

Delegated Report		Analysis sheet		Expiry Date:	05/06/2007
		N/A / attached		Consultation Expiry Date:	18/05/2007
Officer			Application Number(s)		
Elaine Quigley			2007/1859/P		
Application Address			Drawing Numbers		
School of Oriental & African Studies (Land at Torrington Square) University of London Thornhaugh Street London WC1H 0XG			See draft decision notice		
PO 3/4	Area Team Signature	C&UD	Authorised Officer Signature		
Proposal(s)					
Amendments to previously approved permission dated 10/07/2000 (LBC reg. no. PS9804730) (construction of two new teaching/administration buildings 'East block' & 'West block'; enclosure of Northwest Philips building terrace; new library entrance; glazing over ground floor well of 'old building'; reinstatement (to grade) of Torrington Square East side road; including partial demolition of lower ground floor squash courts and roof top plant) for the extension of roof top plant to west wing and provision of an access hatch in the Torrington Square roadway to provide service access to the existing heating basement boiler plant room.					
Recommendation(s):		To grant planning permission subject to deed of variation.			
Application Type:		Full Planning Permission			

Conditions or Reasons for Refusal:	Refer to Draft Decision Notice					
Informatives:						
Consultations						
Adjoining Occupiers:	No. notified	00	No. of responses	01	No. of objections	00
Summary of consultation responses:	No letters received as a result of display of site notice (expired 18/05/2007)					
CAAC/Local groups* comments: *Please Specify	Bloomsbury CAAC – comments Advised that existing plans would be required in order to make any comprehensive comments on the scheme.					

Site Description

The application site relates to the West Wing Building of the wider complex of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) that includes the Philips Building (the library) to the northeast and is linked to the original SOAS Old Building to the east which is a Grade II Listed Building. The building is bounded to the southwest by Torrington Square, a pedestrian walkway to the north and northeast that leads to Woburn Square, the Institute of Education and Law to the north and Thornhaugh Street to the southeast. The 7 storey University of London's Birkbeck College lies to the southwest.

The site lies within the centre of the University Precinct. Although the building is not listed it does lie within the cartilage of the listed building and is located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

Relevant History

PS9804730 and LS9804731

Planning and listed building consent were granted on 10/07/2000 for the construction of two new teaching/administration buildings 'East block' & 'West block'; enclosure of Northwest Philips building terrace; new library entrance; glazing over ground floor well of 'old building'; reinstatement (to grade) of Torrington Square East side road; including partial demolition of lower ground floor squash courts and roof top plant.

Relevant policies

Adopted Unitary Development Plan 2006 (UDP)

SD6 'Amenity for occupiers and neighbours', SD7B 'Noise and vibration pollution', SD8 'Disturbance from plant and machinery', B1 'General design principles', B3 'Alterations and extensions', B6 'Listed buildings', B7 'Conservation areas', T12 'Works affecting highways', Appendix 1 'Noise and vibration thresholds'.

Camden Planning Guidance 2006

'Conservation areas', 'Design', 'Extensions, alterations and conservatories', 'Listed buildings', 'Noise and vibration', 'Overlooking and privacy', 'Plant, machinery and ducting – design and siting'.

Assessment

Planning permission is sought for the extension of roof top plant to west wing and provision of an access hatch in the Torrington Square roadway to provide service access to the existing heating basement boiler plant room. The previously approved scheme was implemented in three phases, phase 1 relating to the research block attached to the Philips Building that was completed in 2002, and phase 2 relating to the extensions to the library/reading rooms. This phase was completed in 2006. The proposed works relate to phase 3 of the approved scheme and it is this part of the development to which the application relates.

The roof top enclosure would extend the length and width of the roof of the approved smaller sixth floor that is set back approximately 4.4m from the main façade of the new building. The roof top enclosure would measure 3.2m in height. The main façade of the enclosure would be clad in natural anodised aluminium spandrel cladding. Aluminium louvres would enclose the roof plant area on the western and eastern side elevations. Views of the louvres would be restricted by the extension to the internal staircase that would provide access to the roof top enclosure that is located on the western side of the block and the Old SOAS Building to the east. The extended staircase would be clad in fair-faced concrete to match the approved scheme.

Design of the approved west wing building (PS9804730/R2)

The approved west wing building would be a free standing building of four floors above ground level, plus a recessed floor at the top. An atrium was proposed along the inside of the west wing to link it to the Philips Building. This element of the approved scheme remains unchanged. The building would be constructed using fair-faced pre-cast concrete, stone, high quality structural steelwork, anodised aluminium and clear glazing.

The main changes to the previously approved west wing building are:

- Erection of new roof top plant enclosure clad in anodised aluminium panels to match the window grid of the floors below of the previously approved west building
- Installation of a new roadway hatch in the pavement to the front of the building. It would measure 5.5m by 4.4m and would provide service access to the basement plant room of the building.
- Erection of a 2m high steel balustrade on the roof of the approved atrium that provides a secondary fire escape route from the new west wing building to the fifth floor of the Philips Building to the rear.

The main issues to consider are:

- The impact on the character and appearance of the building
- The impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area
- Amenity - noise
- Highway issues

Character and appearance of the building

The proposed roof top plant enclosure would match the character and appearance of the approved west block building in terms of its design and the materials. An extension to the approved modern freestanding building would be considered acceptable.

Character and appearance of the conservation area

The roof top plant enclosure would be set back from the front elevation of the approved scheme by 4.4m. As it extends 3.2m in height it would not be visible from immediate southwest views from Torrington Square. The proposed extension to the roof of the approved west wing building would be mainly visible from longer views within the college precinct including longer views from Torrington Square. Although the proposal would result in the loss of the stepped design of the new west wing extension in relation to the seven-storey Philips Building it would not be considered to compromise the integrity of the scheme. It is considered that the quality of Torrington Square as an open space would not be prejudiced by the proposed extension.

The extension to the building to provide an additional storey to the approved six-storey building would

not exceed the heights of the adjoining listed Old SOAS Building or the Philips Building to the rear.

The extension would not result in any further restriction of important views of the Old SOAS Building from Torrington Square. It would not be considered to harm the character and appearance of the adjoining listed building and would be considered acceptable.

The proposal would not be visible from surrounding vantage points at Woburn Square, Malet Street, and Thornhaugh Street.

Conservation and Urban Design Team raised no objections to the proposal.

Amenity - noise

The closest residential properties are located at 28-29 Torrington Square that is approximately 45m to the north of the application site. The applicants have submitted an acoustic report that confirms that the roof top plant enclosure would comply with the Council's minimum noise standards.

Environmental Health has confirmed that there would be no objections to the proposal subject to conditions being attached. The proposal would be considered acceptable in terms of the impact on the amenity of the adjoining residents in terms of potential noise pollution.

Highway issues

Torrington Square is a privately owned road. The installation of a hatch within the road network does not raise any highway safety issues and is considered acceptable.

Conclusion

The proposal would be considered acceptable in terms of its impact on the character and appearance of the approved modern building, its impact on the adjoining listed building and on the character and appearance of the conservation area. It has been demonstrated that the roof top enclosure would comply with the Council's minimum noise standards and therefore would not be considered to have an adverse impact on the amenity of adjoining occupiers. The proposal raises no highway safety issues and would be recommended for approval.

Disclaimer

This is an internet copy for information purposes. If you require a copy of the signed original please contact the Culture and Environment Department on (020) 7974 5613