

Address:	Gordon Square Garden Gordon Square London		
Application Number:	2012/3103/P	Officer: Catherine Bond	
Ward:	Bloomsbury		
Date Received:	11/06/2012		
Proposal: Erection of statue of Noor Inayat Khan (bronze bust on a slate plinth) in northern corner of Gordon Square.			
Drawing Numbers: Site Location Plan; 103 rev A; Plan of Statue's Location; Noor Plinth Revised Drawing dated 05.12; and Design and Access Statement.			
RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY: Granted			
Applicant:		Agent:	
Mr Martin Burchett University of London Senate House Malet Street London WC1E 7HU			

ANALYSIS INFORMATION

Land Use Details:			
	Use Class	Use Description	Floorspace
Existing	Sui Generis - Statue		N/A
Proposed	Sui Generis - Statue		N/A

OFFICERS' REPORT

Reason for Referral to Committee:

1.0 SITE

- 1.1 Gordon Square is a designated private open space situated in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. It is a traditional London square which forms an integral part of the Bloomsbury townscape. It is listed in the London Squares Preservation Act 1931, and is also designated a site of nature conservation importance by English Nature.

- 1.2 It was developed by Thomas Cubitt in the 1820s, as one of a pair with Tavistock Square, which is situated to the east. The central garden was originally for the private use of the residents of the surrounding houses, but it now belongs to the University of London and is open to the public. The square has recently undergone restoration and refurbishment, including the reinstatement of railings replicating the originals.
- 1.3 The square is lined by listed buildings, in particular the terrace on the east side, and it is dominated on the west side by the listed Church of Christ the King and the adjacent Dr Williams' Library.

2.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 Planning permission is sought for the erection of a statue of Noor Inayat Khan within Gordon Square.
- 2.2 The proposed statue is to be located in the north eastern corner of the square. The statue will measure 2.020m from the path to the top of the bust. The plinth is 400mm square with a 50mm deep x 500mm square slate slab on top of it, supporting the bust.
- 2.3 The existing path will be extended in matching materials at its corner by approximately one metre into the shrub bed to enable those who wish to view the statue to do so without obstructing the path for other users. There are no other changes proposed to the hard or soft landscaping.

3.0 RELEVANT HISTORY

- 3.1 **2005/0306/P**
Planning permission was granted for restoration of garden square, including alterations and part change of use of gardener's building to incorporate a kiosk, replacement of boundary fence with railings, alterations to path layout, entrances, signage and site furniture.
- 3.2 **2005/0308/C**
Conservation area consent was granted on 05/08/05 for demolition of single storey extension to gardeners building.
- 3.3 **2011/0072/P**
Planning permission was granted on 17/02/11 for the erection of a plinth and bronze bust in Gordon Square Garden (Tagore Statue).

4.0 CONSULTATIONS

Statutory Consultees

- 4.1 **English Heritage**
The application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance and on the basis of the Council's specialist advice. The statue has been

discussed with them pre-application and been developed in agreement with the Gordon Square Garden Committee. It is understood that whilst this statue is considered acceptable, a commitment that no future statuary will be accepted by UoL Estate management Department has been given. We would support this approach in order to preserve the character of the Square.

4.2 Garden History Society

No comment, have referred the consultation letter to the County Gardens Trust.

Conservation Area Advisory Committee

4.3 Bloomsbury CAAC

Consider the proposed statue to be an appropriate addition to this historic square. Concern regarding the choice of slate for the plinth alongside bronze for the statue. The most appropriate material would be Portland stone which is also very durable (see officer's report for comment).

Ward Councillor

4.4 Cllr Adam Harrison - Objection

- 4.4.1 Objects to the installation of a statue in Gordon Square as he did in Brunswick Square. Brunswick and Gordon Square share the similar characteristics of being more informal, relaxed gardens rather than formally laid out squares such as we have elsewhere in Bloomsbury. The introduction of a commemorative statue would detract from the relaxed nature of the Square. The Tagore statue now in Gordon Square should not be regarded as a precedent. It dominates the Square, a head looming over the garden on top of what many regard to be inappropriately chosen stone.
- 4.4.2 He is concerned at the 'memorialisation' of the Bloomsbury garden squares, which ought to remain just that – garden squares, not memorial parks, however great the deeds we in 2012 may consider of the people to whom the statues are to commemorate.
- 4.4.3 This statue, while in a corner of the Square, will only add to this 'memorialisation' effect and soon Gordon Square will become overburdened. Though smaller, this statue still does not achieve the unobtrusive, surprising and charming effect of statues such as the piece of work in the south-east corner of Woburn Square. This is a formal memorial in an informal square.
- 4.4.4 The council should not grant permission for statues in the Bloomsbury garden squares until we have a policy in place to properly deal with how we manage these spaces.
- 4.4.5 The Noor Inayat Khan statue and Tagore proposals were taken forward by UCL. If UCL has wider views on how the squares should be managed then they should engage with the Council and ward councillor rather than pursue a piecemeal approach which may result in a string of memorial gardens across Bloomsbury.

Internal Departments

4.5 Parks and Open Spaces

No objection. University College London is the freeholder of Gordon Square and will be responsible for the maintenance of the statue. As this is a statue in a public park, they do need to ensure that they have considered the community safety issue of attracting protests. However, it Parks do not consider that this is a risk for this statue.

4.6 Arts and Tourism

No objection.

4.7 Adjoining Occupiers

	Original
Number of letters sent	10
Total number of responses received	0
Number of electronic responses	0
Number in support	0
Number of objections	0

- 4.7.1 Four site notices were displayed from 29/06/142 to 28/06/12 and the application was advertised in the local press on 05/07/12. No letters of representation have been received to date.

5.0 POLICIES

5.1 NPPF (2012)

5.2 The London Plan (2011)

5.3 LDF Core Strategy and Development Policies (2010)

- CS5- Managing the impact of growth and development
- CS14- Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage
- CS15- Improving parks and open spaces and encouraging biodiversity
- DP24- Securing high quality design
- DP25- Conserving Camden's Heritage
- DP31- Provision of and improvements to, public open space and outdoor sport and recreation facilities

5.4 Supplementary Planning Policies

- Camden Planning Guidance – CPG 1 2012
- Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy 2011

6.0 ASSESSMENT

6.1 Background

- 6.1.1 The subject of the proposed statue, Noor Inayat Khan, was a secret agent who worked behind enemy lines during World War II, one of only three women in Churchill's Special Operations executive. She was eventually captured and tortured but revealed nothing about her colleagues and gave away no secrets before being shot dead. She was awarded the Croix de Guerre and the George Cross. As a child, she lived at No 29 Gordon Square and later at No 4 Taverton Street, to the north of the square. There is no memorial to her in this country.

6.2 Policy and Guidance

- 6.2.1 The Council currently has no adopted policy or guidance which specifically relates to statues or memorials within public spaces, therefore each proposal must be assessed on its own merits, with reference to material considerations such as the visual impact of the statue and its effect on the character and appearance of the square, and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The Council has a statutory obligation to determine the application and it would not be possible to refuse to determine the application until such guidance is in place. Both Parks and Planning are currently in the process of preparing new guidance on statues, memorials and public art, however, these documents are only in draft form at this stage and have not been subject to consultation and therefore carry no weight.

6.3 Impact on the appearance of the Gardens and Conservation Area

- 6.3.1 The proposed statue is to be located in the north-eastern corner of the square, chosen partly because of its proximity to Taverton Street, but also because it is a location where it would be accessible to people whilst remaining unobtrusive within its surroundings. The statue would be located in a discreet corner of the square and given its modest proportions and design is not considered to draw undue attention particularly given the overall scale of the gardens; the trees and soft landscaping would remain the dominant feature. Whilst the square does have an informal character, with meandering paths and generous soft landscaping, the statue would read as incidental rather than as a formal focal point and in this respect it differs significantly to the recent proposals for a statue in Brunswick Square which is mentioned by Cllr Harrison. Although it is located relatively close to the boundary railings, from outside the square the statue will be largely concealed by the adjacent soft landscaping with views filtered through the railings, thus minimising its visual impact.
- 6.3.2 It should be noted that a statue of Indian Poet Rabindranath Tagore, an alumnus of the University of London already exists in Gordon Square. This was granted planning permission in 2011 and is located in a far more prominent location on the western side of the Square. It is considered that the current proposal in conjunction with this would not clutter the gardens to such an extent that it could be considered to have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the square or the conservation area. It is not unusual for gardens to incorporate statues or figurative memorials and given the size of this garden it is not felt that the two statues would cumulatively devalue the openness of the space.

6.4 Detailed design

- 6.4.1 The materials for the statue have been chosen to blend sympathetically with the surroundings: the plinth would be made from grey/green slate whilst the bust would be bronze. Although the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Advisory Committee have commented that the most appropriate material would be Portland stone, it is considered that the grey/green slate would sit more comfortably against the backdrop of the square's soft landscaping and blend tonally with its surroundings. Furthermore, slate is a natural stone widely used for roofing as well as a cladding material, and has excellent durability and weathering properties.

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The size, location and materials of the proposed statue are considered to be appropriate and would preserve the character and appearance of Gordon Square and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.
- 7.2 It is recommended that planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

8.0 **LEGAL COMMENTS**

- 8.1 Members are referred to the note from the Legal Division at the start of the Agenda.