2971 Wilkins Terrace

Design + Access Statement
Wilkins Terrace: Slade Window Alterations

December 2014

Introduction

The drawings contained in this application outline the necessary window alterations required to the Wilkins North Cloister façade at Service Yard Level. It is supplementary to the previously granted planning and listed building consent for '2014/0357/P: North Cloister of Wilkins Building' (with conditions).

The proposed works are required to upgrade the fire protection of this façade and allow adequate ventilation of the rooms behind. A separate related consent for alterations of the other windows at this level was made by Burwell Deakins Architects (2014/0383/L).

The windows to the Slade require a different approach due to the need for ducted ventilation that will appear outside the building. This required separate technical resolution and hence a separate application.

Site Analysis

The main planning and listed building consent for Wilkins Terrace creates a public terrace deck constructed over the existing service yard. Consequently, the service yard will become enclosed with natural ventilation aided by mechanical extract. The deck is generally visually separated from the surrounding building facades by a 100mm gap at the terrace edge, however this will be insufficient to allow fresh air intake at service yard level. This is further limited because along the Wilkins North Cloister it is necessary for the building and deck to meet in order to provide three pedestrian links from the building to the deck.

The rooms immediately affected by the proposal are darkrooms for the Slade Art department. The air is currently vented through window mounted ventilation grilles installed in the existing windows of the listed building. In their existing condition two of the windows have been fully blanked off with rendered sheet material, the other two semi-obscured in a similar fashion. There are existing ventilation grilles to three of the windows and vent directly into and from the service yard.

The services consultants have advised that it is necessary for the proposed point of intake and exhaust to be as far as possible from the service yard and vehicular route. This is to be achieved by routing the ductwork through the existing windows and out towards Gower Court. Further technical justification is given below.

Technical Justification

The windows are located in the existing Wilkins North Cloister façade at yard level. They look from the existing Slade department's dark rooms into the yard. The function of the dark rooms necessitates the use of chemicals that generate fumes that must be extracted safely. Due to the future enclosure of the service yard, it is not considered to be acceptable or safe to naturally ventilate the darkrooms, or to mechanically extract directly to the service yard. It is also not considered acceptable to draw in intake air from the service yard due to the presence of vehicle fumes.

The alternative to this proposal to route the ductwork internally has been considered and rejected due to the impact it would have on the internal historic fabric. Extensive alterations would be required to find an alternative route for ductwork through the building, which would in any case terminate at a visible grille at some place in the building façade. For this reason it is proposed to duct air to such that it is only visible within the undercroft.

Proposals

It is recognised that the presence of external ductwork on the building should be minimised as much as possible. In order do so the visual impact of services we propose that the ductwork be located as close to the underside of the new terrace slab as possible and far enough away from the façade that it will be concealed by the edge of the terrace deck. As there is only a 100mm gap and only four instances of secondary ductwork leading from the dark rooms to the main concealed duct the visual impact of this ductwork is reduced as far as technically possible.

The existing heritage listed windows along this façade have been altered previously with two windows completely boarded, two half-boarded and three fitted with ventilation grilles. It is proposed to reinstate the top portion of the half boarded windows and refurbish all existing listed heritage windows and sills. The secondary ductwork will then be routed through the central top panel of the windows.

The heritage listed windows are to have opaque film to the internal face of the glazing to conceal this fire protection. Our detail is as close as possible to the detail adopted in the related application made by Burwell Deakins architects for the adjacent windows (2014/0383/L).

All existing listed heritage window fabric will be restored and refurbished.