

PLANNING STATEMENT

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Prepared For

**UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
LONDON**

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement is written in support of an application for listed building consent for internal alterations only to replace the existing non-original internal vestibule doors within the Flaxman Gallery with new doors.

1.2 This report should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Architectural drawings by Burwell Deakins Architects;
- Design and Access Statement of Burwell Deakins Architects dated 03/01/2013; and
- Historic Significance and Assessment Report of Alan Baxter & Associates dated January 2013.

Photograph 1: Existing doors



2 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

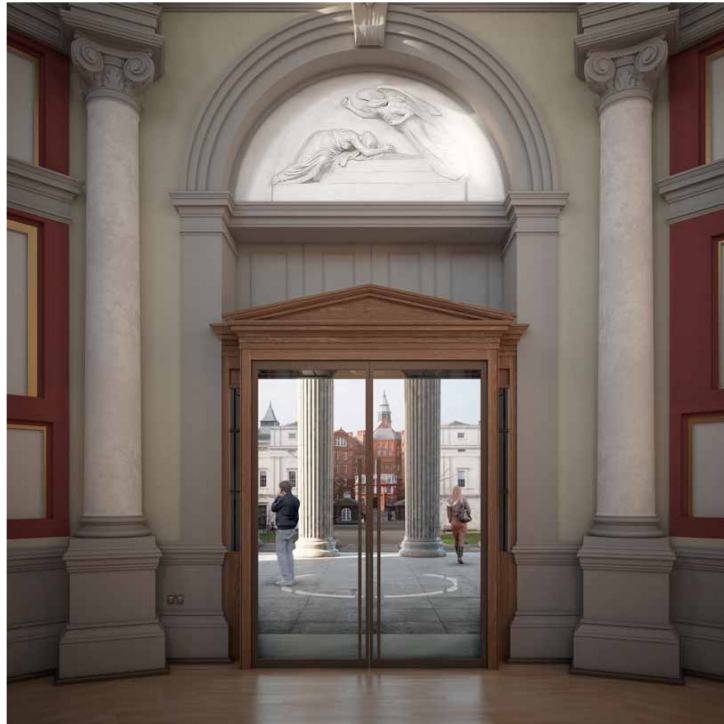
- 2.1 Listed building consent was refused on 18th June 2012 (LPA ref: 2012/2041/L) for replacement of existing vestibule doors at first floor level to the Flaxman Gallery. The Council's reason for refusing consent was as follows:

The proposed new door, set within the historic joinery of the Flaxman Gallery, by virtue of the loss of historic fabric, inappropriate scale and proportions, material, design details and harmful visual impact upon the appearance and character of the Wilkins Building and of the interior of the Flaxman Gallery and would have a detrimental impact upon the special architectural and historic interest of this Grade I listed building, contrary to policy CS14 (Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage) of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Core Strategy, and policy DP25 (Conserving Camden's heritage) of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Development Policies.

3 THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 Following discussions during the application process of the refused scheme referred to in the preceding section, consent is now sought for a revised scheme taking account of comments made previously by the Council's Officers.
- 3.2 The proposal seeks consent to replace the non-original 1940's doors to the internal timber vestibule which sit behind the main Portico doors to the Wilkins building.
- 3.3 The main Portico doors are painted timber and are of solid appearance. No change is proposed to these doors.
- 3.4 The existing internal doors within the Flaxman Gallery and of which sit behind the solid Portico doors are a pair of heavily framed timber and glass doors which date from the 1940's.
- 3.5 Whilst it is proposed to retain the timber surround, the doors would be replaced with a minimal framed pair of glass doors using a bronze frame to compliment the existing timber vestibule.
- 3.6 The new doors would "open" up the relationship between the Portico and the Flaxman Gallery allowing views into and out of the building on a daily basis when the main solid entrance doors would be opened.

Photograph 2: Proposed doors



Relevant Planning History

- 3.7 In February 2012 listed building consent was granted (LPA ref: 2011/6450/L) for the installation of a glass oculus to complete the gallery as it was intended in the original design and the sculpture of St. Michael overcoming Satan sitting upon it. Bronze and glass were used to respect the metallic finishes used within the historic interior, indeed, as referred to in the Officer's delegated report.
- 3.8 In 2004/2005 listed building consent was granted to replace the principal stair to the library using materials of bronze and glass to respect the historic interior.

4 PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27th March 2012. The new NPPF largely carries forward the planning policies and protections contained within Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) albeit in a more streamlined form with an emphasis on a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 4.2 A presumption in favour of Sustainable Development is seen by Minister's as "*a golden thread running through both plan making and decision-taking*" but it makes clear that the starting point for decision making is the development plan and applications for development proposals that accord with an up-to-date Local Plan should be approved.

Development Plan

- 4.3 The development plan for the purposes of this application is the London Plan dated July 2011 and the Core Strategy and Development Policies contained within the Local Development Framework for the London Borough of Camden. Having regard to the Council's reason for refusal of the earlier scheme, relevant development plan policies are:
- CS14 - Promoting High Quality Places & Conserving our Heritage; and
 - DP25 - Conserving Camden's Heritage.

5 THE PROPOSAL AND PLANNING POLICY COMPLIANCE

NPPF

5.1 Paragraph 14 states:

*"At the heart of the NPPF is a **Presumption in favour of sustainable development,**".*

5.2 The NPPF relies upon two well-known definitions for 'sustainable development':

1. The United Nations General Assembly definition: "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"; and
2. The five 'guiding principles' of sustainable development set out in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy: "living within the planet's environmental limits; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and using sound science responsibly."

5.3 In that context, the NPPF identifies three dimensions to 'sustainable development':

- An economic role;
- A social role; and
- An environmental role.

5.4 Paragraph 14 of the NPPF continues:

- *Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change, unless:*
 - *- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework as taken as a whole; or*
 - *- specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted".*

5.5 Paragraph 14 further continues that for decision taking this means:

- *Approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay.*

Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

- 5.6 Paragraph 134 of the NPPF advises 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 its optimum viable use"*.
- 5.7 The contemporary design and use of materials has been carefully considered to respect the architectural integrity of this grade I listed building. The use of bronze has been chosen to compliment the timber vestibule in which the doors will sit and to blend with the bronze and glass used with other contemporary elements introduced with the reinstatement of the oculus in 2012. Old materials such as glass and bronze, used in a modern style, such as the stair to the library and the oculus have shown how such materials can be skilfully integrated to enhance historic spaces and the proposed bronze and glass doors will further enhance this important public space.
- 5.8 The significance of the building lies both in its architecture and its historic role as a public space, first as a vestibule behind the entrance portico where students gather and later, a cast/sculpture gallery. The inter-visibility with the portico is totally lost at present because of the heavy internal doors. Replacing the doors will greatly enhance the significance of this relationship and be a public benefit consistent with the objectives of the NPPF.

Development Plan Policies

- 5.9 Core Strategy policy CS14 seeks to ensure that Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets are preserved and enhanced. Development Plan policy DP25 advises that consent will only be granted for alterations and extensions to a listed building where no harm would be caused to the special interest of the listed building.
- 5.10 The proposal takes the opportunity to improve the visual link between the Flaxman Gallery and the main entrance of the Wilkins building which has been severed over the years with the introduction of heavily framed internal glazed doors and the closure of the main entrance doors to the Portico.

5.11 The Portico was designed by Wilkins to be the principle entrance into the building. The Flaxman Gallery was purpose built within the central core as a means of incorporating a major gift of sculpture to the University. It is therefore now proposed to provide an open appearance to the building as it was originally intended.

5.12 Indeed, the Officer's delegated report for the earlier refused scheme comments that:

"It is recognised for some time that the closure of the Portico entrance lends a closed appearance to the building as a whole and that the spatial link between the Flaxman Gallery and the formal portico has been lost. These overall aims to open up the historic front entrance doors are fully supported".

5.13 The proposal therefore is to open up the main entrance doors on a daily basis which in turn will open up views of the architecturally important space of the Flaxman Gallery, the oculus within it and the statue of St. Michael conquering Satan.

5.14 Currently, even with the main entrance doors open, the view is extremely limited by virtue of the heavily framed internal doors. The doors were designed when the oculus was open and the sculpture of St. Michael was not on display. Each door leaf comprises two full height glazed panels with three transoms set in heavy timber frames. This creates eight small panes of glass in each door and interrupts the clarity of views into and out of the Gallery and Portico. By removing these non-original 1940's doors and replacing them with bronze framed glass doors will significantly improve visibility into and out of this important space, especially now that the oculus has been opened up as originally intended and the glass plinth will ensure St. Michael's sculpture is raised to its original height.

5.15 Whilst it is recognised that other internal doors within the remainder of the building are of similar style and proportions to the existing internal doors proposed to be replaced, in this particular important space incorporating the Flaxman Gallery, the existing doors are rather heavy and cumbersome in appearance which do not sit comfortably within their setting and therefore sit at odds with the architectural

form and detail of this section of the Wilkins building. The bronze framed glass doors which are proposed fully respect other contemporary elements within the Wilkins building such as the oculus and the principal stairs to the library. Furthermore, the sculpture of St. Michael overcoming Satan set within the oculus would be more readily visible for the public to see from outside the building.

- 5.16 For the reasons given in paragraphs 5.9 - 5.15 above, the proposal complies with the objectives of relevant development plan policies, namely Camden's Core Strategy policy CS14 and development plan policy DP25.

English Heritage

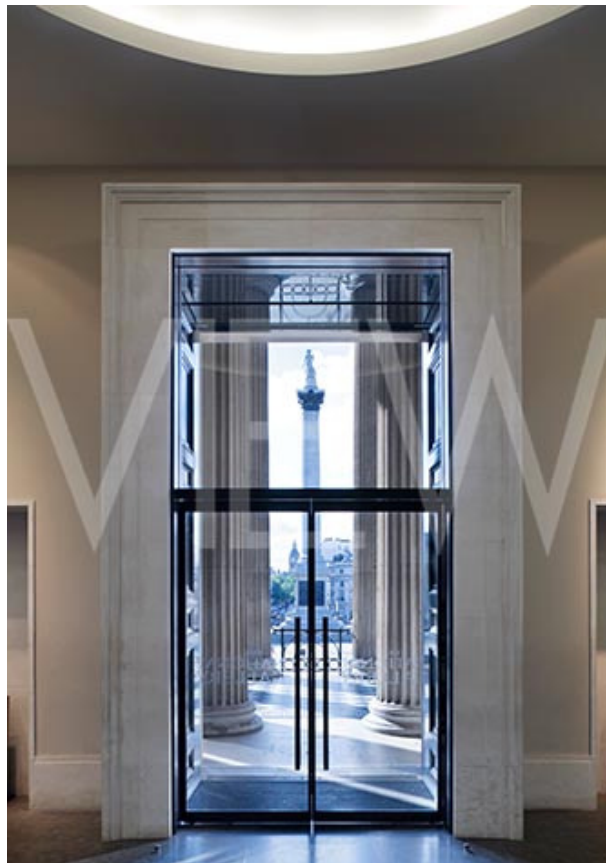
- 5.17 Early discussions with English Heritage suggested that a way forward would be to introduce a contemporary design following the precedent at the National Gallery, another Wilkins building in central London. And following that advice, English Heritage raised no objection to the replacement of the internal vestibule doors to the Flaxman Gallery with a contemporary design of glass and bronze and issued their formal direction in a letter to the Council dated 7th June 2012. See Appendix 1.

6 OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

National Gallery

- 6.1 Contemporary glass doors can be found in another central London Wilkins Building, the National Gallery. The doors beneath the National Gallery Portico have been replaced with new bronze framed glass doors. English Heritage were fully supportive of this proposal since it shows that a contemporary design can effectively be integrated into a classical building.

Photograph 3: Doors to the National Gallery



- 6.2 Whilst the Council's Conservation Officer had reservations and dismissed the National Gallery precedent because the glass door reflects light, it is worth noting that the Porticos of the National Gallery and the Flaxman Gallery are orientated differently, the former being slightly east of due south and the latter facing south

west. This means therefore that in the summer, the sun passes directly over the portico of the Flaxman Gallery and in winter, when the sun is lower, it passes the portico very late in the afternoon. Furthermore, the reflectiveness of the glass will depend very much on the difference in light levels inside and outside. For example, when it is darker outside the Gallery, the interior will be very clearly seen.

- 6.3 It is fair to say therefore, that the light reflection will have a lower impact on the views into the Flaxman Gallery than it does at the National Gallery.

7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The replacement doors of contemporary design within the Flaxman Gallery, using traditional materials of bronze and glass are wholly respectful to the historic interior of this important Grade I listed building and would not cause substantial harm to the significance of the heritage asset.
- 7.2 Furthermore, the replacement doors would open up the view into and out of the Flaxman Gallery providing a public benefit affording visibility of the oculus and the sculpture of St. Michael overcoming Satan.
- 7.3 The proposal complies with all relevant development plan policies and with central government advice in accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. In our judgement no other material considerations weigh against it.
- 7.4 Accordingly we trust that the London Borough of Camden will determine that the application for listed building consent can be granted.