

THE BRITISH MUSEUM

HVM INSTALLATION

**HERITAGE
AND
DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT
TO SUPPORT
LISTED BUILDING APPLICATION**

6th March 2015

**Frank Timothy Associates Limited
Oakfields
18 Piper Road
Yate
South Gloucestershire
BS37 5SY**

Tel: 01454 880395

CONTENTS

1.00 HERITAGE STATEMENT

- 1.01 Bloomsbury Conservation Area appraisal and management strategy
(adopted April 2011)
- 1.02 Heritage gateway

2.00 DESIGN STATEMENT

- 2.01 Historical background and significance
- 2.02 The current proposals

3.00 ACCESS STATEMENT

1.00 HERITAGE STATEMENT

1.01 Bloomsbury Conservation Area appraisal and management strategy (adopted April 2011)

The document:

The purpose of the appraisal is to define the special interest of the Conservation area and to put strategies in place to enhance and protect the relevant assets within the boundaries and to give guidance on such matters.

The initial designation of Bloomsbury as a Conservation area in 1968 was to protect elements of development to assets from the Georgian and earlier periods, but excluded areas where there had been significant later development. The document appreciates that there has been significant development in later period including Victorian, Edwardian and 20th century architecture.

The document refers to the British Museum as one of the set piece buildings generally becoming evident as landmarks in the streetscape. It is a building which forms one of the notable views of landmarks within the area.

The British Museum is considered by the appraisal to have the biggest footprint which includes linked buildings from the 19th and 20th Centuries occupying the majority of a street block. The building is within Sub-Area 3 of the appraisal which refers to and describes the significance of the streetscape and façade treatments.

The appraisal refers to the British Museum making a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area as a whole. Section 5.47 particularly describes the King Edward VII Galleries and the recent demolition of a pair of 1971 neo-Georgian townhouses to make way for the North West development.

The Conservation area appraisal sets out the management of change and in particular the alterations and extensions to existing buildings. Examples of where inappropriate changes are proposed refer only to external elements.

The document makes reference to Listed Buildings and gives advice regarding how to check that a building is listed.

There is a list of buildings at risk within the area.

1.02 Heritage gateway

The Heritage gateway lists the British Museum (entry no.: 1130404) as Grade 1 carried out on 24th October 1954. The following details are included as a description of the building:

"CAMDEN

TQ3081NW
GREAT RUSSELL STREET
798-1/100/697 (North side)
24/10/51 The British Museum

GV I

Museum. 1823-47. By Sir Robert Smirke with later additions. Portland stone. Planned as a big quadrangle with open courtyard extending north from Montague House (the original Museum, demolished c1840).

2 main storeys in Greek Revival style. Built in stages.

East Wing 1823-26: built to house George IV's library and Angerstein pictures (later basis of National Gallery). An early use of iron beams clad in concrete by engineer John Rastrick. Fine Grecian detail to interior with scagliola walls.

West Wing 1831-4: built to house antiquities. Redecorated to Smirke's original colour scheme 1980.

North Wing 1833-8: built to house antiquities.

South Range 1842-7: built as the principal facade following the demolition of Montague House. 7-bay centre linked to projecting wings. Ionic octastyle portico with sculptured pediment projecting from a massive colonnade running around the wings. Ionic order from the temple of Athene Polias, Priene. Pediment sculpture depicts the "Progress of Civilisation" by Westmacott. Fine interior with grand central staircase.

Round Reading Room 1852-7: by Sydney Smirke. Erected to fill the open quadrangle, with domed cast-iron roof.

HISTORICAL NOTE: the museum expanded north during the C19, the last main addition being the King Edward VII Gallery (qv),

1914, facing Montague Place. Some of the galleries were damaged during World War II and have been remodelled for display purposes."

2.00 DESIGN STATEMENT

2.01 Historical background and significance:

The proposals are within The British Museum, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DG. This building is Listed as Grade 1 and as such is of great architectural and social importance not only within the Bloomsbury Conservation area but also nationally and internationally. Grade 1 Buildings form only 2% of the total of Listed Buildings within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area audit and this therefore highlights the architectural significance of the area.

The current building that sits on the site is principally from the designs of Robert Smirke, which were constructed around the 1820's and 1850's with further additions after that date.

The forecourt area was resurfaced as part of the Great Court millennium scheme.

The proposal within this application is to the main forecourt entrance off Great Russell Street. The following is extracted in part and summarised from the Museum's Conservation Plan.

Security has been a pre-occupation of the Museum since the earliest days with the provision of iron doors and frames and gates in the basement corridors. Some areas of the Museum merited particular precautions as is the case with the former Medals Room and the current Coins and Medals Department.

Additional protection in the form of steel sheeting has been provided to some of the basement doors where objects are stored.

Increasingly security protection has been enhanced by the provision of CCTV cameras and more sophisticated electronic locking arrangements.

Significance:

The main concern in the Conservation Plan relative to security matters is the potential visual intrusion of more modern hardware into sensitive historic interiors.

2.02 The current proposals:

Other than the encampment of soldiers on the garden of Montague House during the Gordon Riots, most of the security protection until recent years has been aimed at protecting the objects from theft or damage. More recent changes in the political world have focused minds on different threats to the building and its occupants and visitors. To this end the Museum have employed a security consultant, AECOM, to consider and advise on such threats and particularly in the context of this application the protection from hostile vehicles which are considered a serious threat.

The proposals are to provide new retracting vertical bollards as shown on the AECOM drawing 60304751_TYP_GATE_L2_TS_0001 which forms part of the documentation for the application. The bollards are discrete when retracted as they finish flush with the paving at the entrance from Great Russell Street. In their raised position they stand 800mm high above the paving which is approximately the same height as the existing fixed bollards.

3.00 ACCESS STATEMENT

The gates at Great Russell Street form the principle entrance to the South of the site and are used constantly during Museum opening hours. The entrance is used for vehicles as well as pedestrian accessibility and so the need to have flat and level surfaces whilst maintaining and controlling vehicle movements is fundamental.

The proposal does not adversely affect the means of access into the Museum for vehicles or pedestrians (ambulant or disabled)