

**THE BRITISH MUSEUM**

**DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT FOR A FURTHER TEMPORARY LISTED BUILDING CONSENT FOR THE STAGING IN THE FORMER READING ROOM**

15 January 2015



**PURCELL**

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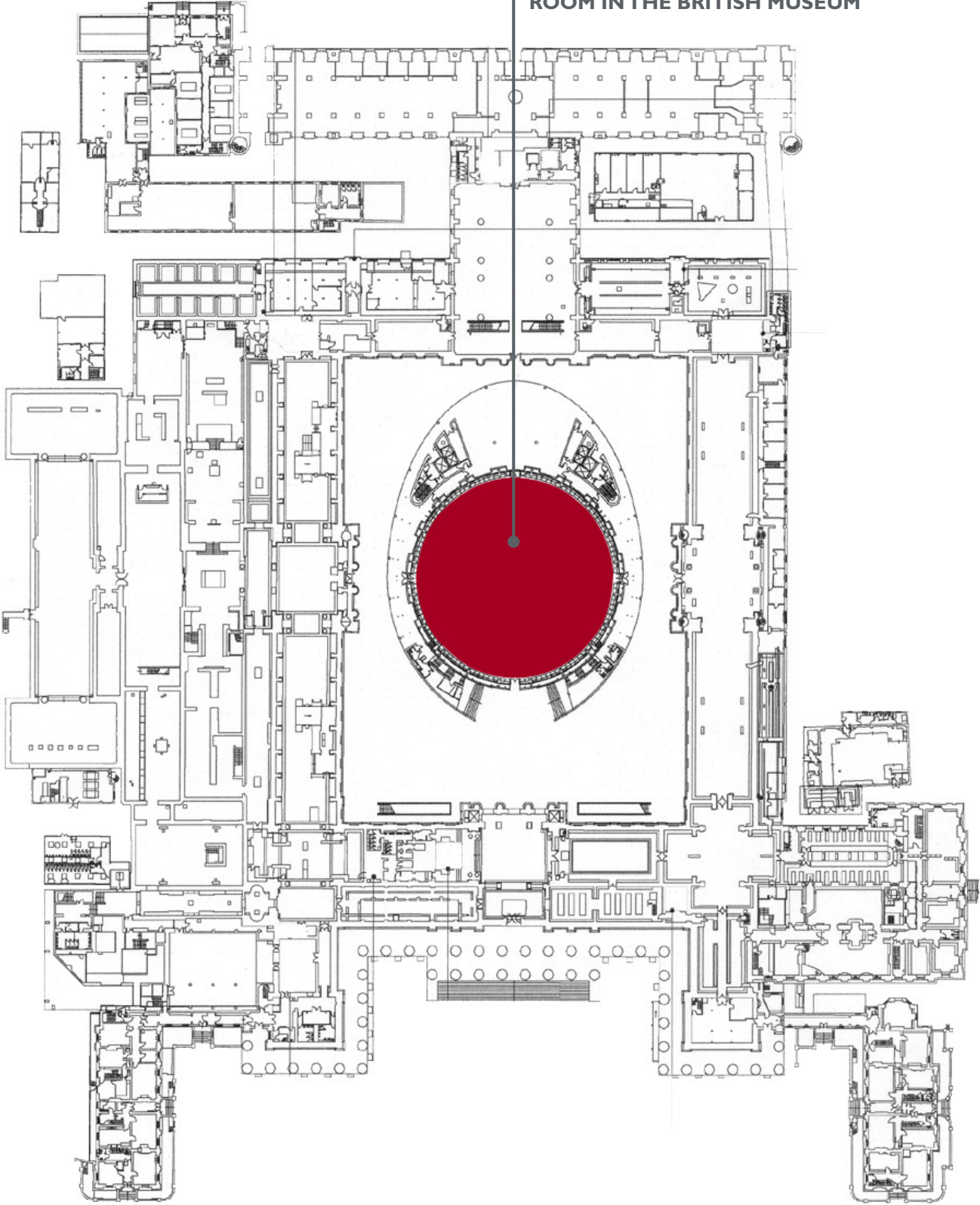
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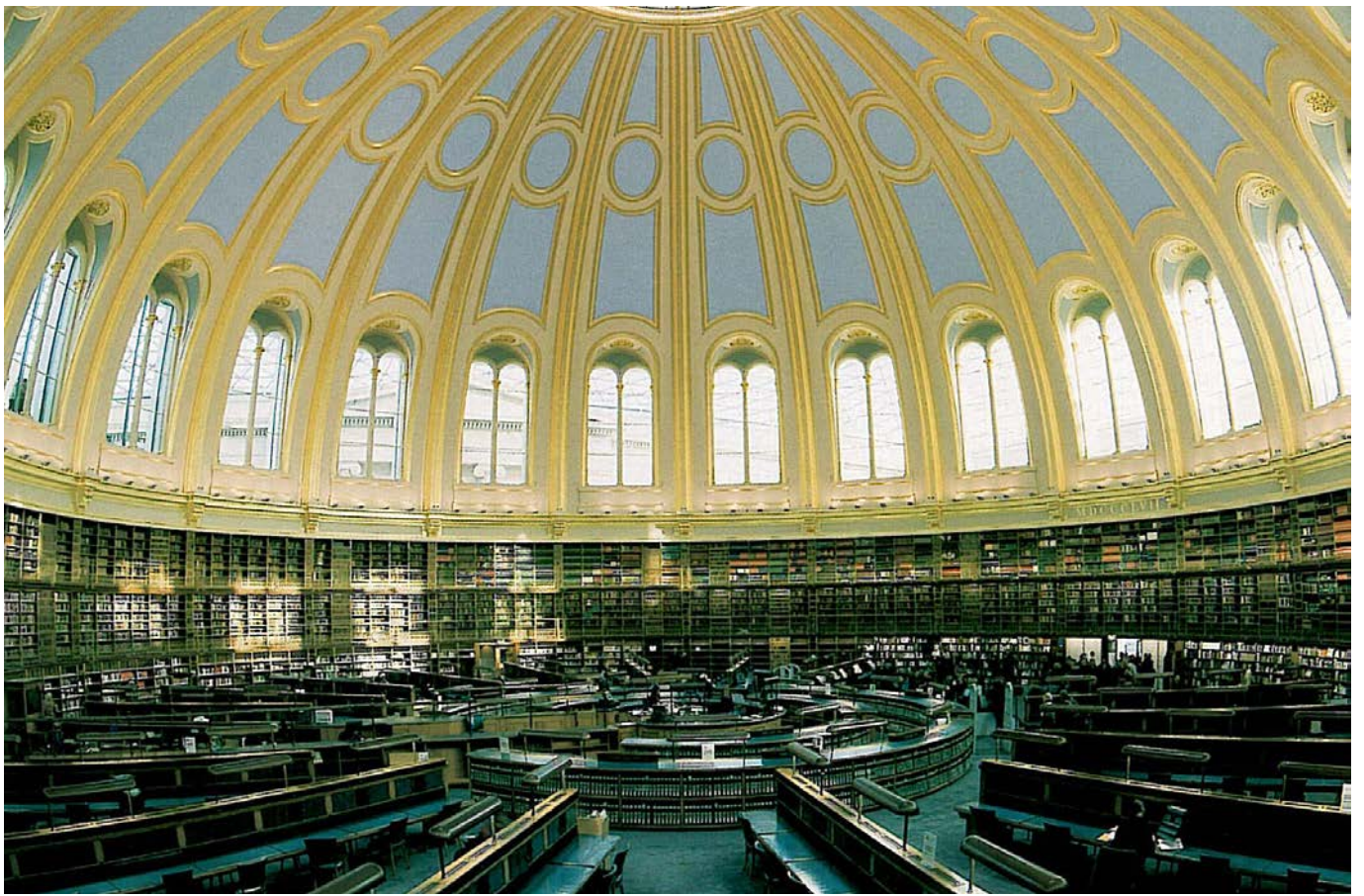
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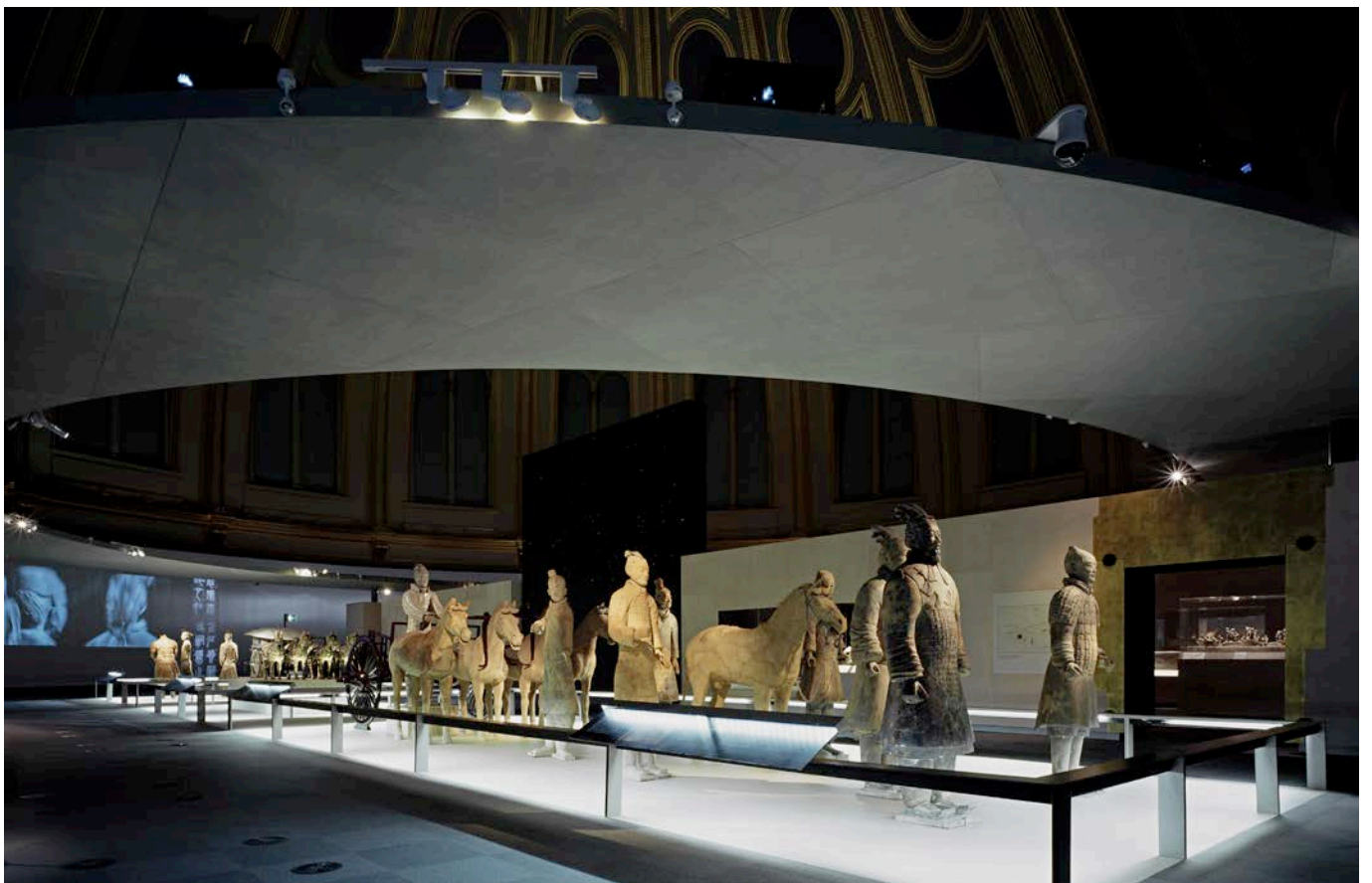
**LOCATION OF THE FORMER READING ROOM IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM**



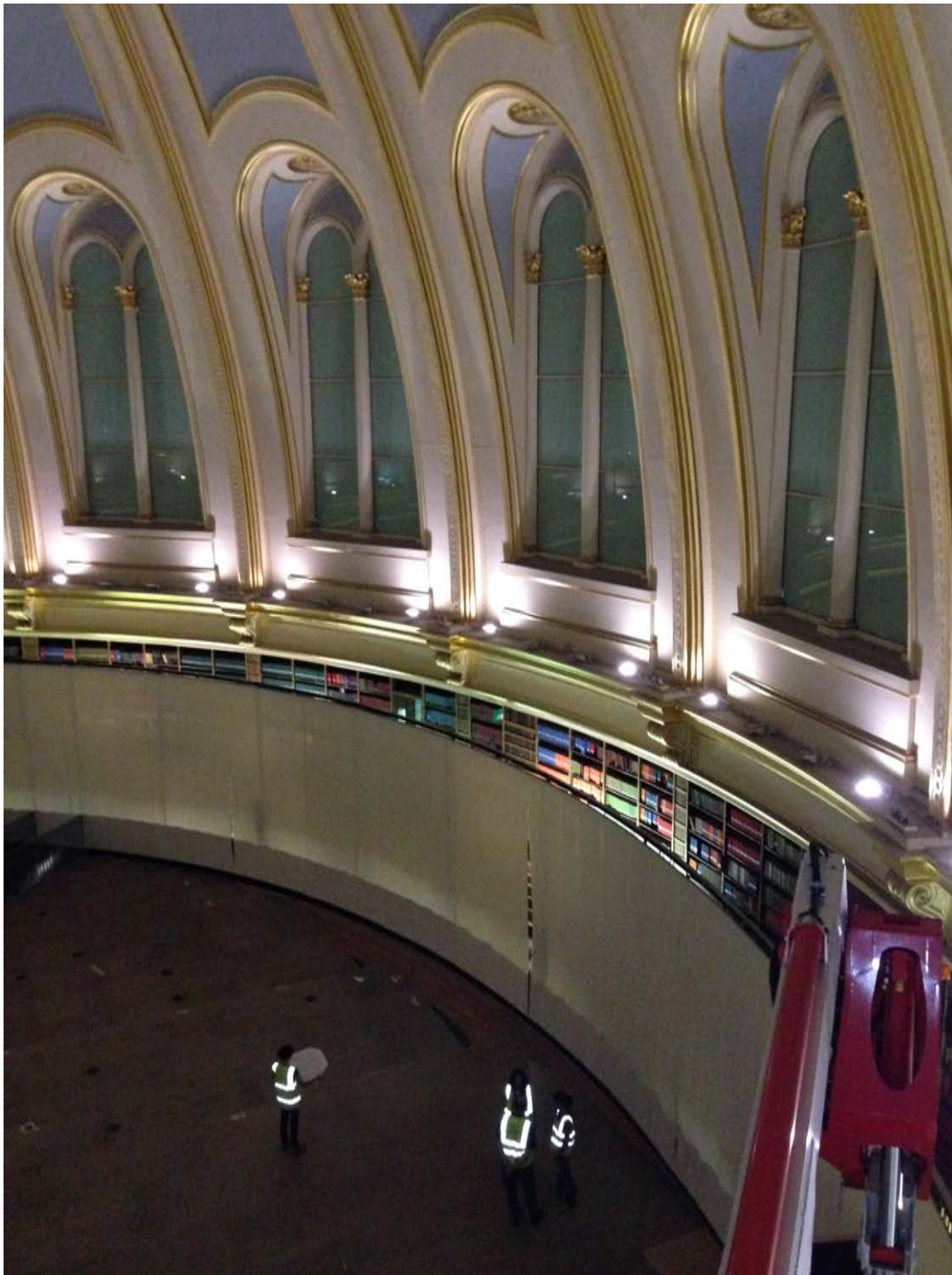
Former Reading Room Temporary Exhibition Space



The former Reading Room before the insertion of the temporary works



The First Emperor Exhibition shown in place in the former Reading Room. The exhibition is on the temporary floor approximately two metres above the normal floor level. The surrounding fabric walls can be seen in the background.



Photograph taken during the recent detailed survey work from the access platform used to inspect the ceiling dome. The photograph shows the relationship between the temporary fabric walls and the permanent bookcases on the galleries around the Reading Room.

## The Present Position

A temporary Listed Building Consent was granted to the British Museum on 27th October 2006 Reference 2006/3731/L. This permission allowed the British Museum to insert a temporary floor into the space and to install temporary air handling plant. The design of the installation allowed all the original Smirke furnishings to be left in place. These are protected by plywood boxes and the new structure is fitted around the furniture.

The purpose of the temporary work was to allow the former Reading Room to be used as a space for temporary exhibitions. The consent and subsequent extension gave permission for the temporary floor and associated plant to remain in position until the new Exhibition Space was open. The floor and the associated temporary works was to be removed and the interior of the room to be reinstated in its original condition by the end of October 2014. This has not happened for the reasons set out below. This application seeks to regularise the position by seeking consent to retain the temporary floor and associated temporary works for a period of 15 months from the date of consent for this new application.

## Why is the additional time needed?

It is the intention of the Museum's Trustees and Management to remove the temporary floor and associated equipment and to restore the space to its former 2006 condition as required by the original Temporary Listed Building Consent.

Since the last exhibition closed in the former Reading Room the Museum has carried out a series of surveys into the condition of the fabric and to establish what repair work is desirable as the work progresses to return the room to its original condition. The survey report can be made available if this is thought relevant – but to summarise its findings there are a variety of elements of work that need attending to with more or less urgency and it will make a good deal of sense to deal with these as the work is in hand to remove the temporary works. Much of the work is necessary maintenance and repair work and some of this work will require Listed Building Consent in its own right. A separate application will be made for consent for these works when they are defined and it is anticipated that an application will be made for these works before Easter 2015.

To summarise the main findings of the investigations and survey work:

- The Museum is currently reviewing the existing Fire Strategy and the outcome may necessitate the treating of the former Reading Room as a separate zone from the remainder of the Great Court. If necessary this will be achieved by recommissioning the fire shutters in each of the windows around the former Reading Room and by ensuring all the fire doors in the small openings in the room at the principal floor level reach current standards. The mechanisms of the fire shutters are located in such a way that they are very difficult to access. Work is needed to overhaul the mechanisms and to ensure that access is available for routine servicing and testing in the future. If required, it is anticipated that this work will require Listed Building Consent as it may require the removal of some masonry on the outer surface of the new stone drum which is part of the Foster + Partners scheme opened in December 2000.

- Access generally is a problem in some of the external upper spaces in the former Reading Room. There is inadequate safe access for maintenance purposes at the gutter level and such poor access to the upper areas of the dome, with its glazed oculus, that at present only specialised access personnel can work in the space. The oculus is blacked out at present as part of the temporary work for the use of the space for exhibitions. However, this blackout is to be removed when the interior of the room is reinstated and it will then be desirable to have safe access for routine maintenance for cleaning the laylights and replacing lamps. Some of this work is also likely to require Listed Building Consent.
- The decorative dome is made of papier-mâché and was last repaired and redecorated during the work to form the Great Court. Several apparent cracks have opened up in the surface of the dome. However, a close inspection from an access platform suggests that these are not an immediate concern. The 'cracking' relates to the repair carried out in the 1990s which taped over the joints between the different panels of papier-mâché. It is not now thought (as a result of the inspection by a specialist) that there are any fundamental structural problems with the underside surface of the dome.

## The timetable for the reinstatement of the former Reading Room

It is the Museum's intention to have all the temporary works removed from the former Reading Room by Spring 2016. There are further specialist investigation works to be completed in the first few months of 2015, these include assessment of the level of access required for full maintenance of the spaces, further scoping of fire safety related works and scoping of the access requirements to deep clean areas around the Great Court parapets. The work will be fully defined by Summer 2015 and it is anticipated that a contract will be let for the removal of all the temporary works before the end of May 2015 for a start on the work in June 2015.

The removal of the temporary work in the former Reading Room will be a relatively lengthy process and much of it will need to be completed outside normal working hours. The platform is set approximately 2 metres above the main floor level which leaves room for the Smirke Reading Desks and their protective boxings. The temporary floor consists of a plywood deck supported on a steel framework. It is surrounded by fabric walls supported by steel columns. The platform has four staircases approaching it, two main stairs to the north and south and two secondary escape stairs to the west and east. There are platform lifts to the north and south stairs and the approach to the bottom of the stairs and the lifts is ramped up from the original floor level. The desks are protected with a heavy plywood boxing on a timber frame and there are eight air handling units together with associated pipework, ducting and electrics. All in all there is a good deal of material to remove. There is no way into the room other than through the doors out of the Great Court. Of these only the south door is freely available as the others open into accommodation occupied by the shops. The south door is a normal domestic sized double door that opens directly into the public area of the Great Court. The Great Court is available to the public from 09.00 until 18.00 every day and remains open until 20.30 on Fridays and later for the many, pre-booked special evening events. This means that all the material stripped out of the temporary floor, ramp, walls

and staircases has to go out of the door into the public space 'out of hours'. The same applies to the disabled lifts, the air handling plant and associated ductwork, pipework and electrics.

The only sensible way out for the material is across the Great Court and the South Entrance Hall and out of the main Museum entrance, down the steps to be loaded onto a lorry waiting to remove the material. Given the highly significant nature of the fabric of the Museum building a good deal of time will need to be spent each evening providing temporary protection to the floor, doorways, columns and steps. This protection will need to be removed before the Museum reopens for business at 09.00 the following morning. The Museum is so busy that it will be thoroughly undesirable to have a lorry with waste material left standing in the courtyard during the day. The intention will be to load a lorry trailer each evening with waste material and for this to be removed well before 09.00 each morning. Given these constraints and the highly significant nature of the fabric of the room and of the desks it is anticipated that the removal will be a slow business. Initial programming of the work, with the advice of the Museum's term contractor, suggests that there will be no difficulty in having the removal of all the temporary work completed before the end of 2015. It is possible, however, that some of the other work to improve access and the environmental controls may continue beyond this period.

## Public Access

Before Spring 2016 it is intended to remove all the temporary work and the protection to the desks. The room will be put back into the state it was in before the temporary works, as far as its physical condition is concerned.



# Appendix A: Listed Building Consent 2006/3731/L dated 27 October 2006



Development Control  
Planning Services  
London Borough of Camden  
Town Hall  
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London WC1H 8ND

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Application Ref: **2006/3731/L**  
Please ask for: **Victoria Fowlis**  
Telephone: 020 7974 **2659**

27 October 2006

Dear Sir/Madam

## DECISION

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990  
Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990

### Listed Building Consent Granted

Address:  
**Round Reading Room  
British Museum  
Great Russell Street  
London  
WC1B 3DG**

#### Proposal:

Erection of a temporary stage within the Round Reading Room, and the opening of the Reading Room North door in order to provide a temporary exhibition space.

Drawing Nos: Site Location Plan 001; Drawing No. 230838 003; 006A Rev B; 006 Rev B; 007 Rev D; 002; Design Statement

The Council has considered your application and decided to grant Listed Building Consent subject to the following condition(s):

#### Conditions And Reasons:

- 1 The works hereby permitted shall be begun not later than the end of three years from the date of this consent.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

## Appendix A: Listed Building Consent 2006/3731/L dated 27 October 2006

Reason: In order to comply with the provisions of Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

- 2 All new work and work of making good shall be carried out to match the original work as closely as possible in materials and detailed execution.

Reason: In order to safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of the building in accordance with the requirements of policy B6 of the London Borough of Camden Replacement Unitary Development Plan 2006.

- 3 The works hereby approved are only those specifically indicated on the drawing(s) referred to above.

Reason: In order to safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of the building in accordance with the requirements of policy B6 of the London Borough of Camden Replacement Unitary Development Plan 2006.

- 4 The installation of the temporary exhibition gallery in the Round Reading Room shall be limited to a period of 2 years from the date of this consent. On or before the expiry of which period the works undertaken to form the temporary exhibition gallery shall be removed and the building restored to the former 2006 appearance, form and elevation.

Reason: In order to safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of the building in accordance with the requirements of policy B6 of the London Borough of Camden Unitary Development Plan 2006.

- 5 Before any work is undertaken in pursuance of this consent to install a temporary exhibition gallery in the Round Reading Room structural engineers' drawings, calculations, details and a method statement, indicating the design and proposed method of installation of the new works, including the safeguarding of the existing building fabric, shall be submitted to and approved by the Council as local planning authority. The relevant work shall be carried out in accordance with such structural engineers' drawings, calculations, details and method statement thus approved.

Reason: In order to safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of the building in accordance with the requirements of policy B6 of the London Borough of Camden Unitary Development Plan 2006.

- 6 Precautions shall be taken to secure and protect the interior features against accidental loss or damage, or theft during the building work. Details shall be submitted to and approved by the Council as local planning authority before works begin on site, and the relevant work carried out in accordance with such approval. No such features shall be disturbed or removed temporarily or permanently except as indicated on the approved drawings or with the prior approval in writing of the Council. Particular regard should be given to the following items:

- a. Round Reading Room desks, and other original fittings and furniture;
- b. Access balconies around the perimeter of the Round Reading Room.

## Appendix A: Listed Building Consent 2006/3731/L dated 27 October 2006

Reason: In order to safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of the building in accordance with the requirements of policy B6 of the London Borough of Camden Unitary Development Plan 2006.

- 7 The following items shall be carefully removed before works commence, under the supervision of a person or body specialising in this procedure appointed by the applicant and approved by the Council as local planning authority, and shall be stored under cover in a secure place and later reinstated in a manner, location and to a timetable agreed with the local authority. Written confirmation shall be given to the Council immediately following this work of the items removed and their location:
- a. Over-desk lamps to the Round Reading Room desks.

Reason: In order to safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of the building in accordance with the requirements of policy B6 of the London Borough of Camden Unitary Development Plan 2006.

- 8 The position, type and method of installation of all new and relocated services and related fixtures (for the avoidance of doubt including communications and information technology servicing), shall be specified in advance of any work being carried out, and the prior approval of the Council as local planning authority shall be obtained wherever these installations are to be visible, or where ducts or other methods of concealment are proposed. Any works carried out shall be in accordance with such approval. Particular regard should be given to work affecting the following features or parts of the building:
- a. Additional air handling units to be placed between Round Reading Room desks beneath the new inserted floor.

Reason: In order to safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of the building in accordance with the requirements of policy B6 of the London Borough of Camden Unitary Development Plan 2006.

- 9 Details in respect of the following shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Council as local planning authority in consultation with English Heritage before the relevant work is begun. The relevant work shall be carried out in accordance with such approved details:
- a. Full structural details of the proposed platform lifts;
  - b. Full structural details of the method of support for the additional air handling units beneath the new floor structure.
  - c. Typical details of the protective casings for the existing desks and furniture, including their interface with the diagonal ties supporting the new floor structure;
  - d. Details of the interface between new wall partitions and the existing fabric of the building (around the perimeter of the Round Reading Room and at entrances/exits);
  - e. Any temporary works required at the entrances to the Museum to facilitate construction works;
  - f. Temporary desks, ticketing facilities and security facilities within the Great Court;
  - g. Additional signage and lighting associated with the temporary exhibition

## Appendix A: Listed Building Consent 2006/3731/L dated 27 October 2006

space, including Means of Escape requirements, where these have a direct interface with the historic fabric;

h. Sample of film to be applied to glazing within the Round Reading Room.

Reason: In order to safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of the building in accordance with the requirements of policy B6 of the London Borough of Camden Unitary Development Plan 2006.

- 10 All new partitions shall be scribed around the existing internal features of the Round Reading Room.

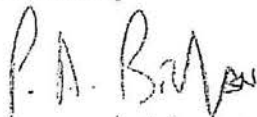
Reason: In order to safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of the building in accordance with the requirements of policy B6 of the London Borough of Camden Unitary Development Plan 2006.

- 11 Any light-reducing film applied to any part of the glazing of the Round Reading Room shall be removed before the expiry of this consent and the glazing returned to its 2006 appearance, form and elevation.

Reason: In order to safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of the building in accordance with the requirements of policy B6 of the London Borough of Camden Unitary Development Plan 2006.

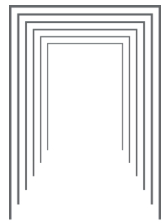
Your attention is drawn to the notes attached to this notice which tell you about your Rights of Appeal and other information.

Yours faithfully



Culture and Environment Directorate  
(Duly authorised by the Council to sign this document)





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