

Camden Council Customer feedback and enquiries
Comments on a current Planning Application - Ref. 10266532

Planning Application Details

Year	2016
Number	4408
Letter	P
Planning application address	Library and Under Treasurer's House, Lincoln's Inn, WC2A 3TL
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Your comments on the planning application	See attached

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[Objections to application 2015/4408/P](#)

About this form

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About this form

Issued by	Camden Council Customer feedback and enquiries Camden Town Hall Judd Street London WC1H 9JE
Form reference	10266532

Applications by Lincoln's Inn:

2015/4408/P 'Library extension'

2015/4404/P 'Education centre'

2015/4402/P 'Works to the Great Hall'

This is an objection to the application 2015/4408/P ("Library Extension"), as well as to 2015/4404/P "Education Centre" (and to 2015/4402/P "Works to the Great Hall", insofar as that application is ancillary to the other two)

In summary the proposed works will cause substantial harm to the setting of Grade II* listed buildings, and to the Conservation Area to which the existing buildings make a positive contribution. There is no sufficient need for or benefit from the proposed works to justify the harm that the works will cause.

I am a barrister working daily in Lincoln's Inn, as I have for some 40 years. Anyone who lives or works in Lincoln's Inn or its surrounding area, or who visits, will appreciate the care previous generations have taken to preserve Lincoln's Inn as an oasis of fine architecture and space, with walks and gardens that contribute harmoniously to make a really inspiring area (an area which forms part of Lincoln's Inn Fields to the west and the Royal Courts of Justice and Carey Street to the south). It is the responsibility of the present generation not to damage what has been achieved, but to ensure that what is passed on is at least as good. What is now proposed will not do that.

The "Library Extension" and "Education Centre" applications are directed at two related schemes for the redevelopment of the Great Hall complex in the centre of Lincoln's Inn. The first entails the demolition of a pretty little building ("the Under-Treasurer's House") which conforms comfortably to the Library part of the Great Hall next to which it stands on the one side and the side gate to Lincoln's Inn Fields on the other, this building being replaced with a block shaped structure which will be a carbuncle on the Great Hall. The second entails the piercing of platform on which the Great Hall stands to allow for plate-glass windows and light-wells, this interfering significantly with the appearance of the Great Hall from the east side as well as with the space on the platform.

The third application is ancillary to the first two applications, while having other elements. As the first two applications should be rejected, so too should the third.

Specifically as to the "Library Extension" application, the Under Treasurer's House is unobtrusive. It is of a piece, having the appearance of a country cottage in a complementary style to the Tudor styling of the Library. In its setting, with the landscaping of Lincoln's Inn north garden, including the walks and the small Gardner's office standing at the south-eastern-corner of the north garden, it contributes to the park-like aspect of this part of Lincoln's Inn. It is modest in scale compared to the Library, while at the same time having similar complimentary elements.

The demolition of this dwelling house, visible both from within the Inn and by the public and passers-by from Lincoln's Inn Fields, would be a loss, diminishing interest in the "oasis" which Lincoln's Inn, and in particular this part of Lincoln's Inn, contributes to the local area.

However the application for the "Library Extension", involves not merely demolishing the small residential building but its replacement with a squat block of a building, with large plate windows, and with no detailing or other features to enable the building to work in harmony with the Great Hall complex; and it has no real place in the surrounding gardens. Its size, shape and form will stand in ugly contrast with the Great Hall: indeed, the choice of red brick for the new building seemingly to provide some connection with the Great Hall only serves to emphasise the differences and to highlight the ugly features of the new building.

In short the replacing of the existing Under-Treasurer's House with the new building will be contrary to planning objectives: there will be damage done to the Great Hall and its setting by the introduction of a discordant intrusion, an intrusion obvious both from within Lincoln's Inn and from Lincoln's Inn Fields.

There is no real need for or benefit to be achieved by sacrificing this part of Lincoln's Inn and Lincoln's Inn Fields to create a library extension in the place of the Under-Treasurer's House. As a reading room Lincoln's Inn Library has ample space. Storage of books and manuscripts does not need to be on-site; but were on-site storage required, that could be found by development underground.

The "Education Centre" development is objectionable for similar reasons.

At present the Great Hall stands on a platform, when viewed from the south or east sides. This platform appears to form organically part of the ground from which it grows, allowing the Great Hall complex to have the appearance of "floating" above ground. On this platform, and before the Great Hall on its east side, is a piazza from which the surrounding area can be surveyed. There is disabled access to this piazza through the passage to the north under the Library. It may otherwise be accessed from the Great Hall, from the Library and by stairs up from the eastern and southern sides.

In order to mitigate (but not to eliminate) the dependence the proposed Education Centre (an entirely subterranean area and rooms) – dependence which makes the Education Centre unattractive, if not unsuitable, for the purpose it is intended to serve, the proposed development will involve piercing, and interfering with the piazza, with light-wells. Also, there will be angled plate-glass windows running at the bottom of the face of the platform wall for the length of the lawn on the eastern side, except for the small section of lawn where there are existing stairs up onto the platform. To enable these windows to obtain any light, the garden on the east side of the platform will have the main border moved eastwards, and there will be a small new track between the border and the platform and another, much more significant one, opened on the opposite side of the border.

These features are visually damaging, being destructive of the architectural concept which was in mind with the construction of the Great Hall complex, and also harming the character and appearance of that complex (Grade II* listed) as well as of the central part of the Inn itself.

Specifically:

- (a) the light-wells will break up the piazza, detracting materially from the appearance of the piazza in its setting between the gardens and the main structure of the Great Hall and Library; while
- (b) the windows set into the base of the platform wall, together with the addition of the new paths and the moving of the border, will be destructive of the present arrangement in which the platform rises organically from the surrounding garden. Instead the platform will become a separate and detached element in the overall scheme for the Great Hall complex.

None of this is necessary or productive of benefit. The Inn already has ample teaching space to serve its existing requirements; and there is plenty of alternative accommodation in the vicinity should the time ever arrive when the future requirements can no longer be served by the Inn's existing space. There is nothing to justify the proposals and, in particular, no benefit whatsoever to the public. So far as that goes the new paths required for the proposal merely duplicate and do not improve upon the existing access way running south to north between the Great Hall complex and the buildings on the east side, an access way which gives adequate pedestrian and disabled access.

The applications should therefore be refused.