

Eastman Dental Hospital
256 Grays Inn Road, London, WC1X 8LD

Design, Access & Heritage Statement



July 2014

Consultancy for the
Historic Built Environment

KMI Heritage

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The following report has been prepared by KM Heritage in support of applications for planning permission and listed building consent submitted in connection with limited air conditioning provision at the Eastman Dental Hospital, 256 Grays Inn Road, London, WC1X 8LD.
- 1.2 The editor and lead author of this report is Kevin Murphy B.Arch MUBC RIBA IHBC. He was an Inspector of Historic Buildings in the London Region of English Heritage and dealt with a range of major projects involving listed buildings and conservation areas in London. Prior to this, he had been a conservation officer with the London Borough of Southwark, and was Head of Conservation and Design at Hackney Council between 1997 and 1999. He trained and worked as an architect, and has a specialist qualification in urban and building conservation. Kevin Murphy was included for a number of years on the Heritage Lottery Fund's Directory of Expert Advisers.
- 1.3 The drafting of this report was undertaken by Kate Graham MA, PG Dip Cons (AA). Kate has been an assistant Historic Buildings and Areas team leader in the London Region of English Heritage, as well as working in English Heritage's policy team. Most recently, Kate was Conservation & Design Manager at the London Borough of Islington. She has also worked at the Architectural Heritage Fund. Kate has extensive experience in dealing with proposals that affect the historic environment and also has a background in research, in policy analysis and in understanding historic buildings and places. She has trained as a historian and has a specialist qualification in building conservation.
- 1.4 The report is structured so as to take into account the purpose and nature of the proposed scheme, the impact of the proposals on the listed building and the acceptability of the proposals against national and local policy.

Designations

- 1.5 The Eastman Dental Hospital is a grade II listed building and was added to the statutory list in 2007. The list description for the building reads as follows:

Dental clinic. Built 1928-30 to the design of Sir John Burnet and Partners. Late C20 alterations including window replacement.

MATERIALS: Steel-frame construction clad in brown brick with Portland stone dressings.

PLAN: 2 storeys high, with central block of 7 bays flanked by lower 3-bay cross wings; these have additional mezzanine floor over raised basement. Central cruciform entrance hall with small rooms set within angles of cross. Large waiting room to left leads through to N wing; central corridor to right has large rooms to either side and leads through to S wing and staircases. Room plan of each wing differs and has been altered. Upper floor of central block is large open-plan treatment room, originally for children. N wing much altered internally and interlinked with adjoining hospital buildings.

EXTERIOR: Symmetrical façade in restrained, Beaux-Arts influenced Classical style. Central 7-bay block has arcaded ground floor with keystones, of which central 3 bays form engaged portico with taller central arch carried on Tuscan columns. Arches to 2 flanking bays are linked by plain impost bands and have recessed windows and tympana with herringbone brickwork and stone lozenge motif. Groin-vaulted porch. Entrance has moulded stone architrave and dentilled cornice. Tympanum has carved stone cartouche with figure of mother and child, flanked by cornucopiae, enclosed within glazed fanlight. Panelled double doors with brass letterboxes with owl motif; rectangular fanlight. Arched window bays flanking entrance, and to inner porch sides have same decorative treatment as ground-floor windows. Steps to entrance. Ashlar area walls to central recessed block continue flush with stone-faced basement of the flanking wings. Entrance flanked by pedestals with sculptures of seated boys. Ironwork has gone. Wings have three windows, plus window to inner return; those to ground floor and mezzanine are set within continuous vertical recesses with stone aprons to upper windows. String course between floors. Upper-floor windows have plain reveals. Original steel Crittall windows have been replaced. Rear elevation plainly finished.

INTERIOR: Glazed timber inner doors lead through to a vaulted entrance hall with original fittings and decorative finishes. Art deco suspended wooden light fittings with decorative etched glass lights depicting owl. Walls lined with buff polished marble with gold fluted friezes; black marble bands to door surrounds, entrance fanlight and above skirtings. Above the doors (on the E side) and windows (on the W side) of the four corner rooms of the entrance hall are inset bas-relief panels of children playing.

Floor of inlaid coloured marble with large central geometric pattern in form of an eight-pointed star within a circle, complementing the central circular compartment of the ceiling above. Waiting room to N has oak dado panelling with patterned frieze, black ebonised skirtings and door surrounds. Octagonal timber-clad columns to each corner supporting angles of coved ceiling. Gold fluted frieze to walls and column heads. Open-well stairs to side wings have solid, staggered balustrades with bronze handrails. Large first-floor treatment room refurbished in 1990 and has a suspended ceiling. A number of original glazed timber doors survive. Interior not fully inspected, but many areas have been modernised. N wing interior damaged by bomb in 1944 and has no visible features of special interest other than the stair.

HISTORY: Built 1928-31 as the Eastman Dental Clinic, then part of the former Royal Free Hospital which stands to the north. The principal benefactor was the philanthropist George Eastman (1854-1932), founder of the Eastman Kodak Co, who had built the Rochester Dental Dispensary, New York, in 1917. This was under the directorship of Dr Harvey J Burkhardt (1864-1946), one of the founding fathers of modern dental public health who promoted preventive dentistry based on the tenets of from childhood, oral hygiene and dietary care. The clinic, whose planning resembled the Rochester Dispensary, provided free dental care for the people of Holborn, St Pancras, Finsbury and Islington, and three wards for oral, ear nose and throat, cleft lip and palate surgery. In 1947-8 the Eastman became primarily a postgraduate teaching and research establishment.

SUMMARY OF IMPORTANCE: Of special interest as a purpose-built specialist clinic which played a major role in the development of modern public dental healthcare in the UK on principles pioneered in the USA. It is a late work of the distinguished architect Sir John Burnet, in partnership with Thomas Tait, an elegant composition in the French American Beaux-Arts tradition with good surviving interior decoration in the Moderne style.

The former Royal Free Hospital to the north does not form part of the listing.

- 1.6 The Eastman Dental Hospital is also located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

2 The proposed scheme

- 2.1 The proposals involve the introduction of air conditioning to an area of the ground floor of the 1928-30 listed building. This area of the south wing, to the south of the main entrance hall, is used for clinical treatment rooms and has been extensively modernised. The equipment within the rooms generates significant heat and would therefore benefit from air conditioning and appropriate levels of cooling. The proposal will significantly improve staff and patient comfort.
- 2.2 The rooms to which air conditioning units will be installed are clustered around the south corridor of the ground floor. There are 11 rooms in total. All of the rooms have been extensively modernised with new floor finishes, modern double-glazed windows and suspended ceilings.
- 2.3 The listed status of the building has influenced the proposed design and location of the air-conditioning units and servicing although the much-altered and modernised character and appearance of the relevant rooms has also been taken into account.
- 2.4 Small units will be wall mounted with pipework and servicing run up to and above the suspended ceilings. Small holes will need to be drilled through the dividing walls between individual rooms but the location of particular rooms allows this to be done sensitively with minimal intervention. The condenser units would be located within the courtyard at the centre of the building at basement level. This location has been chosen to be discreet and have the least environmental impact.
- 2.5 In summary, the proposed air conditioning units are confined to an area of the building which has already been extensively altered and modernised, as set out in the listed building description. The system has been designed so as to have the least impact on the building and its surroundings.
- 2.6 A specification for the air conditioning works has been submitted as part of the application and provides full details of the proposed works.
- 2.7 Access provision within the building remains unchanged.

3 The impact of the proposals

- 3.1 The following section considers the impact of the proposed scheme on the significance and special interest of the Eastman Dental Hospital (EDH) and considers the acceptability of the proposals against local and national policy.

The Eastman Dental Hospital

- 3.2 The EDH was first constructed in 1928-1930 as an extension to the Royal Free Hospital, situated immediately to the north. The list description for the building also records that ‘the former Eastman Dental Clinic of 1928-3, has clear special interest as a purpose-built specialist clinic and headquarters of a medical institution which has played a major role in the development of modern public dental healthcare in the UK, and as a late work of the distinguished architectural practice Sir John Burnet and Partners. It is an elegant, chaste composition in the Beaux-Arts tradition with a splendid entrance hall and a good surviving interior decorated in the Moderne style.’
- 3.3 While there are areas of the building that do retain the original design concept of the architect and are architecturally and aesthetically impressive, the more prosaic parts of the building, such as those areas dedicated to clinical treatment, have necessarily been modernised and upgraded. There is no doubt that overall the EDH is an important building historically and socially but the rooms which are the subject of this proposal contain virtually nothing of any architectural interest.
- 3.4 The eleven rooms which are the subject of this application have new floors, wall finishes, windows and suspended ceilings. Modern equipment and fixtures also characterise these spaces. The courtyard to the rear of the building, and where the proposed condenser units would be located, is a historic space within the building but it too has been altered.

Effects of the proposals

- 3.5 The proposals would have very little impact, cumulative or otherwise, on the significance and special interest of the listed buildings or the rooms to which air conditioning would be provided. The visual impact would be negligible, given the

existing character and appearance of the relevant rooms and the impact on historic fabric would be minimal. The servicing provision and units have been carefully selected so as to be as sensitive and appropriate in this location as possible. It is considered that the proposals would not therefore cause harm to the listed building, particularly given the degree of modernisation in this area.

- 3.6 The general national and local policy test is that proposals should not cause harm to the significance or special interest of listed buildings (the National Planning Policy Framework and DP25 of the Camden's Local Plan). As the proposals have been sensitively designed and will have a minimal impact given the degree of alteration and modernisation, it is considered that the proposed scheme would be compliant with national and local policy.
- 3.7 The proposed servicing and condenser units have been selected so as to have a minimal impact on their environment and to obviously well suited to hospital or clinical use.
- 3.8 It is proposed that no pipework, units or vents are fixed to the external, publicly visible walls of the building. The proposals would therefore have no impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Conclusions

- 3.9 The proposed air conditioning units are much-needed in this clinical environment and will bring about benefits to staff and patients of the hospital. The proposals have been designed so as to have a minimal impact on their environment – in terms of the heritage significance of the existing building and the relevant rooms as well as other environmental considerations. The proposals are therefore considered to be compliant with national and local policy.

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