
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

**LONDON HOUSE,
MECKLENBURGH SQUARE,
LONDON
WC1N 2AB**

**APPLICATION BY GOODENOUGH COLLEGE
FOR PLANNING PERMISSION & LISTED
BUILDING CONSENT**

May 2014



Our Ref: SJC/he/615WC1/48/1

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 We are instructed by our client (Goodenough College), to submit an application for planning permission and listed building consent for the installation of 4 no. low level ventilation housings (3 no. in the basement lightwell fronting Mecklenburgh Square, and 1 no. in the forecourt on Doughty Mews), in connection with the basement plant rooms. In addition, the installation of an external waste drainage run at first floor level of the quadrangle elevation of the Guildford Street block. These alterations are in connection with the continued use of London House as accommodation for international postgraduate students.

2 HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

- 2.1 Government guidance on listed building control is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF'). This advises that the level of detail provided in this statement should be proportionate to assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance (Para 128). This statement outlines the features of the property and explains how the works impact on the listed building, as well as Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

- 2.2 London House is located on the south side of Mecklenburgh Square. The building is formed of a perimeter block with central courtyard. The block is bound by Mecklenburgh Square to the north, Doughty Street to the east, Guildford Street to the south, and Mecklenburgh Place to the west; with access from Mecklenburgh Square.
- 2.3 This is a neo-Georgian building and was designed in 1933; London House was built to the arrangement of architect Sir Herbert Baker, his partner Alexander T. Scott and their successor Vernon Helbing between 1935 and 1963. The building varies in height from three to six storeys, plus lower ground floor and basements. Its elevations consist of a basement of flint with random stone blocks, with the upper storeys of red brick with stone quoins, bands and cornices; the building has hipped roofs of tile.

LISTED BUILDING

- 2.4 London House is Grade II listed and was first listed on 19 April 1996, (listing reference 477499). The listing description is as follows:

*CAMDEN TQ3082SE DOUGHTY STREET 798-1/96/1755 London House 19/04/96
GV II See under: London House MECKLENBURGH SQUARE.*

Includes: London House DOUGHTY STREET. Includes: London House GUILFORD STREET. International Hall of Residence for postgraduates. 1936-63. By Sir Herbert Baker (who prepared a complete scheme in the 1930s), Alexander T Scott and Vernon Helbing. Basement of flint with random stone blocks. Upper storeys of red brick with stone quoins, bands and cornices. Hipped roofs of tile. Neo-Georgian style, with collegiate planning. EXTERIOR: 2-4 main storeys. Irregular fenestration with sash windows; dormers in roofs. Guilford Street (south) front: centre and right wing of 1936-7, left wing of 1949-54. Basically symmetrical, with broad projecting ends and lower centre, the central entrance having three open round arches, the middle one higher, and heraldic devices in stone above. Right wing (housing library) with stone plaque between ground and upper storey commemorating Sir Charles Parsons, and cornice with large inscription in raised brickwork, 'Immortalis est ingenii memoria'. Doughty Street (east) front largely of 1961-3, similar to south front but simplified, with three open round entrance arches in centre, the middle one raised. Mecklenburgh Place (west) front of 1949-54 plain, basically symmetrical with some irregularities and occasional iron balconies. Open quadrangle within has good elevations, notably the east side where the five-bay stone-dressed hall is set left of

centre with full-height central bay bearing inscription to Evan Evans Bevan below round-headed window; and south side which has projecting round-arched cloister arcade along ground storey and a bust of FC Goodenough in niche over central entrance. *INTERIOR:* wing of 1936-7 has generous asymmetrical staircase hall, paved and walled to half-height in Hopton Wood stone, balustrade partly stone, partly iron, urns in niches. Double-height dining hall with high oak panelling, plaster over with astronomical 'Empire clock' at south end, and cove to ceiling with coloured plaster shields and devices by Laurence Turner. Ground floor with common room with deep plastered beams. Parsons Library over (partly altered) with oak bookcases to half height and cove to ceiling with plaster shields and devices commemorating scientific institutions also by Turner. South-west wing includes on ground floor Churchill Room of 1952, oak panelled to full height, and a small chapel formed in 1962-3 by Helbing with panelling behind altar. *HISTORICAL NOTE:* London House was established in 1931 by FC Goodenough - who raised the funds with which to found the Dominion Students' Hall Trust - as a place where students from the British Empire could live a collegiate life. One of Sir Herbert Baker's most characteristic later buildings, comparable with Rhodes House, Oxford, and Church House, Westminster. The post-war northern and western ranges were completed to a simplified design after Baker's death in 1944.

2.5 In addition a number of buildings in the immediate vicinity are also listed. Those closest to Goodenough College are:

- 11-26 Mecklenburgh Square and attached railings (Grade II*)
- 29-38 Doughty Street and attached railings (Grade II)
- 8, 9 And 10 Guilford Street And Attached Railings to Nos. 9 And 10 (Grade II)
- Bollard at junction with Mecklenburgh Place (Grade II)
- Gates and Railings on east side of Forecourt to Former Foundling Hospital (Grade II)

BLOOMSBURY CONSERVATION AREA

2.6 The Bloomsbury Conservation Area covers an area of approximately 160 hectares extending from Euston Road in the north to High Holborn and Lincoln's Inn Fields in the south and from Tottenham Court Road in the west to King's Cross Road in the east.

2.7 The initial designation of Bloomsbury as a conservation area in 1968 sought to protect elements of development from the Georgian and earlier eras, but excluded areas where there had been significant later redevelopment. There have been numerous subsequent extensions that have mostly reflected a growing appreciation of Victorian and Edwardian and high quality 20th century architecture.

- 2.8 London House is located within Sub-Area 12 – Coram’s Fields / Brunswick Gardens, which is dominated by large-scale, green open spaces of historic significance in and around Coram’s Fields. The spaces act as a green lung, providing a sense of openness which contrasts with surrounding areas. There is a predominance of institutional (hospital, university, education), recreational and community uses with secondary residential and office uses.
- 2.9 In terms of the built form, the Georgian townhouses in the sub area form homogeneous terraces and tend to be listed. The 20th century buildings vary in age and style; several are listed, and include the grade II listed 1930s-1960s neo-Georgian London House by Sir Herbert Baker which occupies a block between Mecklenburgh Square and Guilford Street.

3 POLICY CONTEXT

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

- 3.1 National planning policy advice is contained in the adopted National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012), which replaces the previous Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Planning Policy Statements.
- 3.2 The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people (Para 56).
- 3.3 In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance (Para 128).

LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

- 3.4 The planning policy framework for this site comprises of the adopted London Plan (July 2011), the Camden Core Strategy 2010-2025 and Camden Development Policies (both adopted November 2010).

Camden Core Strategy 2010-2025 (November 2010)

- 3.5 Policy CS14 (Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage), the Council will ensure that Camden's places and buildings are attractive, safe and easy to use by:
- a) requiring development of the highest standard of design that respects local context and character;
 - b) preserving and enhancing Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens;
 - c) promoting high quality landscaping and works to streets and public spaces;
 - d) seeking the highest standards of access in all buildings and places and requiring schemes to be designed to be inclusive and accessible;
 - e) protecting important views of St Paul's Cathedral and the Palace of Westminster from sites inside and outside the borough and protecting important local views.

Camden Development Policies (November 2010)

- 3.6 Policy DP24 (Securing high quality design), the Council will require all developments, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings, to be of the highest standard of design and will expect developments to consider:
- a) character, setting, context and the form and scale of neighbouring buildings;
 - b) the character and proportions of the existing building, where alterations and extensions are proposed;

- c) the quality of materials to be used;
- d) the provision of visually interesting frontages at street level;
- e) the appropriate location for building services equipment;
- f) existing natural features, such as topography and trees;
- g) the provision of appropriate hard and soft landscaping including boundary treatments;
- h) the provision of appropriate amenity space; and
- i) accessibility.

3.7 Policy DP25 (Conserving Camden's heritage), in order to maintain the character of Camden's conservation areas, the Council will take into account conservation area statements, appraisals and management plans when assessing applications. Furthermore, in order to preserve or enhance the borough's listed buildings the Council will only grant consent for alterations to a listed building where it considers this would not cause harm to the special interest of the building.

4 THE PROPOSALS AND ITS EFFECTS

- 4.1 The design of proposed alterations (ventilation housings and drainage housing) is contained in the proposed drawings and the Planning, Design & Access Statement.
- 4.2 The following is an assessment of the effects of proposals in terms of the heritage significance of the listed building and the other heritage assets.

ASSESSMENT

- 4.3 The scheme involves the installation of 4 no. low level ventilation housings (3 no. in the basement lightwell fronting Mecklenburgh Square, and 1 no. in the forecourt on Doughty Mews), in connection with the basement plant rooms. In addition, the installation of an external waste drainage run at first floor level of the quadrangle elevation of the Guildford Street block. Both these alterations are in connection with the continued use of London House as accommodation for international postgraduate students.
- 4.4 More particularly, in order that the basement plant rooms are ventilated to comply with the current regulations, ventilation ductwork must penetrate into open air. It was considered that the most discrete positions would be in pavement wells at the perimeter of the building. Three of these housings (along Mecklenburgh Square frontage) will be positioned in the basement lightwells and be below pavement level. These ventilation housings would be covered in roofing felt and finished to match the appearance of the lightwell. The ventilation housing on the Doughty Street frontage would position at pavement; however, it would be in a similar position to a raised manhole cover, which is to be removed as part of these proposals. The flank walls to the ventilation housing would be finished in smooth grey render, and the roof will be clad in roofing felt.
- 4.5 The ventilation housings have been designed to minimise their visual appearance and the housings are sympathetic to their surroundings, shaped to achieve the smallest possible profile, and an appropriate external appearance, finished in smooth grey render and / or roofing felt.
- 4.6 In terms of the external drainage run, due to the nature of the 'public spaces' (i.e. Chapel and Small Common Room), which do not have suspended ceilings and are seen as feature spaces in London House, as such the waste drainage run cannot penetrate these spaces. Therefore, the alternative is to route the waste drainage run along the outside of the elevation. The waste drainage run would be located at low level, and largely obscured from view (from the quadrangle) by the existing parapet wall of the first floor balcony. In addition, the pipework will be of a cast iron construction and painted black to match the existing rainwater pipework prevalent around the building.
- 4.7 These minor alterations, which are considered necessary to ensure the continued function of London House as accommodation for international postgraduate students, while not harming the heritage significance of the listed building.

- 4.8 It is considered that the proposed works will not have a negative effect on the special historic character or architectural interest of the listed building, and the proposals are relatively minor in nature and will not adversely affect the heritage interests of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. Therefore, the proposal will comply with the provisions of the NPPF and Policies CS14, DP24, and DP25.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The proposed works will enable London House to continue to function as accommodation for international postgraduate students, while not harming the historic and special architectural importance of the listed building and conservation area, and as such consent should be granted.