the north of Brill Place and west of Ossulston Street.

2.3 The existing building is some 91,000sqm in floorspace. The application site is located on Level 06 of the south west roof and comprises of 65sqm in area as indicated in **Figure 1.1**.

Figure 1.1 - Level 06 Southwest Roof Location

2.4 An existing photo of the application site is shown in **Figure 1.2**. The site comprises an existing hard standing area (6.6m x 6.6m) on the roof and currently contains a satellite dish. The remaining Level 06 roof (outside of the application site area) is brown roof. The roof is only accessible for maintenance purposes.

Figure 1.2 – Level 06 Southwest Roof Site Photo

2.5 Immediately to the west of site is the 5 storey residential block of Chamberlain House which is a Grade II listed building. Other residential blocks along Ossulston Street including Walker House and Levita House which are also Grade II listed. The submitted Heritage Statement prepared by Smith Jenkins provides further details on the heritage assets within vicinity of the site.

2.6 The site benefits from excellent public transport links and has a Public Transport Accessibility Level of 6b. St. Pancras International is approximately 50m to the east, King's Cross Station approximately 200m beyond and Euston Station is approximately 300m away to the west along Euston Road.

3 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 The planning history for the site is extensive, however, the following is considered to be most relevant.

3.2 Planning permission ref. 2010/4721/P ("the original permission") was granted on 10th March 2011 for the following development:

- **2010/4721/P** - *Development to provide a biomedical research centre including laboratory and research space, lecturing and teaching space, exhibition space and a communal facility; landscape public open spaces; a new pedestrian route between Midland Road and Ossulston Street; a service entrance off Brill Place and a relocated vehicular access from Midland Road to serve the British Library. Approved 10.03.2011, subject to S106 Agreement.*

3.3 The FCI building was completed and opened in 2016. The original permission included two brown roofs at Level 05 and Level 06. The details of the brown roofs were submitted against Condition 5 of the original 2010 permission (ref. 2012/4034/P) which was discharged in September 2012. Each brown roof area also formed part of the sustainable drainage scheme for the building.

3.4 Planning permission was granted in November 2022 (ref. 2022/2667/P) to allow the use of the Level 05 roof as amenity space:

- **2022/2667/P** – *The installation of a permeable deck above the existing brown roof on the eastern end level 05 terrace, together with a refreshment kiosk under the roof eves, provision of perimeter planters and additional landscaping.*

3.5 A number of conditions were attached to permission ref. 2022/2056/P and a condition relating to landscape and ecology was discharged in October 2023 as follows:

- **2023/3322/P** - *Details of condition 4 (Landscape and Ecological Management Plan) of planning permission 2022/2667/P dated 25/11/2022.*

3.6 The 2022 permission (ref. 2022/2667/P) was partially implemented but during the construction phase it was suggested by the staff that a permanent structure to provide shelter / an enclosed area on the roof should be provided.

3.7 A further permission was granted in April 2024 to allow the erection of a glazed pavilion at the Level 05 roof terrace in place of the 2022 approved kiosk:

- **2023/5423/P** – *Erection of glazed pavilion structure to fifth floor roof terrace, in addition to replacement of decking material and installation of green wall to upper level northeast elevation. Biodiversity enhancements to sixth floor green roof at southwest corner.*

3.8 Part of the 2023 application sought to replace the existing Level 06 brown roof (as approved and implemented under the original 2010 permission) with a new green roof, as part of the Biodiversity Net Gain off-setting strategy to allow the introduction of a glazed pavilion at the Level 05 north east roof terrace. The approved Level 06 Terrace Planting Plan (ref: 006) shows the proposed green roof design (see **Figure 3.1** below).

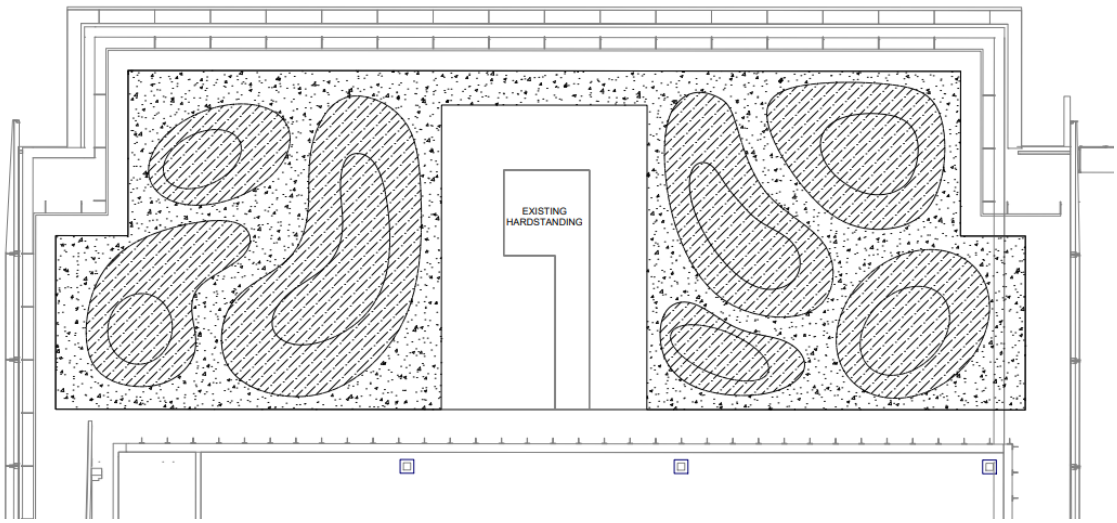


Figure 3.1 - Approved Level 06 Southwest Roof Planting Plan (ref: 006) of Application Ref. 2023/5423/P

3.9 The 2023 application (ref. 2023/5423/P) has yet to be implemented.

3.10 Nonetheless, the proposed chiller compounds will be located within the existing hardstanding area at Level 06 and will not impact on the green roof proposal approved under ref. 2023/5423/P.

4 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

4.1 The FCI's research facilities rely on an existing freezer farm which is located on the ground floor within the building. Refrigeration is an essential component of any scientific research facility. At the FCI, the designated freezer farm houses over 100 upright, freestanding scientific freezers operating at -80 degrees Celsius to securely store research samples.

4.2 Due to high demand, the freezer farm room is experiencing overheating issues. This places significant strain on the freezers and jeopardises the safe storage of valuable research samples.

4.3 To address the overheating issues and ensure the reliable operation of the freezers, the FCI has explored alternative freezer farm configurations but has concluded that there are no other suitable locations within the building to host the freezer farm. The FCI therefore looked at ways to improve the performance of the existing freezer farm with a more robust cooling solution. This involves the installation of two new external chiller compounds which will assist in rejecting the heat generated by the freezers.

4.4 The technical team has explored various locations for these chiller compounds and it is proposed that the Level 06 southwest roof facing Ossulston Street to be the most appropriate location.

4.5 The Level 06 roof has been chosen as the site for the new chillers due to its close proximity to the existing service riser FR1 where pipe and cable run is feasible to the ground floor freezer farm. There are no other external areas in the FCI to house these chillers without resulting in longer / larger pipe runs which is technically unachievable. The Level 06 roof is also adjacent to the L06 internal plant room where the chiller pump can be located.

4.6 Planning permission is therefore sought for the following:

> *"Removal of existing satellite dish and installation of two chiller compounds on Level 06 southwest roof."*

Proposed Chiller Compounds

4.7 The existing redundant satellite dish and antennas currently located on the Level 06 southwest roof hardstanding area will be removed as part of the application (see **Figure 4.1** below).

4.8 It is proposed to install two external chiller compounds on the existing hardstanding area. The units could be operating throughout the day and night, but both units would not operate at the same time.

4.9 Each compound (including acoustic louvers) will have the dimension of 2.42m wide, 3.23m deep and 3.55m high. There is a 1m separation distance between the two compounds. The enclosures will be in powder-coated metal finish to match the FCI gabled wall colour.

4.10 **Figure 4.2** shows the proposed chillers layout plan, as extracted from the proposed drawing (Ref: 170038-PP-ZZ-05-DR-A-15-0500)

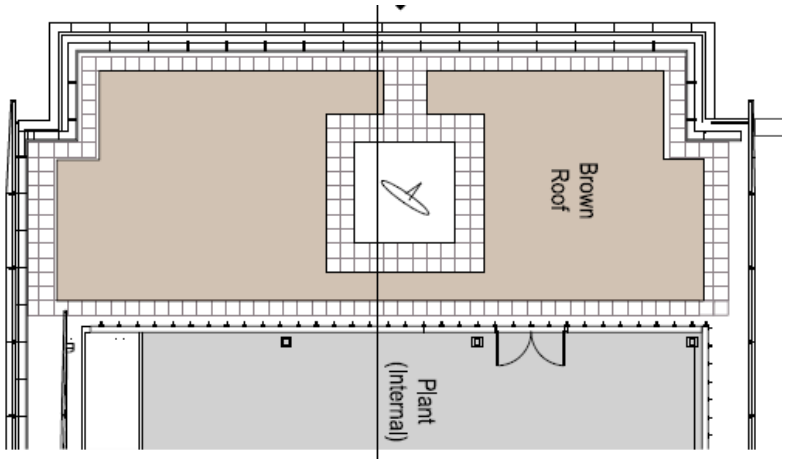


Figure 4.1 Existing Level 06 Roof Floor Plan

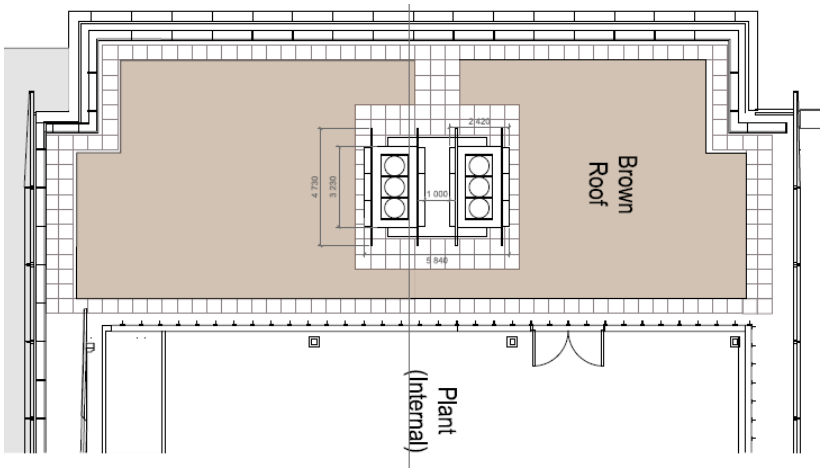


Figure 4.2 Proposed Level 06 Layout with Chiller Compounds

5 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

5.1 The proposal takes account of relevant national, regional, and local planning policy. This section of the Statement sets out the relevant adopted and emerging planning policy framework, against which the proposals are assessed in Section 6 of this Statement.

Adopted Planning Policy Framework

5.2 In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.3 The adopted Development Plan for the site comprises the following:

- The London Plan (2021);
- Camden Local Plan (2017); and
- Camden Local Plan Policies Map.

5.4 Within the adopted Camden Policies Map, the site falls within the Central London Area (CLA). It also borders the King's Cross St Pancras Conservation Area and Growth Area to the east of Midland Road. The site does not fall within any of the London Plan Protected Vistas.

5.5 In considering the development proposals, other relevant documents which will form material considerations in the determination of the planning application include the following:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024);
- National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) (as updated).

5.6 There are also several Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) documents which provide guidance on standards for development proposals, including:

- Camden Planning Guidance - Design (2021)
- Camden Planning Guidance - Amenity (2021)

Emerging Local Plan

5.7 Camden consulted on their Regulation 18 draft Local Plan between January and March 2024. They are expected to consult on an updated version of the draft Local Plan in Spring 2025. Adoption is targeted for summer 2026.

5.8 Given the current progress and status of the draft Local Plan, it is not currently considered to have any material weight and is not considered further in this statement.

6 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

6.1 This Section assesses the proposal against the relevant planning considerations set out in national and local planning policy.

6.2 The following key planning considerations are assessed in turn:

- Principle of Development;
- Layout and Appearance;
- Heritage;
- Residential Amenity; and
- Biodiversity and Drainage.

Principle of Development

6.3 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and that development should be planned positively. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that for decision-taking that means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.

6.4 London Plan Policy GG5 (Growing a good economy) supports London to provide leadership in innovation, research, policy and ideas, supporting its role as an international incubator and centre for learning.

6.5 London Plan Policy E8 (Sector growth opportunities and clusters) seeks to maximise London's global leadership in technology across all sectors and London's role as a location for research and development. Paragraph 6.8.3 of the London Plan makes reference to the FCI, noting that development plans should support existing medical and life sciences research clusters, including FCI, where there is particular demand for affordable 'grow-on- space' (including laboratory space) to ensure London retains the innovations emerging from London-based universities. The networks and facilities that support London's role as a centre of medical excellence should also be supported.

6.6 Camden Local Plan Policy G1 (Delivery and location of growth) states that the Council will create the conditions for growth to deliver homes, jobs, infrastructure and facilities to meet Camden's identified needs. The location of growth is expected to be delivered in the growth areas including King's Cross and Central London.

6.7 Camden Local Plan Policy E1 (Economic development) supports science growth sectors in the borough and promotes the development of the Knowledge Quarter around Euston and King's Cross.

Assessment

6.8 FCI is an established medical and life sciences research institute in the King's Cross and Central London Area. The proposals seek to provide additional plant infrastructure that is required to serve the function of the FCI and meet the technical demand of the laboratory space.

6.9 The research facility relies on the existing freezer farm which currently hosts over 100 scientific freezers operating at -80 degrees Celsius to store research samples. Due to high demand, the freezer farm room is experiencing overheating issues, this places significant strain on the freezers and there is a concern that it could jeopardise the safe storage of valuable research samples.

6.10 The proposed external chiller enclosures will address the overheating issue in the freezer farm room and provide a robust and reliable cooling solution to the freezer farm, facilitating improved functions for FCI.

6.11 The proposed chiller compounds will sit on the existing hardstanding of the Level 06 southwest roof and no internal floorspace will be created as part of the proposal.

Layout and Appearance

6.1 London Plan Policy D3 (Optimising site capacity through the design-led approach) states that all development must make the best use of land by following a design-led approach that optimises the capacity of sites.

6.2 London Plan Policy D4 (Delivering good design) and Camden Local Plan Policy D1 (Design) seek to secure high quality design in development. Development will be required to respect local context and character and integrate well with surroundings.

6.3 Camden Planning Guidance - Design notes that building services equipment should be incorporated into the host building aesthetically, have a minimal impact on the environment and not harm listed buildings, conservation areas or streetscapes.

Assessment

6.4 The proposals would be wholly contained within the Level 06 roof. The 3.55m high chiller compounds would sit substantially below the height of the main roof which extends 13.5m above the Level 06 roof (see Figure 6.1).

6.5 The Level 06 roof would continue to be read as a subordinate part of the building and the chiller compounds read as a functional part of the contemporary research facility.

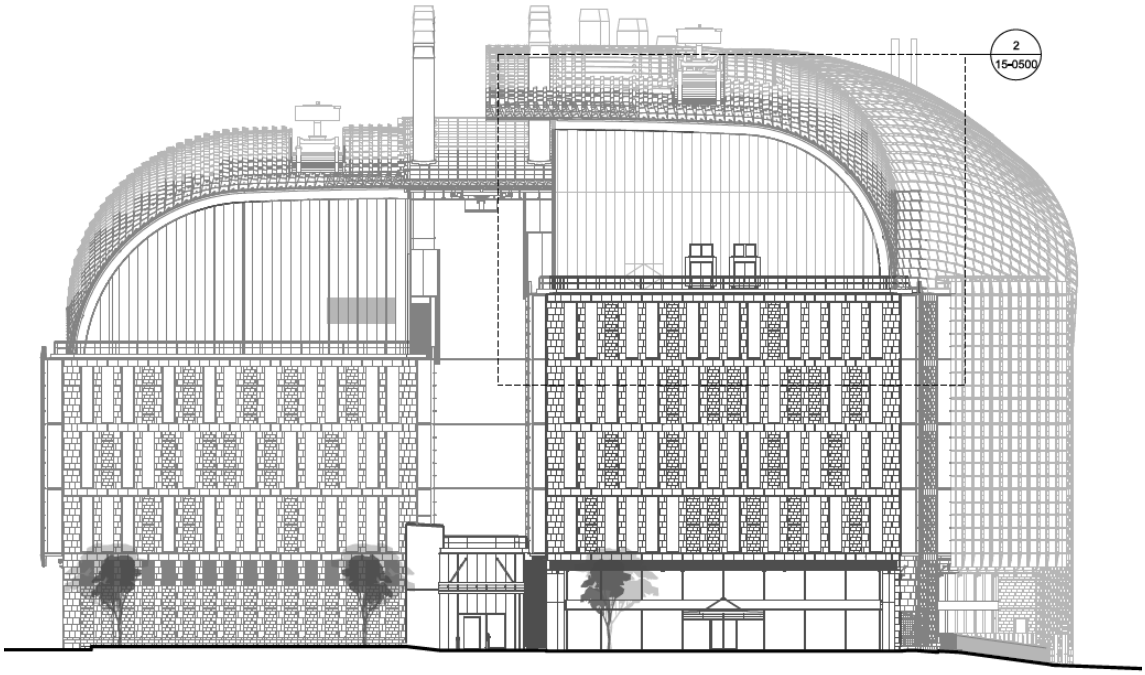


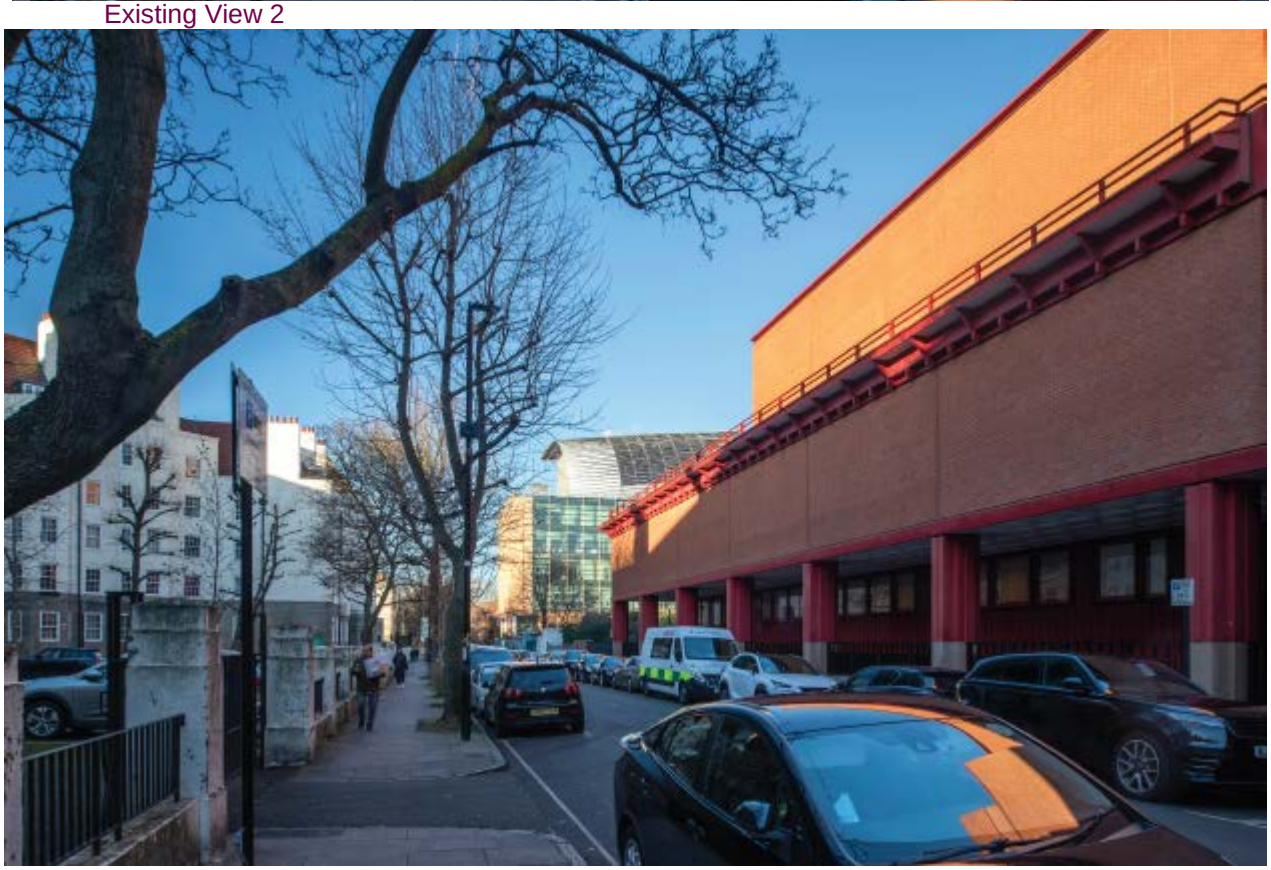
Figure 6.1 Proposed West Elevation

6.6 The submitted Design and Access Statement, prepared by Pilbrow & Partners, includes an assessment of the townscape and visual impact of the proposed chiller compounds when viewed from the five key views identified in the Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment from the original 2011 permission (ref. 2010/4721/P).

6.7 It is only marginally visible from Views 4 and 5 at Ossulston Street looking South and it is not visible from Phoenix Road (View 3). The proposal is most visible when viewed from the south along Ossulston Street (Views 1 and 2).

6.8 For illustrative purposes, Figure 6.2 below shows View 2 (Ossulston Street looking north).

Existing View 2



Proposed View 2

Figure 6.2 View 2 Existing and Proposed - Ossulston Street Looking North

6.9 Given the proposal's relatively modest scale, within the larger context of the FCI, its impact on the townscape is not considered to cause harm.

6.10 Regarding daylight and sunlight impact, the siting of the compounds situated in the middle of the Level 06 roof, with the FCI's vaulted roof extending 13.5m above, means that the compounds would not have any impact on the daylight and sunlight to neighbouring residential properties. Section 3.1 of the submitted Design and Access Statement provides further illustration to demonstrate this.

6.11 Given the location and scale of the proposed compounds, they would only be visible from street level at a distance of approximately 65m from the building. The chillers will not be visible from the residential windows of the adjacent properties along Ossulston Street.

6.12 For the above reason, the compounds are not considered to have a material impact in terms of overshadowing, overbearing, or daylight and sunlight.

6.13 For these reasons the proposals are considered to accord with London Plan Policies D3 and D4, Camden Local Plan Policy D1, and Camden Planning Guidance - Design.

Heritage

6.14 London Plan Policy HC1 (Heritage conservation and growth) states development proposals affecting heritage assets, and their settings, should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to the assets' significance and appreciation within their surroundings. The cumulative impacts of incremental change from development on heritage assets and their settings should also be actively managed. Development proposals should avoid harm and identify enhancement opportunities by integrating heritage considerations early on in the design process.

6.15 Camden Local Plan Policy D1 (Design) requires development to respect local context and character, and to preserve or enhance the historic environment and heritage assets in accordance with Policy D2.

6.16 Camden Local Plan Policy D2 (Heritage) states that the Council will preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, and locally listed heritage assets.

6.17 Camden Planning Guidance – Design notes that the Council will make a balanced judgement having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significant of the heritage assets affected.

Assessment

6.18 The site lies in close proximity to listed buildings as follows:

- British Library (Grade I)
- Chamberlain House including Shops (Grade II)
- Walker House Southern Block including the Cock Tavern Public House (Grade II)
- Levita House including shops and Somers Town Coffee House (Grade II)

6.19 A Heritage Statement has been prepared by SmithJenkins. The Statement concludes that the proposed chiller plants will preserve the significance of both the Grade I listed British Library and the nearby listed building of the Ossulston Estate. The plant, whilst visible in conjunction with the listed buildings, will be seen as part of the modern research institute building, and will not alter the dominance of the architecture of the library and residential blocks in views along Ossulston Street. The listed buildings' key elements of significance, being their design influences and architectural features, will not be impacted.

6.20 Moreover, the proposals will be viewed as another element of the diverse setting in which the heritage assets sit, providing a neutral contribution to their significance. As such, the significance of the Grade I listed British Library and the Grade II listed Walk House, Chamberlain House and Levita House will be preserved.

6.21 It is noted that the FCI is sited adjacent to the King's Cross St Pancras Conservation Area, however, the proposed works are sited on the southwest corner of the building (i.e. facing away from the conservation area). The chiller compound would not therefore be perceptible from within the conservation area and therefore the proposals would not have any material impact on the Conservation Area.

6.22 For these reasons the proposals are considered to accord with the London Plan Policy HC1 and Local Plan Policies D1 and D2.

Residential Amenity

6.23 London Plan Policy D14 (Noise) sets out a number of way to ensure that development proposals manage noise.

6.24 Camden Local Plan Policy A1 (Manging the impact of development) states that the Council will seek to protect the quality of life of occupiers and neighbours.

6.25 Camden Local Plan Policy A4 (Noise and vibration) seeks to ensure that noise and vibration is controlled and managed.

6.26 Camden Local Plan Appendix 3 (Noise thresholds) sets out the noise and vibration thresholds in the borough.

6.27 Camden Planning Guidance - Design notes that building services equipment should not harm occupant or neighbour amenity, health and/or wellbeing. Noise and vibration from building services equipment must be avoided.

6.28 Camden Planning Guidance - Amenity also provides additional guidance on these matters and should be read in conjunction with Local Plan Policy A1. Section 6 on Noise and Vibration sets out the submission requirement for acoustic report; development proposing plant, ventilation, air extraction or conditioning equipment will need to provide the system's technical specifications to the Council accompanying any acoustic report.

Assessment

6.29 The proposed compounds have been designed taking into consideration any potential impact to the occupiers' amenity, and the residential amenity of the immediate neighbours.

6.30 A Noise Assessment has been prepared by Suono Consultancy. A background noise survey was carried out in March 2023 at two locations on the roof levels of the FCI western facade and a 3D acoustic model of the surrounding area was prepared.

6.31 The Noise Assessment concludes that, with the inclusion of the proposed acoustic louvred enclosure for each chiller, the noise emission is estimated to be 1dB to 2dB below the derived noise emission limit and therefore will not exceed relevant noise emission limits at nearby noise sensitive property.

6.32 For these reasons the proposals are considered to accord with Local Plan Policies A1, A4, Appendix 3 and Camden Planning Guidance on Design and Amenity.

Biodiversity and Drainage

6.33 Camden Local Plan Policy A3 (Biodiversity) states that the Council will assess developments against their ability to realise benefits for biodiversity through the layout, design and materials used in the built structure and landscaping elements of a proposed development.

6.34 Camden Local Plan Policy CC2 (Adapting to climate change) expects development to adopt appropriate climate change adaptation measures such as not increasing surface water runoff through increasing permeable surfaces and use of Sustainable Drainage Systems; and incorporating bio-diverse roofs, green and blue roofs and green wall where appropriate.

6.35 Camden Local Plan Policy CC3 (Water and flooding) requires development to incorporate water efficiency measures and utilise Sustainable Drainage Systems in line with the drainage hierarchy to achieve a greenfield run-off rate where feasible.

Assessment

6.36 An Ecological Note has been prepared by RPS Ecology. It is noted that there is no record of protected / notable species within the application site, a developed site with hard surface.

6.37 However, there are a series of bird and bat boxes affixed to the exterior of the FCI building installed as part of the original permission, overlooking the Level 06 roof, which may receive lower level of use once the proposed chiller compounds are installed as the chillers may block potential flight paths into the boxes.

6.38 If, during the determination period, it is considered that a mitigation strategy is required, the FCI is prepared to accept a planning condition to relocate these bird and bat boxes to an alternative

location within the ownership boundary (blue line) of the building, such as the wall overlooking the Ossulston Street Garden.

6.39 The proposed development is less than 0.5ha and no habitat will be removed (i.e. below the 25sqm threshold) and therefore it is exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain.

6.40 The proposed chiller compounds will be located within the existing hardstanding area on the Level 06 roof and would not impact on the green roof proposal approved under ref. 2023/5423/P.

6.41 Finally, the proposed compounds sit entirely on the existing hardstanding of Level 06. There are no material changes to the SuDS strategy and the existing drainage infrastructure will support this area as per existing arrangements.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of The Francis Crick Institute Ltd in support of a planning application for two chiller compounds on the Level 06 southwest roof of the existing FCI building.

7.2 Refrigeration is an essential component of any scientific research facility and the FCI freezer farm has over 100 scientific freezers securely storing research samples. Due to high demand, the freezer farm room is experiencing overheating issues which risks jeopardising the safe storage of valuable research samples. A more robust cooling solution is needed, in the form of new external chillers which will assist in rejecting the heat generated by the freezers.

7.3 The FCI technical team has explored various locations for these external chiller compounds and it is proposed that the Level 06 southwest roof facing Ossulston Street to be the most appropriate and feasible location, given its proximity to existing service risers allowing pipe and cable connections to the ground floor freezer farm.

7.4 Planning permission is sought for the following:

> *"Removal of existing satellite dish and installation of two chiller compounds on Level 06 southwest roof."*

7.5 This Statement provides a detailed review of the development proposals and sets out why this infrastructure is needed to support the FCI.

7.6 The proposed chiller enclosures have been assessed in terms of design, visual impact, heritage impact, overshadowing, daylight / sunlight, noise impact, biodiversity and drainage, to ensure that the proposal would not result in unacceptable impact on neighbouring amenity, townscape, and the setting of the nearby heritage assets.

7.7 Overall, the proposals are considered to comply with the aims and objectives of the NPPF and Local Plan and as such planning permission should be granted.