



Real Estate

UCL Quiet Contemplation
Room, 18-19 Gordon Street
Planning Statement

December 2015

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1 Introduction

Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Deloitte LLP in support of a planning application submitted on behalf of University College London (“UCL”) to the London Borough of Camden. The planning application is for the construction of a new building which will act as an extension to the existing Quiet Contemplation Room (“QCR”) facilities at land to the rear of 18-19 Gordon Square, London, WC1H 0AG (the “Site”).

1.2 The Description of Development as stated on the Application Form is:

“Construction of a new Quiet Contemplation Room facility adjacent to the existing facility (Hut 34) at land to the rear of 18-19 Gordon Square, retrospective planning permission for the ablution facilities adjoining Hut 34, and associated ancillary works”.

1.3 The proposed development will increase the current provision of floorspace for UCL’s QCR for which there is a chronic need and undersupply across the core Bloomsbury Campus.

1.4 This Statement sets out the planning justification for the proposed development and assesses the proposed development against the Development Plan for the Site and other relevant material considerations.

Application Documents

1.5 The application comprises the following documents:

- Planning Application Form;
- Site Plan;
- Existing drawing including the ablution facilities prepared by UCL;
- Proposed drawings including plans and elevations of new QCR prepared by HDA Architects; and,
- CIL Additional Information Form.

1.6 The application is supported by the following documents which have been agreed with the Local Planning Authority:

- Design and Access Statement prepared by HDA Architects;
- Planning Statement prepared by Deloitte LLP;
- Arboricultural Development Report prepared by tree:fabrik;
- Design & Specifications document prepared by Qube; and,
- Schedule of Tree Work prepared by tree:fabrik.

1.7 The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 outlines the rationale for the proposals;
- Section 3 describes the Site and the surrounding area;
- Section 4 outlines the consultation process which has informed the proposals;
- Section 5 briefly details the proposed development;
- Section 6 outlines site designations and the policy context;
- Section 7 considers the planning issues; and,
- Section 8 provides a summary and conclusion.

2 Application Context

UCL

- 2.1 UCL is London's leading multi-disciplinary university with over 11,000 staff and nearly 35,000 students. It was ranked 7th in the QS World University Rankings 2015/16 and provides excellence and leadership in teaching and research.
- 2.2 UCL has prepared an ambitious strategy for the University to 2034 (<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ucl-2034>). This strategy aims to secure and improve on UCL's international standing. A Central Part of this strategy is for UCL to provide the best support, facilities and opportunities for its staff and students.
- 2.3 UCL aim to achieve this by providing: "*high-quality student services that support health and wellbeing, enabling students to focus on their studies and so maximise completion rates and achievement*". Furthermore, UCL will also ensure that they provide high quality excellent spaces for extracurricular activity, and sufficient capacity to accommodate increases in student numbers.
- 2.4 UCL is continuously seeking to enhance the existing university and campus facilities to ensure that it is meeting the needs and demands of the student and staff population. Investment into quiet contemplation facilities is an important way to support student well-being.

The Quiet Contemplation Room

- 2.5 The existing QCR, Hut 34 has been used as a quiet contemplation facility for approximately ten years.
- 2.6 The facility is used by individuals and groups of staff and students as a 'quiet place' to meditate, pray, or spend mindfulness time. It is a space that "*is extremely valued by its users*" (QCR Survey, 2014).
- 2.7 Currently there are approximately 324 regular users, generating approximately 4,462 visits every week. With student and staff figures increasing, the usage is likely to increase.
- 2.8 The existing facility does not provide enough space to accommodate existing users, particularly at peak times.
- 2.9 UCL was recently granted planning permission for the New Student Centre on Gordon Street. A QCR facility is proposed within this new building; however, it is not set for completion until 2018 and therefore there is existing unmet demand that needs to be addressed.
- 2.10 The proposed development is for a temporary building to be erected adjacent to the existing QCR facility. This will provide interim provision prior to the completion of the NSC and relieve the existing facility of the existing pressure and usage.

The Site

- 2.11 The Site is set out in detail in Section 3 below. In summary it is located on the Bloomsbury Campus, to the rear of the Grade II listed Gordon Terrace. It is a small area of undeveloped land adjacent to the existing QCR building (Hut 34). This planning application also incorporates the ablution facilities which are attached the existing QCR, and for which retrospective planning permission is also sought.

3 Site Context

Location

- 3.1 The Site is located in the heart of the Bloomsbury Campus and comprises an area of land adjacent to 'Hut 34'. The maps below demonstrate its central campus location.



Figure 1: Wider UCL Campus (Source: UCL)

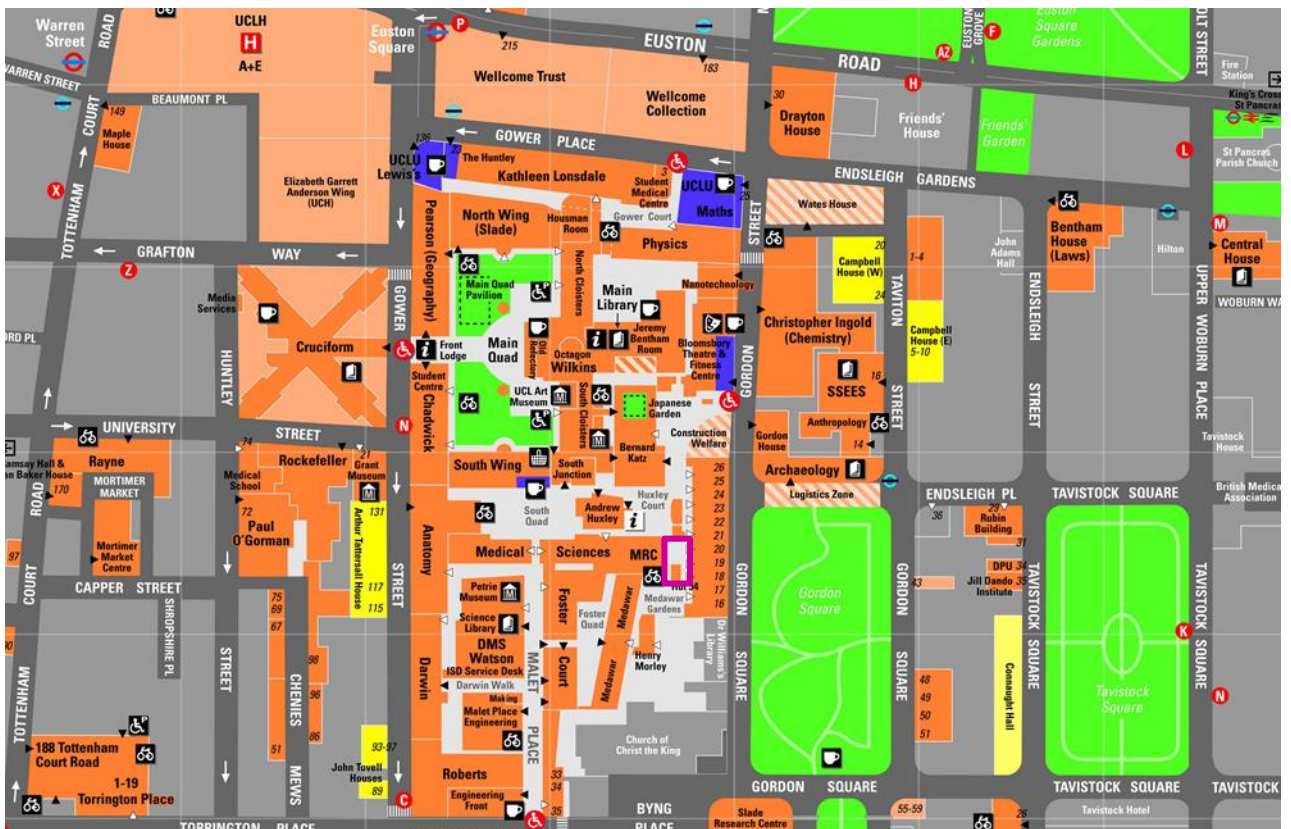


Figure 2: Map 2, Bloomsbury Campus. Hut 34 'QCR' edged in purple (Source: UCL)

- 3.2 The Site is located within UCL's core Bloomsbury campus and as such the surrounding area is characterised by educational buildings (Use Class D1) and associated offices (Use Class B1) and ancillary retail (Use Classes A1-A3).
- 3.3 The Site is bounded to the north by the Anechoic Room, to the west by the Gordon Square Terraces which accommodate UCL teaching facilities, to the south by the existing QCR and to the east by the Medical Research Council Building.
- 3.4 The Site has a PTAL rating of 6B with excellent links to public transport links. The nearest tube station, Euston Square, is approximately 5 minutes (0.3 miles) walking distance from the Site and Euston Station is approximately 6 minutes (0.3 miles) walking distance away.
- 3.5 There are a number of bus stops within 5 minutes' walk of the Site, on routes including the 10 (Hammersmith), 18 (Sudbury), 30 (Marble Arch), 73 (Victoria), 205 (Paddington) and 390 (Notting hill Gate) and night buses: N5, N20, N73, N205, and N253.
- 3.6 The Site lies within sub-area 2: Gordon Square/ Woburn Square/ Byng Place of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.
- 3.7 The Site is situated to the rear of the Grade II Listed Gordon Square Terraces. In close proximity are the Grade I Listed Wilkins Building (approximately 46m) and University Church of Christ the King (approximately 77m).
- 3.8 The map below is extracted from the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (BCAAMS) sub-area 2 'Townscape Appraisal' map. The Site is edged in purple.



Figure 3: Extract from Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy sub-area 2 Townscape Appraisal Map.

Site Description and Use

- 3.9 UCL is the freeholder of the Site and the existing adjacent QCR (Hut 34). Since its construction in 1965, the use of Hut 34 has been as an ancillary educational building. Over the last ten years it has been used as the QCR on campus. In the last three years its use has become more focused towards providing a prayer space. The Site for the expansion of this facility, which is the subject of this application, is directly adjacent to the Hut 34 and is currently undeveloped.
- 3.10 The existing QCR building falls under Use Class D1 as it is ancillary to the primary university campus. It is now used as a prayer and contemplation space for students. There are two gendered ablution facilities

connected to either side of the main entrance. These were constructed in 2013 to respond to urgent need. This application seeks retrospective planning permission for these structures.

- 3.11 The photographs below demonstrate the ablution facilities. The ablution facilities are clad in wood and accessed from either side of the entrance to the existing QCR building.



Figure 4: Photographs taken on Site

- 3.12 The existing QCR is a single storey timber-clad building raised on stilts. It is accessed from the path running along the rear of the Bernard Katz Building. It has one door, and windows to each elevation.
- 3.13 The Site for the new QCR is directly north of the existing facility and to the rear of 18-19 Gordon Terrace. The Site measures approximately 10m x 6m and is comparable in coverage to the existing QCR which is 67 sqm in area. The photograph below shows the Site as it currently exists.



Figure 5: Photographs taken of Site

- 3.14 The Site has one concrete footpath running through it and another running along its northern boundary. It is on a gradient which slopes moderately from west to east. There are two mature trees situated onsite, one London Plane and one Sycamore. The Tree Survey set out in Appendix 1 of the Arboricultural Development Report assesses the value of each of these trees, with the more significant and valuable tree being the London Plane. Otherwise it lacks any ecological value with bare earth and some small shrubs. The accompanying Arboricultural Development Report explores in more detail the existing ecology of the Site.

Planning History

- 3.15 In 1967, “the erection of a single-storey timber building addition at the rear of 21 Gordon Square” was granted planning permission by LB Camden. In 1977 and 1988 time extension planning permissions for this QCR building were granted.

- 3.16 The ablution facilities were constructed in 2013. Planning permission was not sought for that development. This application therefore seeks retrospective planning permission for these alongside the planning application for the additional QCR.

Surrounding Development

- 3.17 The planning history of the Site and immediate area demonstrates a historical precedent for the infill of the land to the rear of Gordon Square terraces for small-scale, single storey buildings for educational uses.
- 3.18 It is understood that the building directly to the north of the Site, the Anechoic Room, was granted temporary planning permission in 1964 for educational purposes.
- 3.19 As part of the ongoing investment by UCL into the regeneration of the Bloomsbury Campus, “Transforming UCL”, there are a number of neighbouring developments of ranging scales that together are improving the UCL student experience and meeting an urgent need to improve and expand UCL’s facilities, the most significant of which is the New Student Centre, located to the north of 26 Gordon Square and south of the Bloomsbury Theatre.

4 Pre-application Consultation

Summary

- 4.1 The proposals have been informed by consultation with the following stakeholders:
- End-user group;
 - Student Union;
 - LB Camden Conservation Officer;
 - LB Camden Planning Officer; and,
 - LB Camden Trees Officer.
- 4.2 Two pre-application meetings were held with LB Camden.
- 4.3 The need for the proposals was informed by a survey of the end-users groups and current users of the existing QCR facility.

LB Camden Pre-application Meeting 1

- 4.4 On the 21 July 2015, the first of two pre-application meetings was held with LB Camden. At this meeting the proposed development was introduced and the context discussed. In attendance were Planning and Conservation officers from LB Camden. The proposed use and design of the building were discussed.
- 4.5 The concept of the proposed development was explained, with the 'Qube' structure described as being temporary, pre-fabricated and swift to construct.
- 4.6 The Conservation officer raised concerns about the proximity of the building to the Grade II listed terrace, 16-25 Gordon Square. It was noted that there had been a historic proliferation of low quality, low rise buildings in the vicinity of the terrace and that the layout of these was lacking a coherent approach.
- 4.7 It was agreed that a temporary proposal would minimise any potential harm on the neighbouring heritage assets. It was also emphasised by officers that the temporary building should be of a high design quality.
- 4.8 In response to this feedback, the proposed development is seeking a temporary permission of 5 years. This would ensure that the demand set out in Chapter 2 of this Statement would be met in the interim period prior to the New Student Centre being completed.
- 4.9 The proposed use of the building was also deemed acceptable. It was also agreed that retrospective planning permission be sought for the ablution facilities.

LB Camden Pre-application Meeting 2

- 4.10 The second pre-application meeting was held on 12 November 2015 with a Camden Trees officer. At this meeting, the proposed development was discussed in regards to its impact on the mature trees on the Site.
- 4.11 The discussions were informed by initial tree and ecological survey work carried out by Tree:fabrik which is set out in the accompanying Arboricultural Development Report. The initial survey work assessed the significance of the trees on the Site and set out that the proposed development should seek to minimise potential impact on the tree roots.

- 4.12 In response to these recommendations, the design team sought alternative solutions to provide foundations for the building which would minimise the impact of the proposed development on tree roots. At this meeting, the desired solution was presented to the Trees officer.
- 4.13 The solution is demonstrated in drawing 5055/4A 'New Qube Structure'.
- 4.14 At this meeting, the Trees officer expressed his satisfaction with this flexible design solution. Furthermore, it was advised that UCL should look to carry out tree maintenance work to the two mature trees situated on Site. This maintenance work does not form part of this application, but is set out in the Schedule of Tree Works prepared by Tree:fabrik in response to this meeting.

QCR Survey of End Users

- 4.15 The application for a new QCR building has been prepared through close engagement with the end-user. A survey was carried out to assess the need for the proposal with the end-user.
- 4.16 The survey analysed current usage, user satisfaction with the current QCR facility, capacity and the key issues.
- 4.17 The results of the survey demonstrated a clear demand for an increased provision of QCR facilities.
- 4.18 The survey demonstrates that the 900 visits are made to the room every day. Respondents rated the capacity of the building as low, particularly during peak times.
- 4.19 83% of respondents believed that QCR should be incorporated into the New Student Centre; however, that building is not expected to be complete until 2018.
- 4.20 A demonstrable need has been shown for the proposed development. The proposed development will meet existing demand and alleviate pressure on the existing QCR facility.

5 The Proposed Development

- 5.1 This section of the Statement should be read in conjunction with the submitted application drawings and Design and Access Statement.

Use

- 5.2 The proposed development responds to the increased demand for the essential space provided by the QCR via the construction of a new building directly adjacent to it. The use of the proposed development would be complementary to the existing QCR and would act as an extension to it.

Amount

- 5.3 The proposed new, single storey building will be slightly smaller than the existing QCR at approximately 9.8m x 4m (39.2 sqm). The height will be 3.2m above ground from the west side, and 4.4m on the east side. This is due to the sloping nature of the Site.

Layout and Access

- 5.4 The main entrance is proposed to be from the west elevation leading off the existing footpath, reflecting that of the existing QCR adjacent.
- 5.5 The two buildings will be connected via decking.
- 5.6 Of the two ablution facilities serving the existing QCR, the nearest to the Site will have its existing access adjusted so that it feeds the new facility independently of the existing QCR facility.
- 5.7 Due to the sloping nature of the Site, the building will have raised foundations to the east. These foundations will sit on pad footings which have a maximum depth of 300mm. These footings can be positioned flexibly in order to respond to existing tree roots. This will ensure that tree roots present will not be adversely affected by the development.

Appearance and Materials

- 5.8 The proposed design of the building includes the use of wooden cladding (western red cedar cladding). This use of this material reflects UCL's intention to be sympathetic to the neighbouring Listed Buildings and will be in accordance with the adjacent QCR (with new ablution amenities) to the south and Anechoic Room to the north.
- 5.9 For more information with regards to the design of the proposals, please refer to the Design and Access Statement accompanying this application.

Ablution Facilities

- 5.10 Due to the nature of the unique use of the QCR, there are two gendered ablution facilities connected to either side of the main entrance. These were constructed in 2013 to respond to urgent need.
- 5.11 This application seeks to regularise the planning position of the existing ablution facilities and apply for retrospective planning permission.
- 5.12 The proposed development includes a change in access to the ablution facilities. The block on the left of the existing QCR entrance is to be used by the new QCR building. The existing access arrangement is from the

ramp to Hut 34; however this entrance will be blocked and replaced on the opposite side of the facilities so as to serve the new building.

Opening Hours

- 5.13 The proposed QCR will be open 24 hours a day and closed on Christmas Day and easter Sunday. This follows the existing opening hours for the current QCR.

6 Policy Context

- 6.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.2 The Development Plan for the Site comprises:
- London Plan (2015);
 - LB Camden Core Strategy (2010); and
 - LB Camden Development Management Policies (2010).
- 6.3 The following documents are material considerations:
- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG);
 - Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy;
 - Camden Planning Guidance (CPG) 1: Design (2015);
 - Camden Planning Guidance (CPG) 3: Sustainability (2015); and,
 - Draft Local Plan (2015).
- 6.4 An extract of Camden's planning policy map is included for reference below. It demonstrates that the Site is within the following policy designations:
- Central London Area;
 - Designated view Corridor: right lateral assessment area of 5A.2 Greenwich Park Wolfe statue to Tower Bridge; and,
 - Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

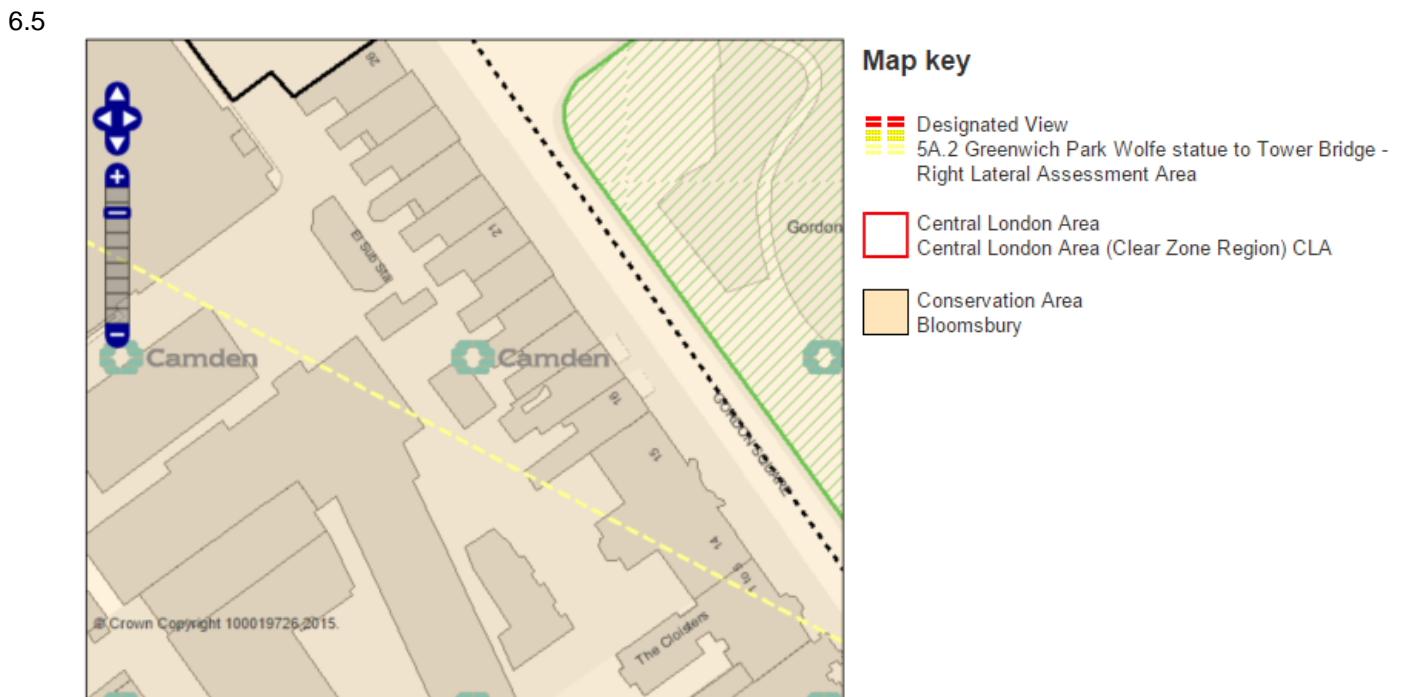


Figure 6: Camden Policy Map Extract

7 Planning Considerations

Use

- 7.1 The NPPF outlines 12 key planning principles, the twelfth of which states that planning should “*take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs*”. It continues to state that planning decisions should plan positively for the provision and use of community facilities, such as cultural buildings, and guard against loss of valued facilities where this would reduce the community’s ability to meet its day-to-day needs (Paragraph 70, p.17).
- 7.2 Policy 3.16 ‘protection and enhancement of social infrastructure’ of the London Plan (2015) states that “*London requires additional enhanced social infrastructure provision to meet the needs of its growing and diverse population*”. It continues to state that “*facilities should be accessible to all sections of the community (including disabled and older people) and be located within easy reach by walking, cycling and public transport*”.
- 7.3 Policy CS10 ‘Supporting community facilities and services’ of the Camden Core Strategy states that the Council will “*support the retention and enhancement of existing community, leisure and cultural facilities*”.
- 7.4 Policy DP15 ‘Community and leisure uses’ of the Camden Development Management Policies states:

“New community and leisure uses must be:

- g) close or accessible to the community they serve;***
- h) accessible by a range of transport modes, in particular walking, cycling and public transport;***
- i) located in the Central London Area or in the Town Centres of Camden Town, Swiss Cottage/Finchley Road, Kilburn, West Hampstead or Kentish Town if they are expected to attract larger numbers of visitors.***

New community facilities must be provided in buildings which are flexible and sited to maximise the shared use of premises”.

- 7.5 The supporting text reiterates that it is important that community and leisure uses are located close to the people who use them.

Applicant’s Response

- 7.6 The proposed use class of the new building is Class D1. The proposed new building shall be used as a space for quiet contemplation by the student and staff community. It is considered that this use in this particular location is acceptable, given the Site’s central location on the UCL Bloomsbury Campus and ease of access by people on the Campus.
- 7.7 The proposals seek to increase the provision of the QCR facilities to meet the vital cultural demands of the growing and increasingly diverse student population. The Site location is also very accessible and is within easy reach of public transport, via walking and cycling. Furthermore, being located on the Central Bloomsbury Campus, the majority of the student population will have the opportunity for regular access.
- 7.8 The building itself will be accessible, with level access from pavement to interior to cater for all users, including wheelchair users.

7.9 In summary the proposed use of the building is considered acceptable and conforms with the policy outlined above for the following reasons:

- the facilities will be located close to the people who use them;
- the increased provision will enhance the facilities;
- the facilities are easily accessible with a PTAL rating of 6B;
- The facilities are located in the Central London Area and therefore conform with Part (i) of Policy DP15;
- the provision of enhanced facilities shall increase cultural well-being of the UCL community;
- the proposed new building is of a simple structure that will be easily adaptable to alternative uses in the future;
- the proposed building is fully accessible to wheelchair users; and,
- the construction of the new building will ensure that UCL is able to meet and support the cultural needs of its student and staff community.

Conservation and Design

7.10 The NPPF sets out in Section 12 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment' paragraph 128 that:

"In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting."

7.11 The guidance encourages the level of detail to be proportionate to the asset's significance.

7.12 London Plan Policy 7.8 deals with heritage assets and archaeology. The policy states that:

"development should identify, value, conserve, restore, re-use and incorporate heritage assets, where appropriate."

7.13 Policy CS14 of the Camden Core Strategy and Policy DP25 of the Camden Development Policies document require development to preserve and enhance heritage assets and their settings.

7.14 Material weight will be given to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy as the Site is located within sub-area 2 of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

7.15 With regards to design and design quality, the NPPF states that the need to:

"always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings." (p.5).

7.16 It continues to state in Paragraph 56 (p.14, Part 7 'Requiring Good Design' of 'Achieving Sustainable development') that:

"good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people".

7.17 Camden Core Strategy Policy CS14 'Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage' of the Core Strategy requires development to be of a high standard of design and respect local character.

7.18 Camden Development Policy DP24 'Securing high quality design' requires all development to be of the highest standard of design, and expects developments to consider the character, setting, context, form and scale of neighbouring buildings, the quality of materials used, natural features and landscaping. The policy encourages outstanding design in contemporary or traditional styles. The policy requires development to consider existing rhythms, symmetries and uniformities in the townscape, the compatibility of materials and

their texture, tone and colour, the contribution of a design to views and vistas, and the wider historic environment and features.

Applicant's Response

- 7.19 The proposed development is to be located to the rear of the Grade II Listed Gordon Square Terrace, and therefore consideration needs to be given to the impact of the proposals on the setting of these buildings. The Site is also located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, and therefore consideration needs to be given to its impact on the character of the Conservation Area, and views within it.
- 7.20 The proposed development has therefore been developed to ensure that it is in keeping with, and complementary to, the surrounding urban fabric. Careful consideration has been given during the design process to the building's relationship with the rear of the Grade II Listed Gordon Square Terraces.
- 7.21 The proposed development is located to the rear of the Grade II Listed terrace and will not be visible from Gordon Street. The proposed development will be largely enclosed to all four sides by existing buildings and at only one storey is smaller than most of its neighbours (except for the existing single storey QCR). Given the proposed development's modest massing, its presence will not impact on key views within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.
- 7.22 It is considered that the rear of the Grade II Listed Gordon Terrace is of lesser significance than the front. The Historic England listing description for No.s 16-25 Gordon Square does not mention features of special interest to the rear of the properties. Given the temporary nature of the proposed development and the likelihood that the rear elevation holds less significance, the impact on the setting of the listed building is considered minimal.
- 7.23 The proposed development will be clad in robust and high quality wood. This approach to elevational treatment is in-keeping with the adjacent buildings and thus the character of the immediate local area.
- 7.24 In terms of access, the design has been carefully considered to ensure that the proposed building is accessible for all. Level access will be provided from the existing pathway.
- 7.25 The ablution facilities are also constructed from wooden cladding, and therefore are in keeping with the neighbouring buildings.
- 7.26 Overall, the temporary timeframe for the building along with its design qualities mean that it is considered that the proposed development is consistent with the design and conservation policies outlined above.

Amenity and Open Space

- 7.27 The Site is currently undeveloped.
- 7.28 Core Strategy Policy CS15 'Protecting and improving our parks and open spaces and encouraging biodiversity' states in part (a) that:

"The Council will protect and improve Camden's parks and open spaces by "protect[ing] open spaces designated in the open space schedule, as shown on the proposals map".

The Site is not included on the schedule of open space and proposals map.

Applicant's Response

- 7.29 The Site is not designated in the Local Plan Policy Map as open space. It is underused and does not contribute positively to the immediate area. Aesthetically, it is insignificant and does not provide a valuable outlook for the neighbouring buildings.

- 7.30 The Site is not practical as a usable open space and is overshadowed by mature trees resulting in lack of grass coverage and bare earth. Therefore, it is not used as an area of amenity by students or staff.
- 7.31 The Site's existing contribution to local amenity is minor; however, the proposals for a new QCR will make a valuable contribution to the provision of student well-being and amenity space on the Bloomsbury Campus. It is therefore considered that the proposals will be of a benefit to local amenity.

Ecology

- 7.32 Section 11 of the NPPF 'Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment' requires proposals to minimise impact on biodiversity.
- 7.33 Camden Core Strategy Policy CS15 'Protecting and improving our parks and open spaces and encouraging biodiversity' sets out that:

"the Council will protect and improve sites of nature conservation and biodiversity by protecting green areas with nature conservation value, including gardens, where possible and protecting trees and promoting the provision of new trees and vegetation."

Applicant's Response

- 7.34 The Arboricultural Development Report submitted alongside this application states that ground flora is limited on Site, with bare earth and a couple of mature shrubs, and therefore focuses on the tree's growing on Site. It states that the principal arboricultural feature is formed by the London Plane, with a lesser quality and subservient Sycamore located to the southeast.
- 7.35 In recognition of the ecological importance of the trees to the Site, careful consideration has been given to the design of the temporary building, with particular attention to its installation and foundations. The installation method has been designed in order to minimise any adverse impacts on the health or amenity of the trees in the short and long term. Overall, the Arboricultural Report submitted as part of this application concludes that the proposal will not have an adverse impact on either the London Plane or Sycamore.
- 7.36 The foundation design has been carefully considered to minimise disturbance within the root protection area (RPA) whilst maintaining moisture and gaseous exchange to the existing soil. The building will be elevated from the surface in order to maintain ground level conditions and avoid impact to roots near the surface. The foundations, comprising of elevated brick piers on concrete pad foundations, minimise the footprint of excavation required, whilst also reconciling the change in levels from the west to the east of the Site.
- 7.37 Furthermore, where structural roots are encountered, the positioning of the foundations is flexible. Where re-positioning is necessary the hole will be back filled and a new hole excavated.
- 7.38 In terms of construction onsite, this will be minimal, with the build process simplified through the use of modular panels produced off-site.
- 7.39 Overall, it is considered that the design of the temporary building will not adversely impact the existing ecology on Site.
- 7.40 Although not protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) it is understood that any proposed works on the two mature sycamore trees in association with the development of the Site will require 6 weeks' notice as per the requirements laid out by the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Policy. Works to the trees will be dealt with under separate applications.

Sustainability

- 7.41 Camden Core Strategy Policy CS13 'Tackling climate change through promoting higher environmental standards' states that:

"The Council will require all development to take measures to minimise the effects of, and adapt to, climate change and encourage all development to meet the highest feasible environmental standards that are financially viable during construction and occupation."

Policy CS13 sets out a number of measures by which application proposals should meet this requirement:

- by reducing the effects of and adapting to climate change;
- promoting local energy generation;
- increasing water efficiency and minimising surface water flooding;
- and introducing carbon reduction measures.

7.42 Camden Development Policy DP22 'Promoting Sustainable Design and Construction' sets out how the Council will *"require development to incorporate sustainable design and construction measures"*.

Applicant's Response

7.43 The building is constructed from 'structural insulated panels' ("SIPs"). This offers a number of environmental and sustainable benefits.

7.44 The panels are highly insulated with a foam core which provides higher insulation values than many other insulation materials used in traditional wall construction. Please refer to the Design & Specifications document prepared by Qube submitted alongside this application for further details on the insulation properties of these panels. Therefore, given the high insulation values of the SIPs, reduced energy is required to heat the building, resulting in fewer fossil fuels being burned.

7.45 The SIPs are made of engineered wood that is manufactured from renewable fast growing trees. This reduces the number of mature trees that need to be harvested.

7.46 The western red cedar cladding is naturally resistant to moisture, decay and insect damage. Consequently, it is suited to being located outdoors without the need to apply toxic chemical preservatives.

7.47 It is proposed that rain water from the roof of the building will be dispersed via perforated guttering to the ground beneath the new building. This will reduce the risk of localised surface water flooding on surrounding footpaths. Furthermore, a perforated pipe will reduce soil erosion in comparison to the likely impact of a single gutter.

Construction Management

7.48 Camden Core Strategy Policy CS5 'Managing the Impact of Growth and Development' sets out that the Council will protect the amenity of Camden's residents and those working in and visiting the Borough by:

e) "Making sure that the impact of developments on their occupiers and neighbours is fully considered;

f) seeking to ensure development contributes towards strong and successful communities by balancing the needs of development with the needs and characteristics of local areas and communities; and

g) requiring mitigation measures where necessary."

Applicant's Response

7.49 The SIPs are pre-constructed in an off-site location, decreasing the amount of labour required to erect the proposals on Site. Therefore the building can be erected quickly with fewer construction workers with little disruption to day-to-day Campus operations.

8 Summary and Conclusion

8.1 The application is for:

“Construction of a new Quiet Contemplation Room facility adjacent to the existing facility (Hut 34) at land to the rear of 18-19 Gordon Square, retrospective planning permission for the ablution facilities adjoining Hut 34, and associated ancillary works”.

- 8.2 The proposed development is required because of a rising demand within the student and staff population for 'quiet places' to meditate, pray, or spend mindfulness time. A survey carried out by QCR user groups in 2014 demonstrated that demand for such space is already high with the existing facility often operating at full capacity.
- 8.3 The use of the existing QCR is on the rise. With the existing room operating at peak capacity, there is a clear demonstrable need for an increase in QCR provision. This need will be satisfied following the opening of the New Student Centre in 2018. However in the interim period, the extant need remains, and is likely to increase. There is a clear demand for the facility, as demonstrated by the QCR Survey. Therefore, this proposal meets the existing urgent demand for increased provision of quiet contemplation space on Campus.
- 8.4 This planning statement has assessed the proposed development against the relevant planning policies.
- 8.5 The proposed use is considered to be acceptable at the Site and in keeping with the Bloomsbury Campus location.
- 8.6 In response to pre-application feedback from LB Camden officers, the application is seeking temporary permission for a period of five years from the date of consent. This will ensure that impact to the neighbouring listed buildings will be minimal and not long term. Furthermore, the design quality is high. The building will be wooden clad in keeping with the adjacent buildings. The ablution facilities are also wooden-clad. The design is simple and self-contained and it is considered there will be no material impact to the Grade II listed Gordon Terrace.
- 8.7 It is considered that the Site in its current state does not constitute useable open space or provides visual amenity for users of neighbouring buildings. Therefore the proposed development will not impact on existing open space provision, or local amenity.
- 8.8 The accompanying Arboricultural Development Report sets out the design response of the proposals to mitigate impact on tree roots. At the second pre-application meeting, the Camden Tree Officer was satisfied with the proposals and the proposed mitigation methods with regards to local tree roots.
- 8.9 The proposed 'Qube' structure is highly sustainable due to it being constructed of highly insulated panels, the use of sustainably sourced materials and the use of ecologically kind manufacturing processes.
- 8.10 The proposed development will be quick to construction with minimal impact on local amenity and users of the Bloomsbury Campus.
- 8.11 For the above reasons it is considered that the proposed development accords with national and local planning policy and should be granted planning permission.

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