

The October Gallery Development

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Narrative accompanying planning and listed building applications

Location & Use

The October Gallery is located within a three storey Victorian Brick Building within a vibrant area of Bloomsbury, south of Queens Square and to the east of Southampton Row. Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children is situated off the eastern side of Queens Square and the British Museum is located in the immediate area to the west.

The October Gallery is a nationally and internationally recognised centre for the provision of contemporary international visual art exhibitions, with thriving Schools and Outreach education programme and a reputation for hosting a diverse range of performing arts, music, poetry and seminar events. The Gallery's central location has allowed for creative links to be sustained with both the local community and neighbouring institutions such as the British Museum, the School of Oriental and African Studies, the Tate Gallery, the Hayward Gallery and the Great Ormond Street Hospital amongst others. It is supported on a project by project basis by Camden Borough Council and a number of other funding organizations.

The Gallery opened in 1979, with the aim of exhibiting the foremost exponents of contemporary art from all cultures around the world. At the time, this was a radical departure from the Euro-centric norms of gallery practice in the UK, and as such, October Gallery was the first UK gallery actively and consistently to promote awareness of modernism, change and the avant-garde in the cultures of other countries. In the intervening years, the Gallery has showcased contemporary art from over 80 different countries, gaining a reputation as a vibrant educational resource, which both reflects and caters to the healthy diversity of London's population.

The Gallery celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in 2004 with a landmark exhibition and a series of events funded by the Arts Council England. Moving beyond this milestone allowed for a reassessment of the Gallery's current systems and objectives, resulting in a re-branding process, a re-design and expansion of the website, www.octobergallery.co.uk, and a revised exhibitions strategy that would continue to keep pace with the dynamic nature of the sectors in which the Gallery operates.

The Gallery is run by the October Gallery Trust which is a registered charity (327032). The Gallery has recently renewed its lease for a further 25 years. The accommodation comprises the gallery, a restaurant and courtyard on the ground floor; offices and studios for artists on the first floor; a theatre and library on the second floor and plant and studio space in the basement.

Access

The Gallery is readily accessible from the London Underground network with both Russell Square and Holborn Stations on the Piccadilly line within walking distance. Numerous Busses; 19,38 and 168 run close to the intersection of Theobalds road and Southampton Row.

Vehicular access is from Old Gloucester Street, which is one way. Old Gloucester Street is situated within the Congestion Charge Zone and parking in the immediate area of the Gallery is on a 'Pay and Display' basis.

The main entrance to the building is located on Old Gloucester Street and is well sign posted with a vertical banner.

The two steps up to the ground floor level has impaired disabled access into the gallery in the past and achieving inclusive access to the October Gallery forms the basis of this planning and listed building application. The proposed access route via the pedestrianised Gage Street utilizes both the four meter width for wheelchair maneuverability and will provide direct access to the gallery from the street.

The Historic Building Fabric

The October Gallery occupies premises in Old Gloucester Street built in 1863 as a girls' infants school. It is listed Grade II. The listing describes the building thus:

TQ3081NW

798-1/100/1750

GV II

Formerly known as: St George the Martyr Girls and Infants School Old Gloucester Street.

Girls' infants school, now private residence. 1863-4. By S S Teulon. Stock brick with yellow brick and stone dressings, slate roof. Early Gothic style.

3 storeys, front to Old Gloucester Street, return to Gage Street. Irregular composition adhering to street line. Ground storey with door at north end and lancet openings with forceful continuous stone mullions to windows. First floor windows with pointed brick relieving arches. Top storey with tall arched windows, some with geometrical tracery. Gables and external chimney breasts and chimneys, now slightly simplified. Entrance at north end with fanlight under pointed arch. Interior altered, but with teaching spaces essentially surviving. On angle with biblical quotation and date 1863. Characteristic school building by Teulon, which forms a strong group with No. 25 the boys school (qv) and St George the Martyr church, Queen Square (qv), the latter altered by Teulon.

The building has been altered on many occasions, most notably by the extension of the second floor into the courtyard. However the street facades remain substantially unaltered except for the addition of a door off Gage Street.

Development proposal

Earlier this year the Gallery was successful in securing funds from the Arts Council specifically for carrying out improvements to the gallery space, raising its presence on the Street and providing access for the disabled.

Previous Planning and Listed Building Consent Applications

In 2006 proposals submitted to Camden Council for the development of the Gallery space and for its improved access were granted planning consent (9/10/06) and listed building consent (9/10/06). The work is being carried out in two phases. The first covering the work to the Gallery space was completed in October 2006. The second phase providing improved access to the Gallery will be carried in conjunction with the work related to this application.

Consent to the works described in this current application will release a second tranche of funding (from the Bridgehouse Trust). This together with the Arts Council funding will allow disabled access and disabled provision to be completed.

Extent of Works

The proposal converts a small store currently accessed from the ground floor courtyard into a disabled WC accessed directly from an existing internal corridor.

The provision of this new facility requires:

1. The existing external door to be removed and the opening bricked up. The existing brick arch and reveal brickwork will be retained. The new brickwork, so far as is possible, will match the existing brickwork.
2. The retention of the existing small window, but the clear glass will be replaced with a obscure cast glass pane.
3. The formation of a new door opening in the passage end wall to give access to the new disabled persons' WC.
4. The widening of the existing door between the Gallery and the passage to give access for wheel chairs.
5. The installation of the necessary plumbing, power, lighting, sanitary ware and associated fittings.
6. Decorations and PVC sheet floor finish.