

Delegated Report		Analysis sheet	Expiry Date:	12/03/2009
			Consultation Expiry Date:	24/02/2009
Officer			Application Number(s)	
Jenny Fisher			1. 2009/0443/P 2. 2009/0444/L	
Application Address			Drawing Numbers	
Institute Of Germanic Studies 29 Russell Square London WC1B 5DP			Refer to decision letter	
PO 3/4	Area Team Signature	C&UD	Authorised Officer Signature	
Proposal(s)				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> External alterations in connection with the use of the building as the Weiner Library, including the provision for disabled access to the front of the building. Internal and external alterations in connection with the use of the building as the Weiner Library, including the provision for disabled access to the front of the building and an internal lift from basement to second floor level. 				
Recommendation(s):		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Grant planning permission with conditions Grant listed building consent with conditions 		
Application Type:	Full Planning Permission Listed Building Consent			

Conditions or Reasons for Refusal:	Refer to Draft Decision Notice					
Informatives:						
Consultations						
Adjoining Occupiers:	No. notified	04	No. of responses	01	No. of objections	00
			No. electronic	00		
Summary of consultation responses:	<p>A letter of support has been received from The University of London Estates and Facilities Division. The University of London owns the freehold of these premises which within the next few months will be occupied by Birkbeck under a long lease. The University fully supports the proposal to make the premises fully accessible in a manner which is appropriate and sympathetic to the building and its surroundings. Hope that the outcome is favourable.</p>					
CAAC comments:	<p><u>Bloomsbury CAAC Comment</u> The application is preferable to 0438. Please see comments on 0438 re: disabled access.</p> <p>BCAAC comments on 0438 are as follows: The disabled lift at 28 Russell Square is absolutely hideous in the elevated position. Is it possible to have an elevating platform that is more elegantly designed?</p> <p><i>Officer comment 0438 (including disabled access) was presented to Members' Briefing Monday 09th March 2009. This concern was explored and it as agreed not to refer the application to DC Committee. Planning permission and listed building consent were subsequently granted on 10th March 2009. The current application proposes an identical solution. The platform lift has been designed to be as unobtrusive as possible, it matches that at no. 28 recently approved in March 2007. Access to no. 29 via the lift at no. 28 is not possible; the buildings are not linked internally.</i></p>					

Site Description

The building comprises basement, ground, first, second and third floors. It forms part of a terrace to the north/west corner of Russell Square. The Square is enclosed by hotels to the east and terraces of 5-storey buildings on the remaining three sides. Most of the 5-storey buildings are set back from the pavement with front basement areas enclosed at ground floor level with black railings. Some of the buildings are in the ownership of the University of London and several are listed. The application premises back onto an area of open space in front of Senate House.

No. 29 is Grade II listed and located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The building (and the rest of the terrace) were used for academic purposes at the time of listing and have remained in the same use since.

Relevant History

28 Russell Square

13/03/2007 2006/5200/P Planning permission and listed building consent for installation of platform lift to the front entrance on Russell Square frontage including alterations to railings to form gates to provide improved access to the existing university building (Class D1).

29 Russell Square

Withdrawn by the applicant in late 2008 (2008/3869/P and 2008/4009/L). Development proposed was similar to the current applications. There was a presumption against the proposal due to the impact on the building and in particular the loss of historic fabric.

Concurrent applications have been submitted for 29 Russell Square (2009/0443/P and 2009/0444/L). The development proposed in this application is similar to the recently approved applications (2009/0483/P and 2009/0442/L); the difference is the internal lift would not provide access to the third floor and thus a dormer extension for the lift overrun would not be required.

10/03/2009 2009/0438/P 2009/ 0442/L Planning permission and listed building consent for:

1. External alterations in connection with the use of the building for the Weiner Library, including provision for disabled access to the front of the building and erection of a dormer roof extension to accommodate a lift over run
2. Internal alterations and works associated with provision for disabled access to the front of the building and erection of a dormer roof extension to accommodate a lift over run

Relevant policies

Replacement UDP 2006: S1/S2/S7; SD1C; SD6; B1; B3; B6; B7; C1C

Camden Planning Guidance 2006: access; conservation area; design; listed buildings; roofs

PPG15 Planning and the Historic Environment

Revised Planning Guidance for Central London: 12 University Area

Bloomsbury Conservation Area Statement

Assessment

Following the withdrawal of the previous applications (2008/3869/P and 2008/4009/L), submitted with the current application is a full justification for the need to make this building fully accessible and highlighting benefits to the University of London and LB of Camden.

The current application varies in a relatively minor way from applications 2009/0438/P 2009/0442/L approved 10/03/2009. The building would not be completely accessible, because the internal lift would extend to the second floor only. The lift overrun would thus be internal (third floor) and not within a small roof dormer as approved in the alternative scheme (2009/0438/P and 2009/0442/L). Therefore,

there would be no works to the main roof of the building.

Proposed

The refurbishment and redecoration of the building, provision of new W.C. and kitchen facilities and brick infills to three small windows in the rear elevation, bricks would match existing.

Also proposed are works to improve access into and within the building. An external platform lift would allow access from the pavement to the front entrance. An internal hydraulic lift 1.2m x 1.2m within a lift shaft measuring 2m x 2.5m would be installed towards the rear of the building connecting basement to second floors. This would require a small internal lift overrun that would be installed on the third floor. Toughened opal glazing would replace glazing in an existing first floor internal stairwell window; this would conceal the lift behind.

Works proposed are in association with the occupation of the building by the Wiener Library, the world's oldest institution for the study of anti-Semitism. It was established in Berlin in 1928 and transferred to Central London in 1939 and comprises some 65,000 items. Alternative premises are sought because the lease of the building currently used and located in the City of Westminster, is due to expire. The library requires similar facilities to existing i.e. size, lifts for the movement of books and people and controlled access.

The basement of the building would be used mainly as a book store; a reception/meeting area would be on the ground floor; a reading room and room for the senior librarian on the first floor; the second floor would mainly be used for administration including librarian's and the Director's Office. On the third floor a small kitchen would be installed, a photo archive and staff work stations. The building would be staffed by employees and volunteers.

The main issues for consideration in this case are accessibility and impact on the fabric of the listed building and character and appearance of the conservation area.

PPG15 paragraph 3.4 states that when applying for listed building consent applicants should be able to justify their proposals and show why the works which would affect the character of the building are desirable or necessary. Paragraph 3.5 (general criteria) lists issues relevant to the consideration of all listed building applications, included is the extent to which proposed works would bring substantial benefits for the community. Paragraph 3.28 states that in principle it is important that disabled people should have dignified access to and within historic buildings.

Accessibility

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) is designed to improve access for disabled people to employment, education and services. Under the Act the Wiener Library would be classified as a service provider because the library is open to members of the general public.

The Council also requires spaces used by the public to be fully accessible to disabled people in the interest of facilitating equal opportunities and access for all. The applicant's intention is to create an inclusive built environment; this is in line with UDP policy SD1C. Camden Planning Guidance declares that it is important that everyone should have dignified and easy access to and within historic buildings regardless of their level of mobility.

The lift would be wheelchair accessible and a 1500mm turning circle would be provided at each landing. To achieve this lift doors would be located in adjacent openings on some levels.

UDP policy C1C states that the Council will seek to ensure that where appropriate educational facilities are made available for public use. The Reading Room would be open daily to the general public and there is an Education and Outreach programme in place for the public and students at higher education level. Lectures, book launches and seminars would be held throughout the year.

The provision of a more accessible building is in compliance with UDP policies and planning

guidance. Public access to the library is welcome.

Impact on the fabric of the listed building and character and appearance of the conservation area

Platform lift

The only alteration to the front elevation involves the installation of a platform lift to match the one recently approved (2006/5200) for the adjoining building, (No. 28) also grade II listed. The lift would comprise a toughened glass and steel platform. Access from the pavement would be through an opening in the existing balustrade. This would require the removal of a small section of plinth at pavement level and the modification of a panel of railings for the installation of a gate. The gate would be traditional in appearance and designed to appear as unobtrusive as possible. As such, it is considered that the proposal would achieve an acceptable balance between the need to improve access into the building, and the preservation of its special architectural and historic interest.

An alternative location that would allow for a new and effective disabled access to the building has been considered. The only other possible location would be to the rear of the building. Access to the rear of the property could be achieved through a gated entrance to the side of No. 30 Russell Square and into open space in front of Senate House.

However it is considered that this is not an acceptable option. To the rear ground floor of the application site a small yard with timber gates is used as a store. Moreover, all available guidance on accessibility states that the main access to publicly accessible buildings should be available for all to use rather than expecting disabled users to enter a building through a secondary access, in this case a bin store. This would not be a dignified entry into the building; therefore the only acceptable means of access would be to the front as proposed.

Internal works

The surviving floor plan of the building would be preserved. Alterations would be made in the basement but this is an area that has already been heavily altered in the past. The installation of partitions in rear wings are considered acceptable. Existing surface mounted services would be removed and run in less intrusive locations. Folding doors at ground floor level would allow flexible use of the large front room whilst being sympathetic to the features of the room.

In-fill of windows

The in-fill of three small windows (only two of which would be visible) in the rear elevation would be a minor alteration and required as a consequence of the relocation of W.C. accommodation. Bricks to match existing would be used and the alteration hardly noticeable. The special historic value of the building and character and appearance of the conservation area would not be harmed.

Lift

The applicant has submitted an access statement that identifies alternative options that have been considered including a stair lift, a wheelchair platform stair lift and a platform lift. However, none of these would be appropriate as the main staircase is also a means of escape and cannot be blocked. In addition the listed status of the building imposes constraints that need to be considered. The lift would be located in one of the least historically significant areas to the rear. It is the largest internal car size (1200mm x 1200mm) that can be achieved given the constraints of the building. The applicant's 'appraisal of conservation issues' (para. 3.5) submitted with this application describes the back extension as having been extensively altered with new window openings, replacement sashes and the alteration of internal partitions in the late 19th/early 20th century. Examination on site dates the flooring to a similar period. No historic plans have been found which conclusively corroborates this, however following an internal inspection and exploratory works, the Council's Conservation Officer has not contradicted this assessment. Whilst the building fabric in the area within which the lift would be installed has some historic interest, it is considered that what would be lost would be kept to a minimum; as a consequence this is considered acceptable.

Lift over-run

As the lift serves only up to the second floor, the over-run can be contained within the building's

envelope, leaving the roof intact.

Justification summary

The following is a summary of the justification for the proposed development submitted by the applicant.

- No. 29 is the only building available within the Birkbeck estate that would meet the needs of the Library and Birkbeck. It is adjacent to the School of History, Classics and Archaeology. The Master of Birkbeck has explained that the Birkbeck estate does not have a building of the appropriate size with DDA access and none of buildings (27 – 29 Russell Square) purchased from the University of London have lift access to all floors. Nos.27/28 are already linked and would be too large;
- access is required into and within the building, an internal lift would facilitate the movement of books and other material and allow independent access up to the second floor for disabled people.
- the internal lift would comply with Part M criteria, including size, turning circles at each landing and maintenance requirements;
- alterations would be kept to a minimum and generally confined to areas of less historic importance;
- the relocation to No. 29 would enable a partnership with Birkbeck; a constituent college of the University of London that has a strong commitment to research excellence. No. 29 is adjacent to the Birkbeck School of History, Classics and Archaeology providing a unique opportunity for academic staff and students to utilise the Wiener collection.
- the move to Russell Square would put the Library in the academic heart of London and enable it to build a much larger user base;
- the site is well served by public transport;
- public benefits include the introduction to the borough of a self-sustaining organisation (a registered charity/financially stable) committed to racial, religious and ethnic harmony. It attracts users from all walks of life in the U.K. and beyond. It is a lively cultural centre with an imaginative programme of public events. All which would enhance London's role as an international centre for higher education and enrich the cultural life of the L.B.Camden.

Summary

The University of London, with its constituent colleges, has a sizeable presence in the Borough. In line with policy C1(C) the Council will support the future growth of the University.

Although the use of a listed building imposes constraints on works that may be considered acceptable, Camden Planning Guidance advises that measures to improve access can often be sensitively incorporated without damage to their special architectural or historic interest. It is considered that this has been achieved. The application is in line with UDP policies and guidance for accessibility and visual impact.

It is considered that the current application has addressed concerns raised during pre-application discussions with the L.B.Camden. A full justification of the need to improve access into and throughout the building for the benefit of employees and users of the service has been submitted; this was inadequate when the previous application were submitted; works to the building have been kept to a minimum and would be sensitively incorporated without damage to the building's special interest. The value of this important global research facility to London is acknowledged. It is also acknowledged that relocation as proposed would bring substantial benefits to the University of London and to L.B. Camden. It is therefore considered that, on balance, benefits summarised above outweigh limited harm to the listed building caused by the installation of an internal lift.

Recommend approval.

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