

23 April 2025

London Borough of Camden  
Development Management Team  
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London  
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FAO Elaine Quigley

Dear Officer,

## **Application for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent | Temporary relocation of bag search facilities at the south entrance | The British Museum, London WC1B**

### **Introduction**

On behalf of the Trustees of The British Museum (the Museum), we enclose a planning and listed building application to support the temporary relocation of the bag search facility to the east lawn of the south forecourt and creation of a temporary opening in the dwarf wall to the east lawn for access to the Museum from the security searches (the proposals) of The British Museum, London, WC1B 3DG (the site). The Museum proposes to relocate the facility, on a temporary basis from the existing location in front of the West Residence, to the east lawn while the longer-term interim strategy to replace the structures is progressed and the construction of the Energy Centre Project (EPC) advances.

The proposed description of development for the planning permission is:

*Temporary relocation of bag search facility at the south entrance of The British Museum from the existing location to the east lawn of the south forecourt for a period of 18 months from the date of permission with associated creation of a temporary opening in the dwarf wall to the east lawn for access/egress.*

The proposed description of development for the listed building consent is:

*Formation of a temporary opening in the dwarf wall to the east lawn for access/egress from the security facility.*

### **Background and Application Summary**

The Museum is one of the UK's leading visitor attractions, regularly welcoming over 6 million visitors a year to its Bloomsbury site. The total attendance each day varies by season. However, there is a continuous flow of visitors that must be organised, with appropriate bag search facilities, before entry to the main buildings to ensure the safety of visitors, staff, and the priceless collections. The two existing search facility structures (to the North, along Montague Place and the South to which this application relates) perform this function. The existing south security facility is located within the south forecourt, in front of the West Residence, serving the main entrance of the Museum for the circa 50% of visitors who arrive via Great Russell Street. There is a second security facility which is located to the north of the King Edward Building (KEB) aligning Montague Place, which accommodates circa 50% of visitors entering the Museum.

The existing structures were originally granted temporary planning permission by the London Borough of Camden (LBC) in August and September 2020 for a period of two years (expired in August and September 2022). In March 2023, permission was granted for the continued use of the single storey structures for a further temporary period of 2 years (expired in March 2025). Most recently, on 3 March 2025, permission was granted for the continued use of both security structures for a temporary period of 18 months (until 3 September 2026). The UK's security threat level is currently 'substantial', and the UK Response Level is 'heightened'. The Museum's security threat level is, therefore, an ongoing risk with the security search facilities remaining essential to the safe operation of the Museum at the principal visitor entry points.

The Museum is actively considering its long-term strategies for the overall Museum estate. It acknowledges that the existing security structures are not an appropriate permanent solution. The Museum is working closely with an external design team and is seeking advice from a specialist visitor flow consultant to confirm the spatial requirements for visitor search and queuing, which will be evolved into a more comprehensive, longer-term solution to tackle the essential need for search facilities and improve the overall visitor arrival experience. It is anticipated that a standalone planning and listed building consent application will be made for this interim design (workstream 2) in Summer 2025.

The Museum has been working to understand the impact of ongoing major projects, seeking to deliver a holistic and coordinated approach overall. This includes the construction impacts from the Energy Centre Programme (ECP) including the introduction of an enabling works construction compound into the south forecourt for the duration of the construction period for the South West Energy Centre (SWEC) (ref: 2023/4648/P and 2023/4903/L, approved -2024), and the ongoing Visitor Welcome interim strategy which forecasts re-using the west lawn on the south forecourt as the long-term location for an interim security pavilion from August / September 2026. These concurrent work strands and the associated construction logistics have resulted in the need for the existing security structure in the west of the south forecourt to be relocated to the east lawn of the south forecourt on a temporary basis to maintain operability of the bag check and security facility and safe forecourt access/egress for the Museum's visitors while construction work advances. It is therefore proposed to relocate the security structure on the south forecourt to the east lawn to enable security and access operations to continue during this period of construction for a temporary period of 18 months, until the interim visitor welcome pavilion has obtained consent and can be constructed on the west lawn.

### **Temporary Bag Search Facility Strategy**

The on-going need for the bag search facilities has been discussed in detail with LBC officers over the past few months, including at meetings with Bethany Cullen, Dan Pope, and Ed Jarvis as well as meetings with Elaine Quigley and officers from Historic England. These discussions have informed the proposals presented as part of this planning application. The principle of and need for relocating the security structure to the south entrance to the east lawn for a period of 18 months (from May 2025 – October 2026) has also been discussed with officers. It is acknowledged that this is a temporary measure to allow for the 10-year interim solution for the security and search facilities to be developed and constructed.

As aforementioned, the interim solution will see the removal of the temporary structures to both the north and south entrances and create an enhanced visitor welcome experience. The interim visitor welcome solution is being devised with security, visitor flow, accessibility and heritage as driving principles of the design and integration within the Museum while also introducing a landscaping strategy to the south forecourt with the welcome pavilion on the west lawn. The interim solution is expected to be submitted for planning in Summer 2025 and will result in the removal of the existing bag search structures. The interim solution is proposed to be operational for a period of 10 years from September 2026. During this 10-year period a final visitor welcome solution, which will include security and bag search facilities, will be developed which will be able to respond to longer term public realm initiatives in the area.

The upcoming ECP construction programme and its implications on the existing security structure arrangement on the south forecourt, particularly the SWEC construction phase which proposes to introduce a construction compound to the immediate north of the existing south forecourt security structure, has also been discussed with LBC officers. It was advised that the proposals for the relocation of the south forecourt bag search will require a further application and forms the contents of this application.

### **Application content**

This application has been submitted via the Planning Portal (ref: PP-13936269). This letter and the following make up the application and supporting documents:

- Application and CIL form;
- Location Plan at scale 1:1250 and Block Plan at scale 1:500, prepared by DJ Architects;
- Heritage Statement, prepared by DJ Architects;
- Design and Access Statement, prepared by DJ Architects; and
- Existing and proposed plans and elevations by DJ Architects.
- BNG documents prepared by Trium.

The relevant planning application fee of £681.00 (including Planning Portal Service Charge £85.00) has also been submitted. This is based on the site area of 1,250sqm, reflecting the area of proposed structures. The charitable exemption will not trigger CIL payments.

## The Site

### The British Museum Estate

The British Museum was founded in 1753, the first national public museum in the world, and has been open to the public since 1759. With approximately eight million objects in the collection, it is arguably the world's greatest display of human history, culture and art. Both permanent collections and special exhibitions are presented within displays for the public. The Museum's Bloomsbury estate is situated on the north side of Great Russell Street within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. It is bounded by Montague Place, Montague Street, Bloomsbury Street and Great Russell Street. The estate houses several important listed buildings, including the Grade I listed Quadrangle Building, the KEB to the north of the site, and other listed elements such as the railings and a number of lampposts around the periphery. The original, now replaced, elements of the Museum date back to 1755- 1822 when Montague House was purchased to house the new British Museum collection. There was a need to expand the Museum as the collection grew bigger. Robert Smirke was the designer of a masterplan which dates from 1823-47. His plans consisted of four wings with an impressive iconic colonnade along the building's south elevation. This building consists of two principal storeys, adhering to the Greek Revival style, which also includes the columns and pediment at the South entrance.

### Surrounding uses and designations

The surrounding uses include a range of commercial office, hotel, residential and education uses. The Museum is located in the Midtown BID district (Holborn, Bloomsbury, St Giles), an Archaeological Priority Area, the Background Strategic View (Blackheath), and the Central Activity Zone (CAZ). It is located within an area of excellent transport accessibility with a PTAL rating of 6b. It is close to Russell Square, Holborn, Tottenham Court Road and Goodge Street tube stations, and several bus routes operate along Southampton Row and Bloomsbury Street. There are cycle networks in close proximity with secure bike stands. There is a Santander bike hire stand towards the junction between Great Russell Street and Montague Street. The south forecourt is designated as an open space.

### Heritage context and significance

**Conservation Management Plan** | The Museum's Conservation Management Plan (CMP), third revision dated February 2023, contains a detailed appraisal of the significance of the BM as a whole and highlights that it represents the high point of neo-classical Museum style in the UK. As noted above, much of the Museum's estate is Grade I listed, being of international significance and sitting in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The Site was constructed in numerous phases from Smirke's 19<sup>th</sup> century Quadrangle masterplan to the 21<sup>st</sup> century WCEC. There is innate value in the historical built fabric overall, especially where it survives from the earliest building phases. The use of pioneering construction techniques and innovative design across the phases is also important as is The British Museum's association with a succession of architectural figureheads. Its special architectural and historic character can in part be attributed to the significance of its collection and the considerable social value attributed to its use as a museum containing some of the world's most valuable and coveted collection of ancient artefacts. The Museum was founded on the principle that its collection was for the nation and would, therefore, be accessible to everyone. This is a key theme which continues today and is a driving force behind much of the Museum's decision making and future planning.

**Heritage significance of south forecourt** | A review of the heritage significance of the south forecourt is within the 2023 CMP. The forecourt creates the setting of the Grade I listed, highly significant Smirke façade. It is enclosed by the Grade II\* listed main entrance and gates and houses 18 Grade II listed lampposts. It is noted that the forecourt has endured to the present time in its original layout. The forecourt, comprising its grassed lawns bounded by dwarf sandstone walls and stone setts paths, has survived as designed by Smirke but rebuilt and remodelled by Lord Foster. It measures as approximately 7,000m<sup>2</sup> of circulation space through which the public pass before entering the building. It is a defined space, and its character is principally drawn from the landscaping (hard and soft), prominent boundary railings and back-drop of the monumental south elevation. The CMP notes that the temporary security structure is a detracting feature. Subject to design and justification concerning the safety of and access to the collection, a permanent solution may be permissible.

**The Bloomsbury Conservation Area** | The Bloomsbury Conservation Area as a whole derives its special interest from its surviving early street pattern, which is laid out in a rectilinear pattern with straight streets leading to open squares, which are often landscaped. The dominant architectural form is the townhouse, with some earlier 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century examples surviving alongside later 19<sup>th</sup> century properties, though a large proportion have been adapted during the 20<sup>th</sup> century for office or other uses. The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal states that "The British Museum is a cultural institution of international importance, occupying a major ensemble of outstanding Grade I listed buildings which make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area as a whole". It recognises that the principal entrance is located south of the site aligning Great Russell Street, with a secondary frontage along Montague Place.

The Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal also notes that there are a few notable local views in the area including the view north along Coptic Street, Museum Street and Bury Place and east and east and west along Great Russell Street of the BM. The BM's imposing frontage set back from the road is noted; the forecourt is considered to give a sense of openness to the CA. Mature trees, the Grade II\* listed gates, railings and gateposts define the frontage and filter views towards the entrance portico.

## **Relevant planning history**

There is an extensive planning history relating to the Museum, spanning many years. Of most relevance to this current application are the two planning applications that were granted for the existing security search facilities in situ. These were granted permission by LB Camden in August 2020 (ref: 2016/2524/P for the south entrance) and in September 2020 (ref: 2016/4219/P for the north entrance facility). These permissions were later superseded by the grant of permission by LB Camden in March 2023 (ref: 2022/3159/P) for the continued use of the single storey structures in the south and north entrances to provide an external bag search facility to the Museum for a temporary period for 2 years (expired in March 2025). Most recently, on 3 March 2025, permission was granted (ref: 2025/0038/P) for the continued use of the single storey structures in the south and north entrances to provide an external search facility to the museum for a temporary period of 18 months (until 3 September 2026).

Regarding the wider masterplan for the Museum; two permissions of note have been approved in 2024 in relation to the ECP. The first of these is SWEC and the associated incoming sub-station (ISS) for which planning permission and listed building consent was granted in September 2024 (ref: 2023/4648/P and 2023/4903/L) for the erection of a new energy centre incorporating maintenance support accommodation to internal West Road, new substation off Montague Street, all together with associated internal and external works, service runs, erection of plant, landscaping, and temporary works associated with construction following demolition of existing Energy Centre to internal West Road and removal of temporary buildings to the south of the existing energy centre on the internal West Road and to the north and east of the White Wing facing Montague Street. The second application relevant to the ECP is the Eastern Road Building (ERB) for which planning permission and listed building consent were granted July 2024 (ref. 2023/1848/P and 2023/2020/L) for the erection of a new two storey building, plus basement and associated works to provide plant and welfare accommodation ancillary to the Museum following demolition of the existing building and two storey structures on East Road (to the rear of 9-11 Montague Street and 43 Russell Square).

## **The Proposals**

### **Summary of proposals**

The existing Museum buildings do not currently provide sufficient space, or suitable facilities to adequately address security entrance requirements associated with modern visitor needs and increased security threat levels at the BM. The existing buildings are also very sensitive to change, given their Grade I listed status. The Museum is, therefore, seeking to relocate the temporary bag search facility in the south forecourt from its existing location, in front of the West Residence, to the east lawn for a further 18 months from the date of the permission, while a 10-year interim solution is being developed and delivered.

The relocation will include the replacement of the tent with an identical temporary tent though with internal modifications as a result of additional assessments by visitor flow experts to alleviate pressures on the associated external queuing in the south forecourt. The new structure will trial run new, advanced automated security search equipment. The replacement tent has been judged to adequately meet the Museum's specific needs and requirements for bag and person checks before entry into the Museum and the upgraded security equipment is expected to speed up the security process and minimise queue time. The upgraded security equipment has undergone testing by visitor flow experts, Buro Happold, and is proposed to be trialed in the relocated south forecourt structure before being introduced in the interim pavilion in later 2026. The structure is proposed to be relocated, in line with the size, height, and materials of the existing structure. The structure will also be cleaned and regularly maintained to tidy up its appearance (please refer to Design and Access Statement (DAS) by Dannatt, Johnson Architects (DJA) for further details).

The tent will sit on the east lawn in a landscape orientation to facilitate the security scanners and queues. The queues will run through the east lawn grassed area, suitable matting and queue barriers will be installed to manage people flow. A making good strategy for the east lawn is proposed to reinstate the baseline (turfed lawn) within 2 years of the development.

The proposals also seek to temporarily create an opening in the north section of the dwarf wall surrounding the east lawn to allow access into the Museum once visitors are through the security check structure. The dwarf wall is not original and was reconstructed with modern practices and materials following the Great Court redevelopment by Foster + Partners in the late 1990s. The principle of this has been discussed and agreed with LBC and Historic England given the wall is modern construction and will be made good following the removal of the structure in 2026.

### **Need and use**

The need for and use of the structures is also outlined in more detail within the DAS, prepared by DJA. The bag search structure as existing is specifically intended to manage the threat against the Museum's collections, buildings, the public, and staff. This includes the need to manage up to 20,000 visitors per day at peak times.

In recent years, to reduce risk to the public, staff, and the Museum collections it has been essential to relocate bag searching outside of the Museum building. Of note, the main entrance is too narrow for crowd control, and there is potential for much greater damage to historic fabric if these facilities are located internally. Also, once inside the building visitors would have to double back to access the cloakroom after security, which would be extremely difficult to facilitate. It is worth noting that the British Museum sees greater visitor numbers each day than other comparative cultural venues in Central London, with figures released in March 2025 showing there were almost 6.5 million visitors to the British Museum in 2024. Furthermore, the threat level is higher than other cultural venues in Central London given its position as a high-profile UK cultural institution, a HM Government building and Organisation, a popular and crowded visitor attraction, and a target for protest and trespass in response to environmental concerns and activism, restitution, and political issues. The high footfall and threat level of the Museum requires a search and welcome facility which lies outside of the main Museum buildings for security reasons.

The existing external structures facilitate the spacing and timing of visitors into the Museum, while providing an adequate facility and isolated space to search visitors which tries to minimise queuing on the street, and respects visitor privacy before entry into the main Museum buildings. They also address some of the specific challenges such as the need to minimise impact on listed fabric, maintain a sufficient distance away from the most significant attributes of the listed setting (i.e. the main Smirke portico and central colonnade), and managing the threat level.

Overall, the relocated structure will continue to provide an appropriate, safe working space on a temporary basis to support the screening of high numbers of visitors away from the Museum doors and entrance halls, where there is insufficient floorspace and a number of security challenges. They allow improved entry into the Museum and reduced congestion in the entrance halls, improving fire evacuation, and visitor/staff safety as well as adding to the visitor's experience. Further details relating to the BM's security requirements are enclosed in the DAS.

The need for the temporary opening in the dwarf wall to the south of the east lawn has been established to enable easy access / egress from the security structure to the Museum following search / check. The opening is required to ensure that there is an access point from the security tent without requiring amendments to the proposed queuing structure. It will be discrete when created and in use, and will be fully made good with the removed materials following the removal of the structure from the east lawn.

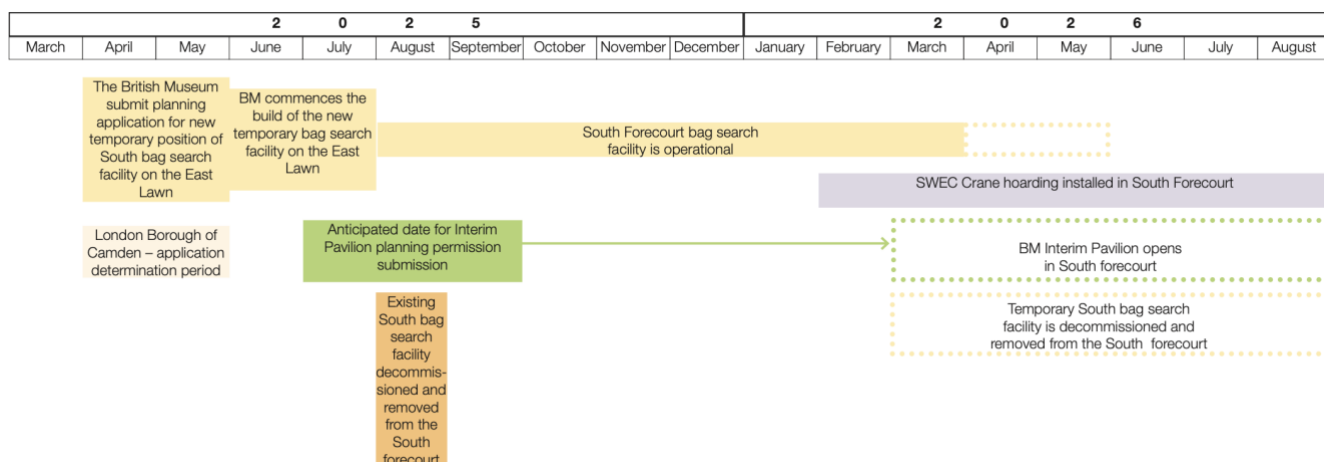
### **Timescales and Strategy**

**Timescales |** The existing bag search structures are a temporary solution to address critical security risks and manage safe public access to the Museum while it develops and introduces the 10-year interim strategic plans for a visitor welcome pavilion from now until September 2026. Therefore, permission is sought for the south forecourt tent to be relocated to the east lawn for a period of 18 months from the date of permission.

It will require an estimated 18 months from the time of approval of this application for the interim solution to be consented and then subsequently constructed, allowing for a short period of overlap for programme contingency. It is considered that this period of time is required for the development of a design solution, statutory planning approval, and construction works to take place and for the interim solution to become operational, and at which point, allowing the south forecourt structure (proposed as part of this application) and the north structure (consented ref: 2025/0038/P) to be removed permanently from the Museum estate.

There will be a short period of time during which the existing and new security structures on the south forecourt will both be in place to allow the new security structure on the east lawn to be erected. This period of overlap is not expected to exceed 6 weeks, and the existing structure will be removed upon completion of the replacement structure on the east lawn.

An indicative high-level programme of works to be carried out while the interim solution is developed and submitted for approval is as follows:



**Strategy |** The proposed strategy has been carefully considered to provide the best approach to an interim security provision which seeks to improve the visitor experience and remove the temporary security structure. The relocation of the south forecourt structure is essential to the delivery of the interim solution due to it utilising the west lawn as well as being on the critical path for the ECP construction programme to allow for a construction compound be introduced to the Museum estate in 2025. The proposed strategy for the future of the Visitor Welcome at the British Museum comprises the following:

1. Seeking permission for the retention of the north and south security structures in the current locations for a further 18 months from expiry in March 2025, allowing them to remain in situ until September 2026 (granted 3 March 2025).
2. Permission is sought for the temporary relocation of the south forecourt security structure to allow for the installation of the SWEC construction crane for its duration on site (this application).
3. Seeking permission for the 10-year interim security solution coupled with the removal of the temporary security structures, estimated to be submitted in mid-2025 for construction to be completed by September 2026 and in place for a period of 10 years.
4. Development of the permanent visitor welcome pavilion to address the Museum’s needs and respond to wider public realm initiatives.

## Planning Framework and Assessment

The policies within The National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF) including the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) form a material consideration in the determination of this application. The Development Plan is formed of the GLA’s London Plan 2021, and the Camden Local Plan is comprised of: The Camden Local Plan July 2017; the Site Allocations Plan September 2013; and the Policies Map (updated version) January 2019. These documents are supported by Camden’s Planning Guidance Note on Design and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal 2011. Historic England Temporary Structures in Historic Places 2010 also provides a useful reference.

LBC are currently in the process of preparing a new Local Plan. The Council published the Regulation 18 Consultation Version of the Draft New Local Plan in January 2024 and held a consultation on the draft Local Plan from 17<sup>th</sup> January to 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024. LBC are currently considering all responses with the view to publish an updated version of the Local Plan for consideration in due course.

## Key Planning Issues

There is no change of use attributed to the temporary structures; they remain an important ancillary function of the Museum's primary use as a museum (in F1 use class). The proposal is considered a minor development which will not trigger the need for environmental provisions. There are also no amenity considerations associated with the structures, they do not omit any noise, or block any light. Therefore, in this case, the primary planning issue relates to the impact of the temporary structure on the heritage setting. As the new tent will be located on the east lawn this will trigger a mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain of 10%, this is discussed further below. This is considered further against the planning policy context below.

## Design and heritage considerations

**Policy summary |** Section 16 of the NPPF (December 2024) requires heritage assets to be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Paragraph 203 confirms that local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation. Paragraph 212 states that, when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). Paragraph 215 confirms that, where a

development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

London Plan Policy HC1 (Heritage Conservation and Growth) requires development proposals affecting heritage assets, and their settings, to conserve their significance by being sympathetic to the assets' significance and appreciation within their surroundings.

The adopted London Borough of Camden (LBC) Local Plan (2017) planning policies most relevant to the consideration of the works presented as part of this application include D1 (Design) and D2 (Heritage). LBC Policy D1 seeks to secure high quality design in development, including that which preserves or enhances the historic environment and heritage assets in accordance with Policy D2. Policy D2 reflects the aims of the NPPF. Developments that propose less than substantial harm are required to be convincingly outweighed by the public benefits of the proposed works. Development should also preserve or enhance the historic environment and heritage assets. LBC will resist development that would cause harm to significance of a listed building through an effect on its setting.

Chapter 12 of the Draft New Local Plan addresses Heritage and Design, with D1 (achieving design excellence) and D5 (Heritage) being of note. The Draft New Local Plan is of some relevance, although it is not at an advanced enough stage to be apropos or a material consideration currently.

HE's guidance on Temporary Structures in Historic Places also provides guidance on 'best practice' in the project management, design and regulation of temporary structures in historic places. The guidance stresses the importance of taking a proportionate approach, particularly in relation to regulatory matters, because the scale and complexity of temporary structures, and their impact on the historic environment, varies widely. It recognises that the majority of temporary structures do not cause harm to the historic environment, but careful planning and project management is necessary to prevent permanent damage and mitigate any adverse impacts. The guidance also acknowledges that temporary structures in historic places are not appropriate in every location and need to be carefully positioned and designed to avoid potentially disfiguring or damaging sites and landscapes of heritage importance. Notwithstanding, there should not be a presumption against temporary structures simply because they are visible in the historic environment. The guidance also identifies the importance of siting temporary structures in such a way to minimise their impact on important views and disturbance of the visual character of historic areas.

**Assessment** | The Museum's Bloomsbury estate includes two Grade I listed buildings of international significance and other Grade II\* and Grade II structures (including the gates and railings and lampposts). It is also set within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. Other listed buildings are in the vicinity, on Great Russell Street and Montague Place. The south entrance forms one of the key approaches to The British Museum and is acknowledged to be important to the wider setting and collection of heritage assets.

However, the Museum's overall special historic interest can also be attributed to the significance of its collection and the considerable social value attributed to its use as a museum containing of some of the world's most valuable and coveted collection of ancient artefacts. In this regard, the Museum must be able to serve the needs of its visitors: this is its primary function. The entrance sequence is an important part of the Museum's visitor welcome and circulation circuit, which is also significant in the context of providing public access to the collection.

A clear need for the proposed temporary security structure and its relocation has been identified, namely stemming from the need to keep visitors and the collections safe and the inability to provide bag search facilities within the main Museum building as well as the requirement for it to be relocated to allow other workstreams to be undertaken with the Museum's masterplan. Detailed analysis has been undertaken on the function, size, and specific requirements for bag search facilities to support this. As aforementioned, medium and long-term solutions are under consideration and require more time to develop in a cohesive and integrated way to align with wider developments at the Museum. The first part of this process is anticipated to take approximately 18 months to deliver.

Several location options have been explored for the relocation of the tent, these are set out in detail in the accompanying DAS. The east lawn has been chosen as the preferred location as this will avoid impacting on the required fire tender access to the front of the portico, it will also avoid vehicular delivery routes to the south-east logistics hub, including any requirement for queuing on the hard standing in front of the lawn.

The proposed relocation and creation of the temporary opening in the dwarf wall will meet all of the Museum's basic security needs in the most efficient way until the interim solution is delivered. The opening within the dwarf wall is only temporary in nature and fully reversible and is essential to provide access to the Museum following security check. Furthermore, given the wall was reconstructed with modern materials and methods in the 1990s, the temporary opening is not understood to cause any harm to the setting of the listed building.

Although the tent structure is recognised to cause some temporary, less than substantial harm to the setting of the Museum (in line with terminology and paragraph 215), this is mitigated substantially by the pressing need and role it performs, and the overriding associated public benefits in keeping visitors and the collections safe. The structure also does not have any long-term or permanent impact on the highly significant setting of the Museum, or the openness of the forecourt. The structures relocation is also completely reversible and



scheduled to be removed permanently as part of the wider strategy by Autumn 2026. The structure is not fixed to any fabric and can be removed when the interim proposals come forward in the future.

While it is acknowledged that the relocation of the security tent will be visible in some principle views of the Museum from Great Russell Street during this temporary period, it is understood that the public benefits of enabling the wider masterplan projects such as the ECP which seeks to decarbonize the Museum estate, and the introduction of the interim pavilion in 2026, which will provide an enhanced visitor welcome experience, will balance any visual less than substantial harm (in line with terminology and paragraph 215) that the proposals present. Furthermore, the upgraded security equipment within the structure is expected to speed up the security process and thus reduce queuing in the highway along Great Russell Street. The relocation to the east lawn also allows for a more streamlined queuing process on the lawn itself which will be able to accommodate more people within the forecourt than the current arrangement and is expected to further reduce the queuing on the highway therefore providing further public benefit to the access and use of the highway without the clutter of queuing infrastructure as an obstruction.

**Landscaping and Biodiversity Net Gain** | This section should be read in conjunction with the Biodiversity Statement, prepared by Trium which provides full details of the enhancement strategy. The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide states that a baseline habitat which is restored to both the baseline habitat type and the baseline condition within 2 years of the initial impact does not need to be recorded as lost since it is a temporary impact. The proposed structure is located on the east lawn, which is currently turfed, and since the baseline habitat and condition is proposed to be restored within 2 years of the initial impact (due to the temporary nature of the proposals) only a 10% biodiversity enhancement is required to be provided on the site above the baseline condition (i.e. the turfed lawn).

The proposals seek to place mats on the lawn to enable safe access and queuing while the structure is in place. Following the removal of the structure, along with restoring the baseline habitat and condition of the existing lawn, it is proposed to provide a single tree within the south forecourt to provide the uplift to deliver the required 10% net gain for biodiversity. The enhancement strategy has been carefully considered to ensure it can integrate with future proposals. Full details of the proposals will be coordinated with the subsequent enhancements required to deliver the uplift associated with the interim security facility. The enhancement proposed as part of this application will comprise a non-native tree species located between the east lawn and the main entrance of the British Museum within a suitably sized planter for the tree planted, of up to approximately 1.8 sqm in size. The proposed enhancement and reversion of the baseline condition are in line with BNG guidance and will deliver a biodiversity enhancement in line with policy at national, regional, and local levels.

## Summary

The British Museum is one of London's most crowded spaces, an iconic British institution and one of the most visited tourist attractions in the United Kingdom. As a result, it needs to be safeguarded, 50% of its circa six million visitors enter the building via Great Russell Street and the remaining 50% of visitors use the Montague Place entrance. The existing security structures were installed to protect the public, staff, collections and building from the high threat level. This threat level remains prevalent and may be increased by the Museum when it becomes classed as an *Enhanced Major Venue* when the Protect Duty Legislation is enacted in 2025/2026. The security facilities are essential to protect visitors and staff and the Museum as a whole, allowing everyone to appreciate the listed building and the collection within safely. They are also firmly integrated into the Museum's daily operations and become an integral part of the visitor entry experience, which is very common for major attractions in London. There will be no change to the visual appearance of the new security structure as part of this application, so there will be no additional harm to the appearance of the listed buildings and conservation area. Any less than substantial harm to the setting is minimised through careful placement and balanced overall against the significant public and heritage benefits that they deliver - namely keeping visitors and the collections safe. The proposal to retain the relocated security facility for a period of 18 months will also give the Museum enough time to design and deliver its interim solution.

The proposals are, therefore, considered to meet the requirements of the relevant London Plan and LBC Policies, alongside other material considerations within the NPPF. The proposal will support the care and display of the collection and improve the overall visitor experience, which in turn will help the Museum meet its objectives and maintain its international reputation, meet the objectives of Policies D1 and D2, and thus continue to enhance its status and significance.

In accordance with the agreed terms of the Museum's Planning Performance Agreement (clause 9.3(h)), we look forward to confirmation of validation of the application within 3 working days of submission, or notification within the same timeframe to confirm if additional information is required.

If you have any questions, please contact Vicky Cartwright, or Shonagh Ramsay on 020 7257 2363 or email [shonagh@theplanninglab.com](mailto:shonagh@theplanninglab.com).

Yours sincerely,

**The Planning Lab**